WHITENESS AND WOMEN'S WRITING IN THE CARIBBEAN

by

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Dissertation Abstract

In this thesis I examine a number of intersecting concerns: women's writing, Caribbean literary and historical texts, and whiteness as a social/cultural/racial category. I look at travel literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and novels and autobiography of the twentieth century, all written within a Caribbean context. I focus specifically on white writing, and argue that whiteness is an historically and culturally constructed identity that intersects with gender, class, and colonialism. My fundamental premise is that whiteness, like gender, is performed within literary texts in ways which require careful analysis. I reject the notion that "race" is a special category that designates people of colour, and instead pursue the ways in which whiteness functions as a racial identity, a perceptual vantage, and a discursive practice within colonial and postcolonial writing by women, but also the ways in which whiteness tends to be rendered invisible, uncoded, "natural." Whiteness, as the invisible norm, draws its ideological power from its proclaimed transparency, from its self-elevation over the very category of race. I attempt to make whiteness visible by probing its various representations within colonial and creole Caribbean literature written by white women.

The authors studied in this thesis are Janet Schaw, Mrs. Carmichael, Esther Hyman, Phyllis Bottome, Eliot Bliss, Phyllis Shand Allfrey, and Jean Rhys. All are white women who lived in, and wrote about, the West Indies. In the texts written by travelers or novelists born in England (Schaw, Carmichael, Hyman, Bottome), whiteness is not privileged or identified as a racial identity, though its various meanings, often expressed in terms of gender, class, and national ideologies, are evident. In the texts written by

white creole women born in the West Indies (Bliss, Allfrey, Rhys), the significance of whiteness as a cultural and racial identity is explored by the authors in a self-conscious manner. White creole writers within a Caribbean context are racially self-aware in ways that colonialist writers are not. The study of all of these authors, however, contributes to the critical examination of whiteness that is emerging within colonial, postcolonial, and feminist studies.

Keywords: women, whiteness, race, colonial/ism, postcolonial/ism, creole, feminism, gender, Caribbean, West Indies, Janet Schaw, Mrs Carmichael, Esther Hyman, Phyllis Bottome, Eliot Bliss, Phyllis Shand Allfrey, Jean Rhys

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INTRODUCTION

> The cultural contribution of [whites] was essentially structural/ functional and materialistic in quality.... Its aesthetic achievement was the Great House and the 'civilization of the wilderness.'... White creoles in the English and French West Indies have separated themselves by too wide a gulf and have contributed too little culturally as a group to give credence to the notion that they can, given the present structure, meaningfully identify or be identified, with the spiritual world on this side of the Sargasso Sea.
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> – Edward Kamau Brathwaite (1974: 32, 38)

I take Edward Kamau Brathwaite's pronouncement on white culture in the English and French West Indies as something of a challenge. But I am interested less in the *value* of white cultural contributions (whether it is "good" or "bad") than in "exploring, mapping, and examining the terrain of whiteness" (Frankenberg 1) within the literary history of the English speaking West Indies. That terrain, I will argue, in disagreement with Brathwaite, is neither empty nor limited to economic materialism. The idea of whiteness and how/what it signifies within a small tradition of West Indian literary production is the subject of this thesis, not because white writers have been "unfairly" overlooked and need to be restored to their "rightful" position within the canon, and not to prove that white writing has contributed more than the literary equivalent of the Great House to the West Indian tradition, but to open up a dialogue on the ways in which white writing, and specifically white writing by women, explores

the various intersections between gender, colour, class and colonialism. Some white writing upholds the Great House tradition, and some subverts it, but in all cases whiteness is *performed* within literary texts in ways which require careful analysis. How does whiteness function within Caribbean texts? What are its attributes, its powers, its limitations? What does it mean to assert that whiteness has meaning? How do conceptions of blackness function to define whiteness? This work attempts to address these kinds of questions, in order to unmask the ideological, material and discursive workings of whiteness as a signifier, and to try to understand the ways in which whiteness signifies differently within different historical moments and cultural contexts.

But this study is not concerned with white writing in general – its specific subject is writing by white women in the Anglo-Caribbean. It is divided into two broad areas: writing by colonial white women, and writing by creole white women. By "colonial" I specifically mean British colonialism. David Spurr offers a useful overview of this distinctive brand of colonialism:

> While the Spanish and Portuguese had even older colonial empires than the British, the spiritual reserves of their imperial traditions lay invested mainly in the Roman Catholic Church. The distinctly British version of colonial discourse promoted, by contrast, a set of secular and quasi-religious ideals borrowed from the humanism of high culture: a narrow aristocracy, a muscular Christianity, the racial superiority of Anglo-Saxons, and, to use a phrase often invoked in parliament, "the trusteeship of the weaker races." (114)

In addition, I would identify British colonialism as a part of the larger design of the British Empire and see it, as does Benita Parry, as "a specific,

and the most spectacular, mode of imperialism's many and mutable states, one which preceded the rule of international finance capitalism and whose formal ending imperialism has survived" (Parry 34). Chandra Mohanty further clarifies when she describes colonialism as "a category of exploitative economic exchange" which "invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a discursive or political suppression of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (196). I use the term "colonial" throughout this thesis to describe this relation of unequal power and the political, economic and discursive violence required to maintain that power. The works that I identify as colonial are travel accounts written in a relatively narrow period of time, between 1774 and 1833. There are more accounts than I include in this study. My list is short because of considerations of space, because travel writing by women before 1900 is a rather rare form, and because it is even more rare when the subject is the Caribbean.[1] But I do not mean to suggest that because the accounts are in close temporal proximity to one another, or because I have identified each as a colonial work, that they share a single outlook on the colonial situation, on racial matters, or on "the trusteeship of the weaker races." To identify colonial writing is neither to identify a stable set of texts nor a monolithic system of representation. Colonial texts speak ambiguously, through the multiple and sometimes contradictory voices of the individual writer, institutional authority, and cultural ideology (Spurr 11).

I would also argue that a study of the various ways in which colonial discourse is marked by both race and gender complicates the notion of a stable, self-identical, monolithic set of texts. I begin from the premise that all writing is raced and gendered. I use the term race while recognizing its

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[1] For a full listing of women travel writers, see Frawley, Lawrence and Mills.

problematic positioning as an historical and as a scientific category. Henry Louis Gates explains:

> Race, as a meaningful criterion within the biological sciences, has long been recognized as a fiction. When we speak of "the white race" or "the black race," "the Jewish race" or "the Aryan race," we speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors (4).

My understanding of race follows Gates, but unlike Gates I do not, while acknowledging the modern notion of race as a result of a dubious pseudo-science of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, place the term into quotation marks to signal its fictional status. I employ the term to make reference to a changing historical discourse of biological (but not always chromatic) difference, and also to more social and psychological understandings of race as a category (in the manner of, for example, W. E. B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon). My understanding of racial difference is that it is socially constructed, and that it continues to have social and cultural significance. The concept of race does not reflect an objective condition, but neither is it an illusion. I aim to attend to the "performative aspect of race" (Omi and Winant 6) by identifying it as an ideologically charged construct that informs social reality, but not as a biological fact.

Race is not a special category that designates people of colour, although it is often deployed as a term to mark only non-whites as raced. The idea that whites are raceless or colourless implies that they are also without "racial subjectivities, interests and privileges" (Roman 71), a notion that I reject throughout this work. This study takes up Ruth Frankenberg's call to look carefully at the "racialness of white experience" (1) and attempts to meet Toni Morrison's challenge to examine "the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability ... on non-blacks who

held, resisted, explored or altered those notions" (1992: 11). As a result, I examine the ways in which whiteness is linked to a number of ideologies and cultural practices that tend to be unmarked and unnamed. In other words, I pursue not only the ways in which whiteness functions as a racial identity, a perceptual vantage, and a discursive practice, but also the ways in which it tends to be rendered invisible, uncoded, "natural." White writers, colonial or otherwise, tend not to speak of their own whiteness as a marked identity – it is the "other" who is marked, coded, distinct, raced. Frankenberg argues that "naming 'whiteness' displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance," and also that

> to speak of "the social construction of whiteness" asserts that there are locations, discourses, and material relations to which the term "whiteness" applies.... [W]hiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination (6).

To argue that British colonialism, a form of domination imposed in the Caribbean by a white minority on a non-white majority, is a raced concept seems to be a rather simple assertion. That colonialism and whiteness have something to do with one another is readily accepted and understood by colonial and post-colonial writers and scholars. But that whiteness as a racial identity and as a rhetorical figure deployed in colonial discourse is "understood" to have significance does not mean that its significance is regularly and rigorously pursued. It is often subsumed under the term "colonialism," and its workings, though generally unmarked, are supposed to be self-evident. Because of this, whiteness continues to be viewed as the

racial norm, while to be non-white is, as Vron Ware argues, "to occupy a racial category with all its attendant meanings" (Ware 18). Diana Fuss observes that whiteness as the invisible norm "draws its ideological power from its proclaimed transparency, from its self-elevation over the very category of 'race'" (22). Coco Fusco agrees, arguing that to "ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it" (in hooks 171). In this study, I mark whiteness by identifying how writers construct themselves as whites within a social landscape dominated by imported black African slave labour. My intent is to make visible that privileged marker, so that its discursive and social operations of power can be probed, analyzed, deconstructed.

Like colonialism, however, the notion of whiteness and its relation to the concept of race is neither historically nor textually stable: it signifies differently at different times and at the same time in different texts. Theodore W. Allen in his study *The Invention of the White Race* (1994) has traced the invocation of race as a biological category back to the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in 1169, and suggests even earlier political manifestations of discourses of racial difference. Allen's principal argument is that the Normans, and later the English, supported their colonial endeavours through a carefully established opposition between "Christian" and "Barbarian," or "civilized" and "savage," and that racial difference was constituted in such terms. Conflicting rules of inheritance, of succession, of marriage forms, of criminal justice, and of land use led the English to view and represent the Irish as "Barbarians" and "savages." As Barbarians, the Irish were understood to belong, and understood themselves as belonging, to a different race than the English, but the status of the word "race" is difficult to determine. In 1317, Irish chieftains led by Donal O'Neill, King of

Tyrone, charged that the kings of England had practiced genocide against the Irish, "enacting for the extermination of our race most pernicious laws" (in Allen 34). Race may mean here what we would call a people or nation, or it may be understood as a marker of biological difference, or a combination of these and perhaps other meanings. Almost five hundred years later, in 1792, Edmund Burke, an Irish-born British statesman, observed that the English continue to regard the Irish "as enemies to God and man, and indeed, as a race of savages who [are] a disgrace to human nature" (in Allen 31).

The history of English colonial expansion in Ireland suggests that race itself is an historical concept whose meaning and deployment have changed over the centuries. While I would argue that the distinction between a "civilized" and "savage" race permeates and informs later conceptions of race as a term to designate physiological (and therefore value) differences, the examples that I have cited do not make reference to differences in physical traits, such as body size, head shape, pigmentation, and so on. But this is not to say that there was, or is, a single prevailing notion of race within the history of British imperialism. Nancy Stepan argues that the idea of race in Britain has always been historically unstable, changing meaning from time to time but also differing in definition within any one historical period. Race as a concept has in British scientific and popular discourses been used to refer to "cultural, religious, national, linguistic, ethnic and geographical groups of human beings," and has denoted such groups as Jews, Celts, Irish, Negroes, Hottentots, Chinese, Anglo-Saxons, Europeans, Aryans and Spanish Americans (Stepan xvii). Stepan also argues that until European involvement in the African slave trade, starting in the fifteenth century, slave systems (such as those in Greek and Roman

societies) were not based on distinguishable racial differences between masters and slaves. In fact, the absence of racially distinguishing marks in slaves made the use of artificial signs such as shaved heads, tattoos or mutilations necessary to identify the slave (Stepan xi). By the eighteenth century, three hundred years into, and at the height of, the European slave trade in Africa, slavery was "almost entirely black" and blackness itself "came to be associated negatively with the degraded condition of slavery" (Stepan xii). While it is possible to argue with Stepan as to what came first, the African slave trade or "negative" associations with blackness, her main argument is that until the eighteenth century colour and race were not necessarily linked, or at least not exclusively linked. Ann Laura Stoler similarly argues that race is a "discourse of vacillations" which "operates at different levels and moves not only between different political projects but seizes upon different elements of earlier discourses reworked for new political ends" (72). And Michael Banton states that "race, class and nation are political ideas that arise from underlying economic and political structures" (4).

One of the "new political ends" that Stepan identifies as producing remarkable change in scientific racial discourse between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is that of the abolition movement in England. Scientific racism grew as "religious and moral foundations of slavery began to be contested" (Stepan xii). The period of "high abolitionism" from the 1770s to the 1830s also marked a period of transition in the human sciences from monogenism (the belief that all varieties of humans belong to one group, type or species) to polygenism (the belief that different varieties of humans constitute separate species). In this new polygenistic view, not only are different humans seen to belong to different racial categories, but

those categories by the end of the eighteenth century are increasingly based upon colour difference. Edward Long, a Jamaican planter of the late eighteenth century, reflects this new distinction by invoking colour as one marker of the difference between the British colonials and the African slave labour force in the Caribbean. Long argues in 1774 that "there are extremely potent reasons for believing that the White and the Negro are two distinct species" (II, 336). It is significant that Long establishes here an opposition not between Christian and Barbarian, English and African, or master and slave, but instead between white and black, although at other points he invokes alternate distinctions. If the notion was circulating in the late eighteenth century not only that Africans and Britons were different races, but that racial differences could be understood to be physiological, and especially colour-coded, by the mid-nineteenth century the connection between race and colour was a proven scientific "fact."[2]

This fact was supported by theories of racial typography. The notion of "type" was dominant in the scientific racism of the nineteenth century and was employed to draw firm distinctions between different races. Banton explains that the notion of type was "a convenient one because it was not tied to any particular classificatory level in zoology, so that it was easy to refer to the physical types characteristic of particular nations, to 'types of cranial conformation,' or to say that a skull 'approximates to the Negro type' without having to establish just what that type was" (28). Both type and race depended upon a tautology: the Negro skull represents a certain type, and that type is Negro. Comte de Gobineau, an influential nineteenth-century academic and racial typologist, divided the people of the world into three

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[2] See Young for a detailed study of the many forms of nineteenth century "scientific" racial discourses.

races – the white, the yellow and the black – whom he considered different species. Like other thinkers of the time, Gobineau believed, and scientifically "proved," that civilized peoples were of the white race, that the yellow race was only partly capable of civilization, and the black not at all (Young 69). Ideas about civilization and savagery were by the eighteenth century incorporated into this new racial discourse which held that different coloured people were different races because they were different types, and that the difference between races was of the same order as the difference between species.[3] As mentioned above, in 1774 Edward Long divided the races not solely according to ideas about nationality (England-France) or civility/barbarity (England-Ireland), but instead privileged physical differences between "White" and "Negro." Long's discourse incorporates ideas about civility and savagery into his division based on colour, as do later white citizens of the Caribbean, such as the travel writers that I discuss in Chapter One.

It is not within the scope of this work to trace all of the movements within and between historical racial discourses. While race as a concept is unstable and changeable, and has been used to mark national differences (between the English and the Irish) or differences within the English population (such as class differences, as I discuss below), my principal contention is that the "modern" understanding of race, which is based on colour difference and other physiological attributes more than any other single factor, was an accepted idea by end of the eighteenth century. This is not to say that in racial discourses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the notion of colour entirely displaced or superseded those of

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[3] Michael Banton remarks that in this discourse "much turned on the definition of species, which was problematic" (31). Like "race," "species" as a concept was deployed in a rather elastic fashion and denoted any number of perceived differences between humans.

nation or genealogy or civility, but that these earlier distinctions were both maintained and reworked in a new political climate – a climate that by the mid-nineteenth century was marked by a belief in progress, reason, science, capitalism and bourgeois values (Hobsbawm 3). The eighteenth and nineteenth century colonial in the Caribbean saw his or her racial identity in part as colour coded – as "white" as opposed to "black" or "negro" – and also saw whiteness as a normal and natural corollary of superiority and privilege, although this privilege tended to be assumed rather than explicitly stated. By focusing on whiteness as a powerful ideology and as an "invisible" marker of power and privilege in writings by colonial women, I attempt in this study to trace the different meanings attached to a discourse that was named "white" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By the time that Janet Schaw, the first writer to be considered in this work, traveled to the Caribbean from her home in Scotland in 1774, the white race had already invented itself.

I have said that colonial discourse is marked by gender. The subject of this study is not just colonialism and whiteness, but the intersection of those two social practices with gender. Specifically, I am interested in the relationship between gender formation and colonial ideology, or the ways in which race and colonialism inform gender socialization. In other words, how is whiteness, within colonialist discourse, a gendered social identity and practice? Certainly there is a long and complex history of the construction of white womanhood within colonialist discourse. For example, when the white Victorian woman is seen as the locus of home (whether at "home" or abroad), cleanliness, purity and angelic ministration, her very construction and maintenance as such demand that the relations

between the races be highly regulated so as to prevent her "spoilation." This is not to say that the "ministering angel" was the only subject position available to such women, but rather that there exists a dominant historical discourse that identifies the Victorian white woman in those terms. Reading whiteness in colonial texts entails reading gender as well. Whiteness does not signify in some essential way; ideas about masculinity and femininity construct and are constructed through ideas about race, colour, and the colonial enterprise.

It is worthy of note that until the 1980s, gender as an analytical and critical category was virtually absent from literary academic studies. Just as whiteness continues to represent itself as an unmarked category, the masculine form (in the structure of language itself, and in linguistic representations) has enjoyed a long history of invisibility. While the masculine often renders itself as universal, generic, the norm, the feminine is viewed as marked, different, the exception to the rule. As Elaine Showalter says, the introduction of gender into the field of literary studies made possible "an investigation of the ways that all reading and writing, by men as well as by women, is marked by gender" (2). And, like race, gender is not only a question of *difference*, which assumes that the sexes are separate and equal, but of *power* (Showalter 4): asymmetry, inequality and dominance characterize both racial and gender difference. In gender studies, the critic seeks to probe, question, and reveal power differentials, to understand what it means to have a gendered identity, and to make visible the apparently natural, transparent and unproblematic masculine norm. In this study, I add to this gender project the idea of racial difference, and especially the notion of an unproblematic white norm – a norm of white reading, and a norm of white writing. The issue is one of visibility. While

it has long been argued that femininity and/or a "coloured" skin render the subject invisible in literary studies as well as in political and social discourse,[4] I would argue that whiteness as a social norm renders its own operations of power invisible. This study, therefore, intersects in many ways with gender studies and studies of racism in literature and literary criticism. Because the white female colonial writer belongs to both historically marked (femininity) and unmarked (whiteness) social categories, she is simultaneously visible and invisible, inside and outside, colonizer and colonized.

Because of this unstable identity, the white female colonial writer disrupts the neat binary of colonizer/colonized. In many ways the female writer is herself a product of colonialism, rather than merely its instigator. She is both a support to and a subject of colonial rule. While the colonizing project tends to be viewed as "officially" male, it certainly had its female-centred practices, especially on the domestic front. The colonial woman writer occupies a subordinate place in patriarchy (and in literary canons), but a racially dominant position in the colonies. This places her in a rather complex locale, allied with both white colonial rule and the blacks who are ruled, and as a result her writing (in the texts that I present) tends to both echo and subvert colonial discourse. Of course, this means that colonial discourse maintains within it both its dominant operations of power, and challenges to that power. In other words, colonial discourse is not an

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[4] Frantz Fanon argues in *Black Skin, White Masks* that black men are feminized by white men - that blackness as a racial identity turns men into women in the eyes of European white men - and that they therefore disappear as subjects in colonialism. For Fanon, whose readings of femininity within colonialist discourse verge on being misogynist, and whose readings of homosexuality are outright heterosexist and homophobic, the feminization of masculinity within colonialism is the ultimate horror. The value of Fanon here is that he links two versions of invisibility (femininity and "colour") together, and that he names and interrogates whiteness as a coded cultural identity.

exclusively male domain, nor is it a stable set of social or discursive practices that represent a solid wall of power. There are inconsistencies, and challenges to it, within its own boundaries. The writings of white colonial and white creole women are fascinating for their complex explorations of privilege without power, dominance mixed with oppression, and alienation from both patriarchal hegemony and black folk culture.

The writers whom I identify as colonial were born and raised in the British Isles, ventured out to the "colonies" for either a short visit or a long stay, viewed England or Scotland as "home," and eventually returned there. Into this category I have placed Janet Schaw and Mrs. Carmichael. While there are distinct differences between these writers (as will be explored in Chapter One), they share a "passing through" approach to the Caribbean as they are travel writers. Janet Schaw's *Journal of a Lady of Quality* is an account of Schaw's travels from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776. Mrs. Carmichael weighed anchor by the island of St. Vincent in 1820. She was met on the boat by "several of our own people" (5), by which she meant slaves, and stayed in the Caribbean for approximately five years before embarking for London. Both Schaw and Carmichael considered themselves to be not just British subjects but permanent residents of the British Isles. For this reason, and for many others that will be explored later, these writers are colonial in their social attitudes and outlook.

I "oppose" the term creole to colonial (though as it will become apparent, these terms bleed into one another in many ways). While the word creole means different things to different people, I am using it as Brathwaite does, as an Anglicization of the Spanish *criollo*, meaning one who is born in, native to, the West Indies, regardless of "race" or skin colour (Brathwaite

1971: xv). Brathwaite calls cultural and political institutions creole if they do not merely replicate institutions from "home" but have developed their own character out of the specific historical, social, linguistic and other identities of any one Caribbean region. So, for example, Brathwaite sees the Jamaican Assembly in the eighteenth century as a creole institution, as it gave expression to specifically Jamaican aspirations and interests and was composed of planters, doctors, merchants and lawyers whose best interests lay on the island (1971: 40-41). By contrast, the Governor of Jamaica represents a colonial political force, since he exists to serve and protect the interests of the British parliament. When Brathwaite views institutions as creole, he suggests that a creole identity is less a matter of birthplace and more a state of mind or a social practice. For example, one could view the idea of "going native" as an indication of a fear of creolization. Lady Nugent, who resided in Jamaica as Governor's wife in the early nineteenth century and kept a journal for the purpose of noting all who came to and went from King's House in that time, views Lord Balcarres, the Governor of Jamaica who precedes her husband, as dirty, lazy, and immoral. Balcarres was British born, and Britain bound by 1805, but in Lady Nugent's eyes he was in danger of becoming creole, of losing the habits of thought and the manners associated with Englishness – cleanliness, a Protestant work ethic, and moral uprightness. While I tend to use the term creole to designate those who are born in the Caribbean, I also recognize the discourse of creolization and the notion that a creole can be made, as well as born.

If the colonial white woman is alienated from both dominant patriarchy and the culture of the black majority, the creole white women is even further a figure of alienation. She is a product of two cultures, both European and African, but belongs to neither and is often denied and

despised by both. As Lady Nugent's thoughts on Lord Balcarres indicate, the white creole tends to be viewed by the colonial as lazy, stupid, vulgar, sexually loose, and undereducated – an inauthentic or failed white who has not successfully upheld true white, British, colonial values and practices. The speech, dress and social rituals of creoles are different from those of colonials, and also of course different from those of the black majority. The conception of the creole has changed over time, and changes from text to text, but there are some consistencies in representation. How the creole is represented by the colonial, and how she represents herself and her culture, is explored throughout this study.

I should note at this point that ideas about European, creole and racialized (black/white) identities were and continue to be bound up with ideas about class. The inauthentic white is also the white who betrays his or her class, or who abandons traditional class consciousness. Stoler sees colonialism not as about "the importation of middle-class sensibilities to the colonies, but about the *making* of them" (Stoler 98). In her view, European identity was protean and dependent upon a social taxonomy that equated Europeanness and bourgeois civilities, so that "what sustained racial membership was a middle-class morality, nationalist sentiments, bourgeois sensibilities, normalized sexuality, and a carefully circumscribed 'milieu' in school and home" (105). In other words, an identity as European or white could be gained or lost if certain social practices or civilities were adopted or abandoned. That ideas about race and civility are linked has already been suggested by the history of English-Irish relations, but Stoler adds to this the notion that colour and civility are interdependent. Thus, whiteness is both a "real" physical condition and an abstract idea. Whites are not "white" if they lack the class background or cultural accoutrements that make them

truly European and therefore fit to rule (Stoler 106). Creoles, poor whites and light-skinned citizens of mixed European and African heritage in the Caribbean constituted a problem for the ruling elite, for while their skins were white their sensibilities often were not, and they were not considered to be appropriate or adequate representatives of colonial rule. Property ownership and an orderly family life were understood in the colonies not just as belonging to the middle class but as having a racial component as well (Stoler 128). The white underclass in the colonies, as in England, was viewed as unruly, lacking civility and unable to form orderly family units, all of which coded it as a distinct race. As Eric Hobsbawm explains,

> the bourgeois was, if not a different species, then at least the member of a superior race, a higher stage in human evolution, distinct from the lower orders who remained in the historical or cultural equivalent of childhood or adolescence. From master to master-race was thus only a short-step. (247-48)

Hobsbawm links class and race membership, suggesting that the two discourses overlapped. Just as the Irish were viewed as an alien race, so too were the lower orders of Britain. Edmund Morgan makes a similar argument about class, positing that in seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain the poor were viewed by the moneyed as "vile and brutish" and as bearing "many of the marks of an alien race" (325-26).

I have briefly introduced the issue of class here to suggest that when white writers in the Caribbean speak of manners, civilities, custom, form, and so on, the language that they adopt is not just a language of class but one of race as well. White colonials occasionally differentiate between both classes and races by similar criteria. As noted above, this creates a problem for the white creole who is not, by some definitions, white or European at

all. The white creole is an uneasy figure in colonial texts. If she is wealthy but adopts local social practices that do not meet ruling-class colonial standards (for example, if she lets her children be raised by blacks after the age of four, or if she does not send them abroad to school by the age of twelve), then she risks losing both her class and her race identity as they have been prescribed by the metropole. If she abides by the rules set by the metropole and the colonial elite but speaks English with a creole "drawl" she again risks being socially ranked by the governing elite as a lower form of life. Linguistic "competence" is but one criterion of the middle or upper classes and of racial identity as well, and it is also one frequently not met by white creoles.

Writers that I identify as white creoles include Eliot Bliss, Phyllis Shand Allfrey and Jean Rhys. Bliss was born in Jamaica in 1903, the daughter of an army officer in the West India Regiment.[5] She was raised in Jamaica until her early teens, educated in convents in England, and then returned to Jamaica in 1923. Bliss wrote two novels, *Saraband*, published in 1931, and *Luminous Isle*, published in 1934. Allfrey was born in Dominica in 1915. Her father was Francis Shand, Crown Attorney of Dominica. Allfrey was educated privately in Dominica, then later left to study in England, Belgium, Germany and France. She returned to Dominica in 1954 and began a long history in local (Dominican) and federal (West Indian) politics. Her novel, *The Orchid House*, was published in 1953. An analysis of the works of Bliss and Allfrey comprise Chapter Three. Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890, the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a white creole

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[5] It is always the occupations of fathers who provide the explanation for a life lived in the West Indies. Their professions tie them to this region. The mothers are rarely discussed in introductions to editions or other critical works and little tends to be known about them, other then their positions as wives of professional men.

mother. At sixteen, she left Dominica and stayed away (in England and in France) for most of her life. In Chapter Four, I discuss her unfinished autobiography, *Smile Please* (1979). In these three texts I examine the construction of a creole identity that is raced (white) and gendered (female), what that identity means to the different writers, and how its significations within the texts relate to the history of colonialism.

In offering a brief outline of what texts make up this study, I have thus far skipped over the contents of Chapter Two. This is because in Chapter Two I discuss a number of Caribbean writers who fit neither into the category of colonial, nor into that of creole. I have already suggested that colonial and creole as identities are not always distinct, that they are not simply opposed terms with stable meanings. I employ these terms because they are linked to an historical discourse and because I think that they mean *something* in the specific works that I analyze, though that something shifts from text to text. The works that I discuss in Chapter Two offer a challenge to any attempt even to provisionally ally them with either colonial or creole sensibilities. In a sense, all of the works that I discuss offer this challenge and defy any simple definition, but the problems that the texts in Chapter Two offer are unique. For example, while none of the writers covered in this thesis have received any sustained critical attention (with the exception of Jean Rhys), the authors studied in Chapter Two are virtually unknown. There is no scholarly work available on Esther Hyman/Chapman and only a few brief references, within texts devoted to other writers, to Phyllis Bottome.

Hyman's and Bottome's novels deal with the intersection between race, gender and colonialism, but more specifically the subject of this chapter is one particular kind of intersection, namely miscegenation. The term

miscegenation is, like race, a scientific fiction and a misnomer. The word literally means the mixture (from the Latin *miscere*) of races or species (*genus*). The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines miscegenation as "mixture of races; especially the sexual union of whites with negroes," and the *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines it as "a mixture of races, especially marriage or cohabitation between a white person and a member of another race." Both definitions emphasize the "mixture" of *whites* with other races, which suggests the kind of anxiety of contamination or mongrelization that the term encompasses. Since there are no racial boundaries between peoples of different colours, ethnicities or nationalities, the term miscegenation must be recognized as fundamentally problematic. The races can neither be mixed nor pure. But both Hyman and Bottome represent miscegenation as resulting in racial contamination, and represent the mulatta as a threat to racial purity. In Chapter Two I trace a history of the representation of this "spurious and degenerate breed" (Schaw 112) within Anglo-Caribbean discourse, and mark the ways in which Hyman and Bottome engage with the discourse of racial degeneration.

Before delving into the major concerns of this work, it is important to indicate the general state of critical work on West Indian literature. There are to date less than a dozen major works on West Indian writing, and within the majority of these works there has been little attention paid to the writings of women in general, and of white women in particular. Kenneth Ramchand's *The West Indian Novel and its Background*, originally published in 1970, is considered a classic work of West Indian literary criticism. Ramchand describes the focus of his book:

> The concern in this book is with prose fiction, mainly novels, written by people who were born or who grew up in the West Indies.... The books have all been written in the twentieth century; and their native West Indian authors include descendants of Europeans, descendants of African slaves, descendants of indentured labourers from India, and various mixtures from these (3).

Ramchand refers to this mix of texts as "West Indian raw material" (3); another way of categorizing such writers is to call them creole. Ramchand's study of creole writers is an historically important work, and his attempt to "reinstate White West Indian writers" (x) into the literary canon was, in 1970, after 20 years of black nationalism "concerned with redressing the balance of centuries of British colonial exploitation and its concomitant racism" (O'Callaghan 20), perhaps a bold and unfashionable move. It is certainly a move that has not been systematically followed up on. But what *has* proved to be a pattern in West Indian literary criticism can also be identified in Ramchand's early work, namely the invisibility of women writers, and especially white women writers, in such scholarly critical overviews of the region's literature.

Ramchand includes the requisite section on Jean Rhys in a chapter devoted to white writing entitled "Terrified Consciousness." In this chapter, Ramchand discusses four novels written by four white West Indians of European descent.[6] Two of the four writers are women, and between them Ramchand devotes twelve pages (out of a book total of 273) to their works. Ramchand is not the only critic who disregards the Caribbean literature produced by white women. In Michael Gilkes' *The West Indian*

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[6] Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966); Phyllis Shand Allfrey, *The Orchid House* (1953); Geoffrey Drayton, *Christopher* (1959); and J. B. Emtage, *Brown Sugar* (1966).

Novel (1981), women's writing receives minimal attention, and white women's writing none at all. Similarly, in Frank Birbalsingh's *Passion and Exile: Essays in Caribbean Literature* (1988) there is no analysis of white women's writing, despite the stated concern of the study with "major novelists of the first half-century of the existence of anglophone Caribbean literature" (11). In fact, no women writers at all make it into Birbalsingh's study. In the collection of essays edited by Bruce King entitled *West Indian Literature* (2nd edition; 1995), there is one chapter devoted to Jean Rhys, and one chapter entitled "Contemporary Women Writers." There are also brief and scattered references to Lady Nugent, Esther Chapman and Phyllis Shand Allfrey, but there is no sustained scholarly attention paid to either early (eighteenth and nineteenth century), recent (early twentieth century) or contemporary writing by white women.

There are obviously two different, but related, omissions in these critical overviews of West Indian literature. The first is the scarcity of attention paid to women writers as an undifferentiated group (undifferentiated from each other, but differentiated from male writers as a group), and the second is the lack of any attempt to address systematically the range of women's writing and the many differences among writing practices (diaries, journals, poetry, novels, plays), as well as the historical and cultural differences among different women writing in/about different places at different times. Some recent critical works have attempted to address these gaps in Caribbean scholarship. Two 1990 collections – *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, edited by Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, and *Caribbean Women Writers*, edited by Selwyn R. Cudjoe – cover a broad range of topics related to women's writing. This study is indebted to both of these works, but also diverges from them in historical scope and

subject matter, as there is in these collections neither a lengthy and detailed study of early colonial women writers, nor a study of twentieth century novelists such as those covered in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this work. Evelyn O'Callaghan's book, *Woman Version* (1993), develops theoretical approaches to West Indian fiction by women. O'Callaghan devotes a chapter to early white writing by women, but also acknowledges how little scholarly work has been done in this field. This study takes O'Callaghan's work as its starting point but also differs from it markedly, as O'Callaghan does not approach the subjects of whiteness or gender in the manner that I have outlined above.

In many ways, Brathwaite's conception of white culture in the Caribbean remains in place today. Literary critics seem to share in his conclusion that, apart from Rhys, whites have created no literary documents worthy of study. While Davies and Fido seek to address the voicelessness and historical absence of women writers within literary histories of the West Indies, and recognize that the works of early and contemporary colonial and creole white women are "important to an understanding of Caribbean literary history" (14), the contributors to their collection do not explore this particular literary-historical thread. The stated concern of the collection is with a "specifically female" (1) history; mine is with an even more specific history, namely the literary productions of white women in the Caribbean. It is that particular exclusion from the critical dialogue that this study aims to address, in the hopes of expanding the boundaries of Caribbean literary discourse.

CHAPTER ONE

Travel Writing: Janet Schaw and Mrs Carmichael

Only in the last few years have full-length critical works devoted to women's travel writing been written. In fact, it is only in recent years that travel writing as a genre has been studied with anything like the same critical seriousness as that of the more mainstream literary genres (the novel and the poem). Because travel writing has long been viewed as a popular and recreational product, rather than a serious art form, it has tended to be relegated to the status of second best, or of "minor" writing. But as Maria Frawley argues, to examine the place of travel writing in general, and women's travel writing in particular, is "necessarily to consider how certain documents come to be privileged as representative of a literary period, a social history, a class, or a gender" (15). In reference to gender, class, and, I would add, race, travel documents that occupy a privileged place in literary studies tend to be those produced by white men, and specifically by those members of society most free to roam the world for work or leisure – scientists, explorers, bureaucrats, traders, missionaries, and moneyed (middle or upper class) men of leisure. But white women also frequently traveled, occasionally as missionaries or governesses but primarily as wives and daughters of those bureaucrats, traders, and so on. Frawley also argues that travel writing, as a nondomestic genre, is an unusual and risky choice for women but that it was a way to gain a kind of authority to write about culture: it gave women "the symbolic capital with which to compete in the culture market of [society] and to appeal to institutionally recognized powers – the periodical presses and publishing houses" (29). In this sense, travel writing was, for women, empowering while it also represented a kind of

risk in relation to women's identity as feminine. Frawley notes that "the idea of a woman traveler was particularly troublesome because the qualities that identified her as an adventurer seemed also to compromise those ostensibly 'natural' qualities that made her a woman" (103). While I would agree that travel was for many women a risk to their identity as "female," and that writing was a route to asserting cultural, and colonial, authority, I would argue that the so-called nondomestic nature of the genre needs to be reconsidered in a number of ways. As I discuss below, many women when they traveled (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) did not enter a nondomestic zone so much as redefine domesticity, alter its appearance, and take it with them. So, for example, when Lady Nugent (c. 1800) travels she is accompanied by a large assembly of black servants and white assistants, frequently her husband and children, several carriages and horses, and enormous trunks filled with clothing, books, kitchen-ware, and other household paraphernalia. It does not seem accurate to describe her travels, and her writing, as nondomestic, in general because of the social organization of her travel, and specifically because the bulk of her journal entries are given over to recording who visited King's House (the governor's mansion in Jamaica) and on what social occasions. Many female travelers simultaneously leave home and resurrect it along the journey, whereas male writers frequently just leave, because custom, or the maintenance of a gendered social identity, allows them to move more easily outside the confines of home.

While there emerged in the 1980s a few works devoted to travel writing by women, such as Leo Hamalian's *Ladies on the Loose: Women Travelers of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (1981), Mary Russell's *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travelers and Their World* (1986), and Dea

Birkett's *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (1989), these texts range from samples of writings by women travelers (Hamalian), to biographies of, and tributes to, "the complex spirit known as the explorer" (Russell 14), to studies which aim to introduce to the reader a "a gallery of strong, independent, willful women" (Birkett ix). Each of these books contributes to the vastly under-researched area of women's travel writing by providing biographical information on the travelers and offering descriptions of their many and varied accounts. But they are of limited use to the reader who is interested in pursuing the intersections of race, gender and colonialism in travel writing, since they either seem unaware of the possibilities of reading that these subjects enable (Birkett), or they consciously eschew such "theoretical" issues altogether:

> This book is less concerned with theories than with the reasons offered by women themselves as to why they soar off into the dawn skies, trudge across deserts, sail into uncharted waters or cling perilously to the peaks of snowbound mountains. (Russell 15)

Fair enough, but when Russell concludes that women traveled "to find their true identity" (20) and did so by making use of "the energy and drive that characterized the great days of the British Empire" (23), she does not consider the relationship between subject-formation and writing, the politics of female identity and authorship in the Victorian period, or the relations of power which constitute that celebrated imperial drive.

Birkett begins on a more promising note. On the subject of women taking up travel, she writes:

> Often finding their inclusion as women in their male heritage uneasy and unsatisfying, these women discovered a more attractive, inclusive

> history as white people in an age of increasing European intervention in and colonization of distant lands. (19)

It is an interesting hypothesis that women travelers gained an insider identity as "white" by *leaving* England for the colonies, and that this identity literally opened up avenues for them to explore. Whiteness as a liberating identity is only really possible when there is an Other who is both non-white and subjugated, and it is access to this Other in the colonies that helped to mold an identity as not just (for example) Victorian and female and middle-class, but also as white. However, Birkett does not explore this idea any further in her work. Instead, she offers biographical information on a number of travelers, glosses their texts, and describes the paths taken in detail. Birkett, like Russell, does not look at travel writing as an extension of and support to colonial discourse, nor does she consider the ways in which such a discourse is gendered. As Sara Mills notes, scholars like Birkett and Russell tend to treat these writers "as if they traveled simply as individuals and were not part of colonialism as a whole" (29).

Sara Mills belongs to a group of four writers on women travelers whose interests overlap with my own: Mills herself, Mary Louise Pratt, Karen Lawrence and Maria Frawley. These writers see travel accounts by both men and women as marked by gender, as belonging to a larger colonialist discourse, and to some degree as raced. I say to some degree because racial issues, while not entirely absent, tend to be subsumed under colonialist concerns, explored in depth only when the travelers come face to face with the racial Other, or "hidden" within apparently straight-forward assertions. So, for an example of the latter tendency, in Mills's text the phrase "women's travel writing" is understood to mean "white women's travel writing," although that distinction is never made and as a result the raced

nature of that gendered paradigm is not fully explored. It is an important distinction, and not only because women of colour, such as Mary Seacole, also wrote travel accounts. The assumption within Mills's text is problematic in itself because it establishes a racially exclusive category that hides its own exclusivity by rendering natural and normal a white racial identity. I make this point not to undermine Mills's very fine work on travel writing, to which I am indebted, but to offer a simple illustration of one way in which a white racial identity is both assumed in and effaced from critical works on colonial texts. To name whiteness, and to privilege its material and discursive dimensions, is to give a cultural and racial specificity to white writing in order to uncover the structured invisibility of whiteness as a site of dominance.

Karen Lawrence is the only writer of the four mentioned above to specifically name whiteness as one of the cultural identities of the women that she studies:

> [This book is not] a comparative study of travel by women of various racial, class, and national statuses; my examples are all travel narratives written by white, aristocratic or middle-class Englishwomen, whose race and class inform their expectations of mobility as thoroughly as they inform their domestic ideologies. (xii)

Lawrence does not dwell on the various meanings of whiteness as thoroughly as she does on those of gender, but an awareness of race as constituting identity and as enabling travel in the first place remains at least in the background of her work. None of Frawley, Mills, or Pratt explicitly take up ideas about race as in part constituting the discursive parameters of white women's travel writing. What and how women wrote about travel had something to do with the circulation of ideas about gender (especially

femininity), class, nation, colonialism and race. An awareness of historical conceptions of race in general, and whiteness in particular, allows the reader of travel accounts to understand what it was possible to say about race, or what racial discourses were available to women writers, and how those discourses intersect with ideas about gender, class, nationality, and so on. The subject of race – especially, how whiteness is both articulated and rendered invisible in the two travel accounts that I study – will be explored throughout this chapter. For now, I want briefly to elaborate on the ways in which travel writing and issues surrounding gender come together.

Travel writing is a gendered paradigm. As noted above, travelers themselves, and critics who read travel writing, tend to view travel and its texts as a masculine domain, and travel writing by women as an exception, an oddity, even a freakish occurrence. The journey plot, as Karen Lawrence explains, has been understood to be exclusively male, with the very absence of women "establishing the world of the journey as a realm in which man confronts the 'foreign'" (1). Not only is woman's place at home, but "she in effect is home itself, for the female body is traditionally associated with earth, shelter, enclosure" (1). Lawrence takes the Odysseus/Penelope model as the dominant paradigm for most thinking about travel writing: Odysseus travels, Penelope waits. It is the male traveler who crosses boundaries and penetrates spaces, and the female body which remains both a figure of home, and an emblem of that foreign space. Thus, the feminine is conveniently constructed as both domestic (home, homeland, Mother Country) and foreign (unknown, the Other, to be explored and penetrated). It is both that which is to be escaped from, and that which is to be discovered, explored, mapped, and contained in "new" territories. In his book *The Adventurer,* Paul Zweig identifies the adventure story, which is

also a travel narrative, as a "flight into danger" and a "flight from women" (61). Locating his paradigm of adventure and travel in *The Odyssey*, Zweig then finds that throughout literary history travel represents the "essential escape from the domains of women into the unconfined spaces" (71). But how useful is this paradigm when that literary history is not the exclusive province of male writers and travelers?

As Lawrence observes, most studies of the journey and of travel literature fail to theorize a place for woman as traveling subject. In Charles L. Batten Jr.'s *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* the works of female travel writers do not contribute in any significant manner to the uncovering of those eighteenth-century conventions. Batten argues that "travel literature of the eighteenth century provides an important key to the intellectual, cultural and literary history of the English people" (6), but he does not consider how female writers have contributed to that history.[1] Because of this oversight, Batten makes claims for the conventions of eighteenth century travel writing that cannot be supported when women's texts are under study. For example, Batten argues that some distinguishing characteristics of the eighteenth century account are that it lacks "anecdotal and autobiographical material" (13), that it admits of only the "barest hint of a narrative sequence" (47), and that it avoids "trifles" (49). Janet Schaw's and Lady Nugent's accounts contradict these claims again and again, and Schaw's text also (as I am sure do many other accounts) problematizes Batten's claim that eighteenth

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[1] And, like many other scholars of travel writing (see Zweig and Adams), Batten also constructs the *reading* subject as exclusively male. He describes, for example, how the travel account "opened up the world to the man who for one reason or another could not visit places like the Holy Land, America, or even the shores of the Mediterranean" (7). Percy Adams in *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* argues that travel accounts "were a source of information and pleasure for the sedentary by his fireside or sometimes the magnet that pulled him from his chair and onto ships and highways" (67).

century accounts contain "honest descriptions," rather than "fabulous narratives," and are therefore "factually accurate" (7). Similarly, in *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*, Patrick Brantlinger maps out the development of imperialist ideology over a period of eighty-five years without offering a reading of British women's writing, and the relationship of that writing to imperialism. Further, Brantlinger does not identify gender as a material or discursive system intertwined with imperialism. For example, Brantlinger's list of elements of imperialist ideology is: advocacy of territorial expansion; chauvinism based on loyalty to the Empire; advocacy of the use of military force to settle issues of foreign policy; glorification of the military and of war; racial superiority of white Europeans; and the civilizing mission of the British (8). Not only is agency missing from this list (whose advocacy? whose glorification?) but the meaning of gender is unexplored. How, for example, is "racial superiority" a gendered subject position? How can the different powers and privileges of white men and women be articulated within imperialist ideology? Brantlinger continues to summarize the primary activity of imperialism:

> ... the "benighted" regions of the world, occupied by mere natives, offer brilliantly charismatic realms of adventure for white heroes, usually free from the complexities of relations with white women. (11)

Brantlinger's "white hero" is clearly male, and specifically a male seeking to escape the entanglements of maternal ties and/or romantic heterosexual bonds. In Brantlinger's study, the traveler is unproblematically posited as white, male and heterosexual.

Brantlinger, like Frawley, also bases his study upon the assumption that the travel or adventure tale is specifically non- or anti-domestic. The travel tale, says Brantlinger, belongs to the modes of adventure and realism, which

are opposed to "domestic" and "romantic" modes of telling (12). Percy Adams, in *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, also argues that the "domestic narrative" and the "adventure narrative" are diametrically opposed, the former being "static" and the latter "dynamic" (148). Adams identifies the "lure of excitement" and the "fascination of travel" as the "Ulysses factor" (151) or the "Ishmael theme" (152), therefore identifying adventure, movement and excitement with masculinity and stasis with femininity. This is a common assumption among critics of travel writing, and yet the woman traveler challenges such assumptions. Her writing is frequently both domestic and adventurous, both realist and romantic – if those oppositions can even be maintained. The female travel writers that I discuss traveled both in the company of family members and alone, alternately or simultaneously maintaining and leaving behind the domestic realm. Brantlinger and others oppose the "imperial adventure tale" to the "tame, monotonous realm of domestic routines and responsibilities" (Brantlinger 12), but this is clearly not the case for many women travelers who wrote another kind of imperial adventure tale. Not only can the Zweig-Brantlinger-Adams paradigm not account for the kind of travel writing covered in this chapter, but these critics also support Sara Mills' criticism that "women as individuals and as writers are always seen to be marginal to the process of colonialism" (3). While women's involvement in colonialism may have been different in most cases from men's, a certain gender-blindness in critical writing about empire and travel suggests that women remained outside the colonial enterprise. In following the Zweig-Brantlinger-Adams approach, one misses the opportunity to investigate the relation between gender (both masculinity and femininity) and colonialism, and women's contribution to imperialist ideology.

These masculinist approaches also implicitly support the man-as-colonizer, woman-as-colonized opposition. In other words, the white European woman is not an agent of imperialism but rather its object, in addition to those "natives" in need of subduing. In this study, I view gender as both a marker of difference and as "a site of conflicting subjective processes ... [which] makes it impossible to ignore the contradictory social positioning of white, middle-class women as both colonized patriarchal objects and colonizing race-privileged subjects" (Donaldson 6). My argument is that the travel account is also a site of conflicting subjective processes that can neither be reduced to the notion of the woman as colonized object nor to the model of the white heterosexual male escaping domesticity and the complexities of male-female relations. Travel writing by women not only both supports and contests domestic ideologies, thus preventing the reader from assigning to the female travel writer the simple subject position of victim of patriarchy or colonialism, but it also highlights the ways in which travel itself carries ideological significance. Does the woman travel to escape domesticity, when domesticity is in many ways tied to both feminine social practices and the female body itself (as "home")? Clearly, theories of travel need to accommodate gendered social practices, and discourses of masculinity and femininity, in order to engage in readings which extend beyond the "flight from women" model.

It bears repeating that women travel writers, like men, primarily belonged to the middle and upper classes.[2] The writers whom I discuss

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[2] This is not to say that the white population in the colonies was made up primarily of the middle and upper classes. It is a popular misconception that all whites in the West Indies during slavery were rich merchants or land-owners. Edward Kamau Brathwaite divides the white population of Jamaica in the nineteenth century into five major groups: Royal administrators (Governors, Admirals, Generals); merchants; planters; British troops; and *petit blancs* (servants, clerks, housekeepers, preachers, teachers, hotel and tavern keepers, tradesmen). An 1820 census in Jamaica, which totals the white population at 30,000, lists

below are of middle-class backgrounds, and while they traveled for different reasons they occupied similar positions in the upper economic segment of society. I would also like to note again that the discourse of class that permeates these texts is not entirely divorced from that of race, that racial identity and class identity are closely intertwined, and that whiteness, as I suggest in the Introduction, is as much about colour as it is about social practices and civilities. Class distinctions are often articulated in terms of racial differences. To illustrate this point, as well as my earlier contention that the discourse of race in the eighteenth century was one of vacillations, I want briefly to look at Edward Long's 1774 text, *The History of Jamaica.* Long at different moments refers to the people of England, to orangutans, and to white servants as distinct races (II 442, II 363, II 283) and as distinct classes of men (the orangutan he sees as more civilized, more human, than black Africans). He also employs the same language to describe blacks and the servant class in England, thus suggesting that class similarities (the working poor, whether free or enslaved) are shared racial characteristics. For example, the white servant's character is one of "wilful waste, idleness, profligacy, ingratitude of disposition, and ill behaviour in general" (II 282), and similarly the black man is "idle and profligate" (II 323). The question of profligacy is interesting in that Long freely admits – even describes at length – how utterly common a practice it is for white planters to have several black mistresses at any one time, either in place of or in addition to a white colonial or creole wife. European men, says Long, "give a loose to every kind of sensual delight" in the colonies (II 328), enjoy a "loose [i.e.

1200 men of property, 6000 merchants plus their families, 3000 British troops, and 5000 servants. That leaves 18,000 whites unaccounted for, which added to the 5000 servants indicates a massive under-class of about 23,000 persons, or 77% of the white population (Brathwaite 106-135).

unrestrained] attachment to Blacks and Mulattoes" (II 250) and "are not always the most chaste and faithful of husbands" (II 265). They are not, however, ever described as profligate. Long demonstrates that "sexual promiscuity or restraint were not abstract characteristics attached to any persons who exhibited those behaviours, but as often post-hoc interpretations contingent on the racialized class and gender categories to which individuals were already assigned" (Stoler 115). The deadly sin of lust is reserved for blacks, both free and enslaved, and the white servant class, because for Long the charge of lust is not based upon measurable sexual relations but rather upon social position.[3] Further, Long does not read idleness as a resistance strategy or as a rejection of the status quo on the part of the underclass within the British class system or the colonial plantation economy, but sees it instead as a racial, that is natural and not learned, characteristic common to both poor whites and poor blacks. Long seems to believe, in common with the eighteenth century European travelers to South Africa, that idleness is unnatural to civilized man, who views work as "the fundamental divine edict, an edict that all men must obey to atone for Adam's fall" (Coetzee 20) and indolence as the province of the animals.

My purpose in citing Long on the subjects of profligacy and idleness is not merely to point to his hypocrisy in the case of the former, and his short-sightedness in the case of the political value of the latter, but to indicate that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was not always a rigid boundary maintained between discourses of race and class. In terms of marking distinctions between both class and race categories, much depends

[3] This is not true of all colonial historians. In later chapters I explore the charge of licentiousness laid against white creole men by colonial writers.

upon the absence or presence of bourgeois sensibilities, perhaps most importantly a work ethic and notions of normalized sexuality. Idleness offends post-Reformation religious and moral sensibilities, while the practice of European men taking black women for sexual pleasure is viewed as a normal expression of manly appetites.[4] Any sustained practice that contravenes middle-class civilities is viewed as a disqualification for status as "white."[5] Alternatively, a black or mulatto can obtain honourary white status if he (and it can only be a "he") meets certain criteria:

> ... [I]n all cases where the father, having no legitimate kin to whom he may be willing to give his property, where that property is large, and his illegitimate child may be, by the polish of a good education, and moral principles, found well deserving to possess it; there can be no question, but he might be made legitimate and capable of inheriting, by the power of an act of assembly. (Long II 326)

Acts of assembly have the power to make a slave free, and to confer upon that ex-slave "the same rights and privileges with other English subjects born of white parents, except that they might not be of the council nor

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[4] In fact, Long blames white women for the sexual excesses of white men, arguing that were white women to acquire the appropriate "graces and polish which are to be attained in genteel company" they would by "the force of their pleasing attractions" (II 250) soon draw their men away from the "goatish embraces" of their black slave women (II 328). Long recommends that white women groom themselves more thoroughly, and divest themselves more fully of the influences of black slave culture that result, for example, in "whining, languid and childish speech" or a white head "muffled up with two or three handkerchiefs" (II 279), in order to lure white men "into the more rational and happy commerce of nuptial union" (II 250). The white woman who partakes too much of black culture (in her adoption of *patois* or African headdress) is not in fact white according to the criteria established by Long. She is, rather, idle ("lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees" [II 279]) and profligate ("... her dress loose, without stays" [II 279]), which are according to Long the two main characteristics of a sub-species (the orang-outang, or the black) or sub-class (the servant), neither of which is fully civilized, fully rational, or fully white. I discuss the representation of the white creole more fully in Chapter Three.

[5] For example, when a white woman marries a black man, she often loses her "place" in white society and becomes for all intents and purposes an honorary black. This idea will be explored further in Chapter Two.

assembly; nor judges in any of the courts, nor in the public offices, nor jurymen" (Long II 320). In other words, an ex-slave can be given, by an act of assembly, the status of an unpropertied white or *petit blanc* and can function as white within the community. Edward Kamau Brathwaite has uncovered some civil documents that show that in Jamaica these privileged free blacks (most of whom were "coloured" rather than "black") occasionally married poor white women, whose identity as "white" is already compromised by their economic status.[6] Although, as I state in the Introduction, the "natural" link between race and colour is acknowledged by Long and will soon become a dominant concern in the nineteenth century, these textual examples indicate that racial identities are more fluid in the eighteenth century than many late twentieth century readers might assume, and that they are frequently determined by the adherence to or appropriation of middle-class civilities.

In this chapter I analyze travel accounts written by Janet Schaw (writing from 1774 to 1776) and Mrs Carmichael (writing circa 1830). The ways in which issues of gender, race and colonialism intersect and occasionally collide in these texts make up the subject of this chapter. In commenting on Schaw's text I emphasize how both the discourses of sensibility and of the white, female, middle-class body support colonial and gender ideologies, but also how Schaw attempts to contest gender ideologies through a re-reading of white privilege. In Carmichael's text I pursue the idea of how that so-called exclusively masculine privilege of looking-as-possessing is both

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[6] Brathwaite does not look at the records for all parishes within Jamaica. He takes the parish of St. Elizabeth as an example, and cites evidence that between 1780 and 1815, fourteen inter-racial marriages were noted in the church records. Six marriages were of white men to coloured women, and eight were of white women to coloured men.

contested and supported by the female imperial eye, and also how Carmichael's discourse of colonial mimicry undermines her claim to a stable, self-identical, natural white identity. In both texts, colonial discourse is represented as fractured, at once asserting its absolute authority (based upon racial and class privilege) and, through textual ambivalence, exposing how contingent and compromised is that authority.

Janet Schaw's *Journal*

In her 1921 introduction to Janet Schaw's *Journal of a Lady of Quality* (1774 to 1776), Evangeline Walker Andrews compares the discovery of an unknown manuscript with that of an unknown land:

> The finding of an interesting manuscript is much like the sighting of an unexpected island by a mariner sailing in strange seas, for the exploration of either, whatever may be the ultimate value of the discovery, affords all the excitement that accompanies an adventure into the unknown. (1)

Janet Schaw's manuscript was stumbled upon accidentally in search for other material, just as the West Indies were stumbled upon by Columbus in his search for the East Indies. Andrews makes much of this felicitous error, referring to the Journal as a buried "treasure" and hastening to apprise the reader of the "genuineness" of it (1). Already the "ultimate value of the discovery" is asserted – it is genuine, not false, treasure – and as such will enrich the reader who takes the time to replay the scene of discovery that engaged Columbus and the editors of this text alike.

What is interesting in this neo-imperialist scene of discovery however is the gendering of this treasure and its producer. Andrews simultaneously acknowledges the restrictions that exist in piecing together the biographical

details of many women's lives, and at the same time restricts the scope of the *Journal* itself through her assumptions about gender. Andrews writes, after recounting the "meagre facts of the life of our charming Lady of Quality":

> Had she, like her brother Alexander or her relative John Rutherford, held positions of public trust, or, like her brother Robert and the Rutherford children, owned land on the Cape Fear, public records would have been available for her history as they have been for the history of these others; but she, the most important person connected with the *Journal*, remains for the most part unrecorded. Nor is the elusive lady to be caught anywhere it seems, for as far as we know she did not marry; and having made her contribution to history and letter, she passes on – what women but will envy her! – without date, ageless, just Janet Schaw, the author of "The Journal of a Lady of Quality." (10-11)

While Andrews emphasizes the unrecorded nature of so many women's lives, she also suggests that Schaw, a capricious figure, is partly responsible for her own historical erasure, and that she is a truly "feminine" woman (even though she did not marry) because she has managed to disguise her age for all time. Throughout the Introduction, the language that Andrews uses to describe Schaw keeps her in her "womanly" place. Schaw is "charming," "genial," "sociable," "the candid, warm-hearted, quick-witted woman of the world" (14), while Schaw's brother Alexander is, by contrast, "the educated, intelligent man of affairs, prompt in action, impatient of brutality and injustice, resourceful in emergencies both on land and at sea" (14). Janet is quick-witted, Alexander is intelligent; Janet is warm-hearted, Alexander is impatient of brutality and injustice. Janet demonstrates throughout her *Journal* that she is well-read in literature and philosophy,

that she knows at least three languages, and that at one point she has accurately calculated during the sea journey how far from land the ship is (the captain of the ship loses a bet with her on the subject). It is also interesting to note that on the seven week voyage from Scotland to Antigua, Janet is never sea-sick while Alexander is so ill he is not as prompt in action or resourceful as Andrews would have us believe.

But the point is not just that "facts" from the *Journal* do not support Andrews' reading of the differences between brother and sister. Also of interest is Andrews' need to produce Schaw as a conventionally feminine writer and traveler with conventionally feminine attributes – that is, a traveler who is domestic and not adventurous, and who is genteel and somehow therefore not a colonizing subject. It is Alexander who acts in the realm of politics (his concern with justice) and Janet who passively commands the personal realm (her warm-heartedness). Andrews' reading is a support to the traditional split between domesticity and adventure, stasis and movement, femininity and masculinity. She does not read Schaw as a conflicted site of domestic, racial and class ideologies, nor does she consider the ways in which Schaw's so-called feminine approach to her material – her emphasis on sensibility – is as much a bourgeois form of authority as the more traditionally masculine scientific treatises of the eighteenth century (Pratt 5).[7] Andrews depoliticizes the act of writing, the mode of writing, and the manner of writing a colonial self, which is not coincidentally a self that is middle-class, female, and white.

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[7] And it is not an exclusively "feminine" attribute or mode of expression, as Andrews' reading of Schaw's *Journal* seems to suggest. The susceptibility to the sorrows of others was a literary staple (or posture) of both male and female writers in the eighteenth century. The "Man of Feeling" was a familiar figure to the eighteenth century reader, and a figure who anticipated the romantic poets.

Despite what Batten says about the eighteenth century travel account, Schaw constructs her *Journal* as a narrative sequence with a cast of recognizable (and sometimes stock) characters. Schaw travels to Antigua and St. Christopher from Scotland in the company of "the best of brothers" (21) and three children of John Rutherford, a family friend who lives in North Carolina. Schaw's primary role is as escort of the children, who are returning home after being educated abroad, and presumably her ticket and expenses are being paid for by John Rutherford. Schaw, a respectable middle-class woman, is, in effect, a paid travel companion for two small boys, John and Billy, and a young woman, Fanny. Unlike the dominant model of the male traveler who traveled for the sake of it (for leisure, to gather "experience," to see the world), the female traveler wrote about her travels within a number of constraints that tended not to inhibit male travelers to the same degree (Mills 21). Her very gender and the purpose of her journey placed restrictions on her movement. Schaw is not "free" to roam where she will. She must maintain her role as escort and in addition to that restriction is subject to the desires of her brother Alexander, whom she accompanies or does not accompany as he requests. Schaw is dependent upon her brother for maintenance and perhaps upon similar services to the one she is executing for John Rutherford, since she could not have inherited much money, if any, from her father. Schaw's father, deceased two years before the journey in 1774, had been a supervisor of customs in Scotland, and then a collector of customs, then assistant in Scotland to the register-general in England (Schaw 107). His salary, though respectable, was not large. Schaw presumably accepts the responsibility of chaperoning the Rutherford children because Alexander, her "best of brothers," is to take up the position of searcher of customs in St. Christopher.

My reading of Schaw's text revolves around three distinct but inter-related concerns: the discourse of sensibility, the management of the white, middle-class, female body, and the adoption of a strategy of "counter-identification" in an attempt to contest creole gender ideologies. I have chosen these three areas because I think that they meaningfully illustrate the ideological and discursive workings of whiteness as a signifier. This is not to say, however, that this signifier within Schaw's work is unified or consistent. There are a number of ways, discussed below, that Schaw contradicts herself or undermines her own construction as a "white" colonial woman with the attendant restrictions and privileges. In fact, Schaw anticipates the changeable nature of her text and her self when, early in the *Journal*, she writes: "My opinions and descriptions will depend on the health and humour of the Moment, in which I write; from which cause my Sentiments will often appear to differ on the same subject" (20). In the Introduction I state that a colonial attitude does not manifest itself in a monolithic system of representation. Schaw herself acknowledges this fact in the opening pages of the *Journal*.

Sensibility and Colonial Politics

Markman Ellis argues that it is "not possible to legislate between the closely allied terms 'sensibility' and 'sentimental' in the mid eighteenth century" (7-8), explaining that the two terms "do not share a single unitary meaning, but rather, they amalgamate and mix freely a large number of varied discourses" (8). Throughout this section, I use both terms to refer to "the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering" (Todd 7) – or, to be more precise, the representation of that faculty – that is frequently to be found in mid and late

eighteenth century texts, such as Shaw's *Journal*. Schaw writes within the mode of sensibility, which can be thought of as an "aesthetics of moral sensitivity" (Markley 211) or a "moral and physical susceptibility" (Todd 8). In other words, fine or intense feeling is perceived as, or represented to be, allied with a strong moral sense: he or she who has a superior capacity for feeling has also a superior moral capacity.

The writer of sensibility does not merely seek to represent, she also seeks to elicit the emotions of the reader in order to allow the reader to develop, and acknowledge, her own superior moral potential. But both the capacity to feel, and the highly developed morality that attends feeling, are marked by gender and class. Ellis describes the discourse of sensibility as a "distinctly feminine field of knowledge, which, although available to both men and women, was particularly associated with the behaviour and experience of women" (24). The "Man of Feeling," for example, is a "feminized" man, marked by female-coded behaviours, such as sighing, weeping, loss of (or loss of control of) language, body, and mind, as a result of the overwhelming power of emotion. There is some debate in eighteenth century studies as to whether the emergence of large numbers of women writers in the eighteenth century encouraged the development of this discourse, or whether the development of this discourse opened the doors for women writers. Whatever the case, the rise of sensibility and the rise of the female writer as a dominant literary figure (and the female reader as a dominant consumer) are coterminous. Also closely linked to the "new culture of sentimentalism" (Ellis 5) are "narrowly conservative and essentialist views of class relations" (Markley 212). As will be seen in Schaw's *Journal*, the ideology of sensibility is a middle-class ideology. Not only is sensibility, as a literary movement and a capacity for feeling, largely

the privilege of the middle-class, it is also a politics of representation that refuses to acknowledge its own operations of power. It is not, however, an apolitical discourse, for that very act of refusal is a political act. Further, scenes of sensibility in Schaw's text are always, if obliquely, involved in the politics of race, class, gender and colonialism.

Schaw describes herself as "a sensible mind" (21) and her susceptibility to tender feeling is established early in the narrative. Just a few days into the seven week voyage, Schaw discovers to her dismay that her little group is not the only one aboard the *Jamaica Packet* with passenger status. While they had been promised by the owner of the vessel that they would be traveling alone, Schaw finds herself confronted by "a Cargo of Dean Swift's Yahoos" and exclaims that "never did my eyes behold so wretched, so disgusting a sight" (28). Schaw discovers that they are a group of Scots emigrants smuggled aboard by the owner for a healthy profit. She resolves "no more to encounter these wretched human beings" (30) and turns back to her writing. But when Schaw learns that these emigrants were forced from their homes by a greedy landlord, and suffered terrible hardship before selling themselves as indentured servants to the owner of the ship in return for their passage to the West Indies, she suddenly sees them through "a feeling heart" (33). Evidence of the emigrants' suffering ignites Schaw's tender feeling, expressed in an apostrophe to the greedy landlord:[8]

> Hard-hearted, little Tyrant of yonder rough domains, could you have remained unmoved, had you beheld the victims of your avarice, as I

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[8] The discourse of sensibility makes habitual use of highly formulaic, even clichéd, modes of expression. Janet Todd describes the vocabulary of sensibility as "conventional, repetitive, mannered, and overcharged," and also "hyperbolic" (5). The apostrophe, a turning away from present characters to address an absent figure, is a highly conventional form and lends itself to extremes of expression. For an example of repetition, Schaw never refers to her brother Alexander by name, but rather hyperbolically as "the best of Brothers" (21).

> have done, with souls free from guilt, yet suffering all the pangs of banished villains; oh! had you seen them, their hands clasped in silent and unutterable anguish, their streaming eyes raised to heaven in mute ejaculations, calling down blessings, and pouring the last benedictions of a broken heart on the dear soil that gave them being; perhaps even a prayer for the cruel Author of all their woes mixed in this pious moment. (34)

While Schaw feels a bond with the emigrants based on a shared capacity for intense feeling, a clear distinction is drawn between the sensible emigrants and the sensible Schaw, for it is only Schaw who can articulate the value of this portrait of silent, unutterable, mute feeling. It is, of course, an eighteenth century convention to become so overwhelmed with feeling that loss of language is present or immanent, but for the writer language cannot be lost for long. In fact, it is never truly lost because what is substituted for the exact description of the response to beauty or misery "beyond words" is the description of the lack of language itself or markers, such as asterisks and dashes, that speak of this lack. On arriving in Antigua, Schaw announces that "it is out of my power to paint the beauty and the Novelty of the scene" (74), and then of course does precisely that for the next few pages.

Schaw's aestheticization of misery is a common rhetorical strategy in her *Journal*. In order to encourage the reader to join in her empathetic project, she picks from the large number of emigrants one figure upon whom the reader's eye may settle and the imagination may dwell:

> In this general group of Sorrow, there was one figure that more particularly engaged my attention. It was that of a female, who supported with one arm, an Infant about a month old, which she

> suckled at her breast; her head rested on the other, and her hand shaded her face, while the tears that streamed from under it bedewed her breast and the face of the Infant, who was endeavouring to draw a scanty nourishment from it. At her knee hung a little Cherub about two years old, who looked smiling up into her face, as if courting her notice, and endeavouring to draw her from her melancholy Reflexions; while a most beautiful girl about eight years old stood by, and wept at the sight of her Mother's tears. (35)

One of the most notable elements of this Virgin With Children tableau is again the silence of the aestheticized object. The balance of the portrait is also remarkable – Mrs. Lawson (for so we learn she is called) holds her baby in one hand, and her head in the other. Her tears are balanced by those of the eight year old girl, while the two year old offers emotional and visual contrast through laughter. The mother's body is bent down; the laughing child looks up. The Yahoos "have been transformed into a Company of the most respectable sufferers" (36), respectable, in fact, *because* of their suffering, because of a demonstration of intense feeling. Fine feeling links Schaw to the fate of working class in this scene, although the difference between them is also striking. The silent spectacle of suffering becomes the subject of Schaw's narrative. In a sense, Schaw owns, through representation, Mrs. Lawson's suffering in a way that Mrs. Lawson herself does not. Mrs. Lawson cannot represent herself; she must be represented. The reader is not moved by Mrs. Lawson's suffering, but rather by Schaw's highly mannered artistic rendering of the scene. Further, the reader is not moved by the inequities of the class system. As Anne Shea remarks, "sentimentality assuages and maintains social relations, and as such is antithetical to revolutionary change" (27). In this case, it is the figure of

Mrs. Lawson as an individual that is sentimentalized and divested of context and therefore political analysis. The villain in the passage is not the class system but rather a single tyrant; the subject of the portrait is not class oppression but rather the plight of one woman. Robert Markley similarly argues that the discourse of sensibility depends upon the suppression of the "reader's recognition of the social and economic inequalities upon which this discourse of seemingly transcendent virtue is based" (211), and that it defuses "class conflict by sentimentalizing its victims" (212). It is a discourse that does not seek to understand or alter the socio-economic injustices that it takes as its subject.

I have suggested one way in which the rhetoric of sensibility is in Schaw's text marked by class. Mrs. Lawson is transformed by the rules of the game from an historical subject to an aesthetic object that is mute, blind and immobile. When Mrs. Lawson sees Schaw watching her, she stands up and curtsies, and waits to be spoken to – again silent, again motionless. Schaw makes a note of Mrs. Lawson's "civility" (35) and then asks to be told her story. Schaw writes, "I wish to learn the history of this woman, which I will easily do" (36). Schaw does not reciprocate and tell Mrs. Lawson her own story; Mrs. Lawson is to serve Schaw, and not vice versa. Instead, Schaw tells her own story in her *Journal* which is destined for a literate, middle-class audience, and is therefore not accessible to working-class figures such as Mrs. Lawson. Civility is the only arena where reciprocity is the rule. Mrs. Lawson curtsies to Schaw, and Schaw "returned her civility" (35). Schaw continues to return it by emphasizing that it is her "duty and inclination to comfort" (36) those in need. She performs this duty by giving apples to the small Rutherford children to hand out to the emigrants, thus positioning herself as beneficent mistress of the ship and indicating her "natural"

(economically based) benevolent feelings to the reader. She does not, however, regard the emigrants as one undifferentiated mass of suffering and fine feeling. Schaw marks Mrs. Lawson as "superior to the rest of the company" (37) and therefore worthy of the portrait and of Schaw's attention to her particular story of woe. Intense feeling connects the two women of different classes, but "true" sensibility, which cannot be severed from representation or artistic rendering – from the apostrophe or the mannered vocabulary – belongs to Schaw and then, through her *Journal*, to her middle-class world.

David Spurr argues that when "the picturesque and the melodramatic are given prominence, they displace the historical dimension, isolating the story *as* story from the relations of political and economic power that provide a more meaningful context for understanding poverty" (48). While it is true that Schaw's apostrophe to the landlord does not provide much in the way of political or economic analysis – nor does it point to the manner in which Schaw herself is interpolated into the class system – I would argue in disagreement with Spurr that Schaw's use of the convention of sensibility does not remove her from relations of political and economic power. My argument is that the discourse of sensibility is a politicized discourse that indirectly says much about the relations of power within a social milieu inflected by class, gender and race. As Anne Shea observes, Schaw "engages in political arguments indirectly through the rhetoric of aesthetics and morality" (10). Schaw employs the discourse of sensibility to divide the right sort of people from the wrong sort, asserting that sensibility is not just an aesthetic capacity but also a moral and political category. Those who feel, or who are represented to feel, both tenderly and intensely, are the characters who occupy the moral high ground in Schaw's *Journal*.

For example, Colonel Martin, a prominent land-owner in Antigua, is a man whose capacity for feeling is directly equated by Schaw with his political leanings and moral qualities. Martin is the "revered father of Antigua" (103) whose "large troop of healthy Negroes ... cheerfully perform the labour imposed upon them," and in their treatment "they appear the subjects of a good prince, not the slaves of a planter" (104). Martin is a "good prince" not because of his advantageous economic position but because he is a man of feeling. He greets Schaw and her entourage (none of whom he has met before) "with the embraces of a fond father" (104), speaks feelingly of lost children, sighs aloud when he looks upon Fanny whom he addresses as "my child, my little darling" (106), and so on. Schaw romanticizes the character of this patriarch, but again this romanticization is not necessarily apolitical. Schaw employs and valorizes the rhetoric of sensibility in her portrait of Martin, and in so doing endorses his political objectives. One of those objectives is to refrain from any participation in the slave trade, although the trade in 1774 was still a legal business.[9] The effects of Martin's kindnesses toward his slaves is

> a daily increase of riches by the slaves born to him on his own plantation. He told me he had not bought in a slave for upwards of twenty years, and that he had the morning of our arrival got the return of the state of his plantations, on which there were no less than fifty two wenches who were pregnant. These slaves, born on the spot and used to the Climate, are by far the most valuable. . . . (104)

Schaw represents plantation society as a society "structured by liberty and reciprocal attachment, rather than violence, forced labour, and racial oppression" (Shea 1). Further, the argument here is that Martin's fine

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[9] It was not legally abolished by the British Parliament until 1808.

feeling is directly related to his success as a planter, and has therefore vastly contributed to his wealth. Schaw, through her avowed love of this revered father, endorses Martin's economic and political objectives without issuing a direct statement about the slave trade or the preferred manner of running a sugar estate. Throughout her *Journal*, Schaw speaks indirectly of political matters and marks her own political position through a discourse of sensibility.

While intensity of feeling might not be a uniquely middle- or upper-class experience (though Schaw is careful to suggest that such feeling is rare among labourers – Mrs. Lawson is an exception to her class), it is within the *Journal* a uniquely white attribute. Schaw clearly demonstrates that black West Indians are essentially divided from whites because blacks simply cannot feel with any kind of intensity. Of corporal punishment, Schaw comments:

> But however dreadful this must appear to a humane European, I will do the creoles the justice to say, they would be as averse to it as we are, could it be avoided, which has often been tried to no purpose. When one comes to be better acquainted with the nature of the Negroes, the horrour of it must wear off. It is the suffering of the human mind that constitutes the greatest misery of punishment, but with them it is merely corporeal. As to the brutes it inflicts no wounds on their mind, whose Natures seem made to bear it, and whose sufferings are not attended with shame or pain beyond the present moment. (127)

Unlike the white emigrants, who ruminate upon their unfortunate condition, the black slaves do not suffer. If the pain does not last beyond the moment, there can be no feeling mind said to exist in a state of mental hardship. Here the perceived lack of fine feeling in the slaves separates

them, as a race, from whites, and contributes to the production of an ideology of whiteness. Since whiteness as a discourse is parasitical upon ideas of blackness, a perceived lack of feeling in the slave produces the white subject as white, in inverse relation to blackness. Sensibility is a privilege of a white skin, and as such lends to the construction within the *Journal* of a white sense of self. The discourse of sensibility is directly related to the discursive workings of whiteness within the *Journal*.

For Schaw, the scopic sign of delicate feeling is a white skin, and this equation has direct, if somewhat paradoxical, political manifestations. Schaw urges the "humane European" to understand and accept the necessity of corporeal punishment and to, by extension, stifle or overcome any significant emotional response to this scene of brutality. In other words, the humane European, also a figure of sensibility, ought to feel nothing when confronted with this scene, because the blacks themselves feel nothing. Fine feeling can only be expended upon those who themselves can feel, such as the emigrants. In this scene, sensibility is not a requirement of the reader, and is not an appropriate response to the scene described. There are rules within the discourse of sensibility marked by colonialism, and those rules describe a discourse with political ends. Of course, the rules are contradictory: Colonel Martin, a man of fine feeling who does not whip his slaves, is a model of economic success, but when the slaves need whipping there can be no place for empathy, compassion or understanding, feelings that Martin exemplifies, simply because the slaves themselves lack these qualities. Schaw does not directly comment on her construction of a contradictory white identity, but she does seem to be bothered by her representation on some level. In words immediately following the appeal for a suppression of fine feeling (for where there is no

suffering there is no cruelty), Schaw offers this description of the slaves' work:

> When they are regularly ranged, each has a little basket, which he carries up the hill filled with the manure and returns with a load of canes to the Mill. They go up at a trot, and return at a gallop, and did you not know the cruel necessity of this alertness, you would believe them the merriest people in the world. (127-8)

Suddenly, the earlier portraits of happy labour on the part of the slaves are called into question. Could there even be a cruel necessity to the cheerfulness of Colonel Martin's slaves and "the love they bear him" (105)? Schaw finds herself in the difficult position of defending both Martin's delicate feeling and an apparent lack of feeling on the part of other slave-owners. And when she argues that a lack of feeling must prevail on the part of whites in regard to corporeal punishment, she implicitly establishes a basic connection, rather then opposition, between black and white. If the blacks do not feel, then neither should the whites. Hence, both races are united in the spectacle of punishment through their absence of "feeling." Schaw has inadvertently posited a similarity, and not a difference, between the races, undermining her sustained equation between whiteness and sensibility and her desire to construct whiteness as an inversion of blackness.

Despite this contradiction, however, Schaw continues to link sensibility and whiteness, for though whites may lack or even ought to lack feeling under specific circumstances, they still maintain the *capacity* for this fine feeling. Schaw's argument is that this capacity must be engaged only under certain circumstances. The circumstances themselves indicate the political dimension of sensibility, the presence or absence of which can conveniently

be read as an argument in favour of slavery and empire. And, both the presence and absence of sensibility under specific conditions contributes to the maintenance of a racial identity. Schaw deploys the seemingly apolitical discourse of sensibility to normalize slavery and to, as Anne Shea says in another context, naturalize the material and ideological distinctions between black and white (13). Schaw indirectly articulates one of the meanings of whiteness by isolating a cultural practice and literary convention – sensibility – which functions as a perceptual vantage of educated whites but which is also unnamed and rendered as natural. There is no treatise upon sensibility in Schaw's text, but as a dominant mode of expression it organizes Schaw's representation of race and empire. "Natural" superiority, and relations of both class and race domination, are communicated through a rhetoric of sensibility.

But there are also moments when Schaw suggests that the white working-class and the black slaves share characteristics that separate both groups from the white middle-class, and she comes close to making a case for the shared racial identity of both disenfranchised groups. For example, Schaw uses the word "wench" in reference to the black female slaves who reproduce so well for Colonel Martin. Wench is a common, if derogatory, term for a white rustic working-class woman or female servant, and is used to mark the class difference that exists between the writer (and reader) and the character. Schaw's use of this term renders slavery as a specific economic system invisible, suggesting that black women are working-class citizens rather than property. In fact, throughout her *Journal* Schaw rarely uses the word slave at all. In the following passage, Schaw's terminology further effaces the material reality of slavery from the West Indian economic scene:

> We met the Negroes in joyful troops on the way to town with their Merchandize. It was one of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. They were universally clad in white Muslin: the men in loose drawers and waistcoats, the women in jackets and petticoats; the men wore black caps, the women had handkerchiefs of gauze or silk, which they wore in the fashion of turbans. Both men and women carried neat white wicker-baskets on their heads, which they balanced as our Milk maids do their pails. (107-8)

The market is populated by Negroes, men, women, and milk-maids, but never slaves. Anne Shea offers an extended reading of this scene, observing that Schaw lyricizes the market scene by drawing on pastoral language (often employed by the elite to write the lower classes), and that she "masks slave women as labourers" and "abstracts them into artful images" (17). I agree with Shea that obscuring labour obscures the material conditions of slavery, and this is consistent with my earlier reading of Schaw as supporting, and not condemning, the class system that produces Mrs. Lawson's misery and in turn produces Schaw's artful portrait. I would add, however, that this market day scene also establishes Schaw's desire to draw connections between the white working poor and the black slaves. Both are romanticized and distanced from the reader through aesthetic conventions such as the tableau or the pastoral panorama, and these conventions should be recognized as forms of white middle-class authority. Like Long, Schaw suggests that poor whites and blacks are a single racial type based on their lack of "white" values and attributes.

The White, Middle-Class Body

Speaking of political matters through an apparently apolitical discourse is a dominant mode of communication in Schaw's *Journal.* But there are subjects upon which Schaw speaks directly, subjects that would be considered the province of a woman writer and therefore approachable more directly than slavery or colonial politics and practices. These subjects are civility, duty, hygiene, clothing, and domestic order and, like everything in Schaw's *Journal,* they are tied to ideas about race, class and gender. In short, the presence of these qualities mark a subject as white and middle-class, and their absence marks the object against which the subject constructs itself. So, for example, no slave is civil, convinced of his or her own duty (to work for the master), clean, decently clothed or a member of an orderly domestic unit. These middle-class values are represented as white racial attributes rather than cultural or economic differences either adopted by or imposed upon the disadvantaged group. When Schaw describes the market scene, her language ("men" and "women") suggests that the slaves are free citizens who operate according to their own innate racial codes, rather than oppressed persons who struggle to maintain a cultural identity and who will adopt any number of "racial" habits to survive. Initially, the "Yahoos" were also of this lower order (dirty, poorly clothed, disordered) until they were redeemed by suffering, a sign of humanity and consequently of whiteness. Schaw frequently writes of the civility (also courtesy, decorum, manners and gentility) of the colonial and creole planter class, exclaiming during one visit to a plantation that with her hosts "every hour is rendered agreeable by new marks of civility, kindness and hospitality" (92). Summarizing her assessment of white West Indians, Schaw dwells upon "the numberless civilities we have received from every individual" (110).

Civility is not just a sign of class; it is a sign of race as well. With the exception of Mrs. Lawson, Schaw only uses this term to describe the "character" of the white West Indian. Her aim here is, again, political. Mrs. Lawson's civility elevates her from a common working-class figure into a superior subject worthy of portraiture, who offers an occasion for Schaw to demonstrate her empathy for less fortunate others but also her authority as a white, middle-class woman. In the case of the white West Indians, the civility angle argues in favour of a class of people often castigated in the press and in literature but with whom Schaw has close ties, as she has numerous Scottish acquaintances among the West Indians, and her brother Alexander is about to join this class of people and take up permanent residence in St. Christopher.

Anne Shea argues that the female middle-class body represents a particular coding of hygiene, clothes, sexuality, health and space (5). Susan Bordo explains that the body, "far from being some fundamentally stable, acultural constant" is constantly "in the grip . . . of cultural practices" (90). There is no "natural" body; bodies are, rather, "constituted by culture" (Bordo 90). Disciplinary practices, such as codes of hygiene, clothing and sexuality, represent part of the process by which the ideal feminine body is produced. Sandra Lee Bartky argues that these disciplinary practices are adopted by a "self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance," and that *she* is under surveillance in ways that *he* is not (81). Schaw's extensive comments upon bodily regulations indicate the degree to which she submits herself to relentless self-surveillance. She is careful to establish for the reader her own standards in bodily discipline. For example, when she complains on boarding the *Jamaica Packet* that "nothing can be less cleanly than our Cabin" and assures herself and her reader that once at

sea "all wou'd be neat during the voyage" (19), or when she explains the elaborate ritual involved in the ladies' daily bathing on the deck, during which time the deck must be cleared of all ship personnel (69), Schaw indicates the degree to which her sense of self – her femininity – is tied to notions of disciplined cleanliness. The emigrants do not have any bathing facilities, and their resulting physical uncleanness is confirmed by Schaw when she calls them Yahoos, before she reassesses their cultural value and elevates them to the status of "white" based on their suffering. Schaw also emphasizes clothing rituals and habits of dress, which are an extension of notions of hygiene. Proper hygiene and proper dress designate the proper body, so Schaw is careful to note, for example, that once when land is sighted after retirement to their bedroom, the ladies "presently slipt on our wrapping gowns and with great joy went on deck" (60). The propriety of this act is seen especially when, later in the *Journal*, Schaw comments that the "black women, wear little or no clothing, nothing on their bodies, and they are hardly prevailed on to wear a petticoat" (87). This cultural difference is represented as a racial characteristic, as though it is a racial fact that "the black woman" is incapable of maintaining her body as a private space. As a result of this disorderly public display she loses, as Anne Shea puts it, her "status as Woman with a complex interior self" (6). The middle-class body, which is also a white body, is private (hidden beneath clothes), clean and well-ordered, and as a natural consequence its acceptable social milieu is also a private one of order and cleanliness. The white, middle-class woman's body belongs in domestic spaces.

The structure of Schaw's travel is that of the social visitation, and during each visitation Schaw comments upon the domestic orderliness of the household. Schaw's landscapes, described at length, are for the most part

interiors or interior views of the outdoors. Her science is a domestic science, just as her landscapes are domestic landscapes:

> We have had a sound sleep in an excellent bed chamber, in which were two beds covered with thin lawn curtains, which are here called musquetoe Nets, but we found it so cool, that we occupied but one bed. A single very fine Holland sheet was all our covering. . . . My bed-chamber, to render it more airy, has a door which opens into a parterre of flowers, that glow with colours, which only the western sun is able to raise into such richness, while every breeze is fragrant with perfumes that mock the poor imitations to be produced by art. . . . This hall and everything in it is superbly fine; the roof lofty and ornamented in a high degree. It is between fifty and sixty feet long, has eight windows and three door all glazed; it is finished in mahogany very well wrought, and the panels finished in with mirrors. . . . (86, 90, 124)

It is interesting to note that while Schaw occasionally uses the plural pronoun "we" in her descriptions, she rarely names who are her companions and never includes their comments, conversation or observations. The reader is often faced with a "we" and no subjects with which to affix the pronoun – and searching back a few pages does not answer, for Schaw has never, during one visit or another, explained in whose company she has traveled. The effect is one of solitude or privacy, although Schaw is invariably in "reality" situated within a largely populated social scene. Mary Louise Pratt comments on the absence of family figures or friends in the description of interiors in other women's travel accounts, suggesting that the writer transforms a busy domestic scene into "a private place in which the lone subjectivity collects itself" (159). Pratt also argues that "the predictable fact that domestic settings have a much more

prominent presence in the women's travel accounts than in the men's . . . is a matter not just of differing spheres of interest or expertise, then, but of modes of constituting knowledge and subjectivity," because if "the men's job was to collect and possess everything else, these women travelers sought first and foremost to collect and possess themselves" (159-60). I would qualify this observation by adding that Schaw collects *knowledge* about herself as a way of possessing herself. Schaw's emphases on hygiene, on clothing, on domestic spaces, and so on, produce the knowledge that she is a white, middle-class colonial woman with the attendant privileges. This is the "inclusive history" (Birkett 19) that Schaw discovers or has reaffirmed in the West Indies, where her status as "white" is much more meaningful than it is in Scotland.

Counter-Identification: Schaw as a "rebel to custom"

Thus far I have mainly discussed the means by which Schaw has negotiated what Stoler calls the "problematic political semantics of whiteness" (98), while at the same time addressing the conflicting demands of discourses of femininity. But in addition to her perhaps conflicted support of colonial ideology in the form of a self-effacing politics of sensibility, and her support of traditional gender politics in her emphasis on the management of the white female body, Schaw also constructs herself as a female colonial "rebel" to feminine creole "custom" (81). When Schaw first arrives in Antigua, she describes the local habits of the creole ladies:

> I observed the young ladies drank nothing but Lime-juice and water. They told me it was all the women drank in general. Our good landlady strongly advised us not to follow so bad an example – that Madeira and water would do no body harm, and that it was owing to their method of

> living, that they were such spiritless and indolent creatures. The ladies smiling replied that the men indeed said so, but it was custom and every body did it in spite of the advices they were daily getting. What a tyrant is custom in every part of the world. . . . I was resolved to shew I was to be a rebel to a custom that did not appear founded on reason. . . . (80-1)

It is interesting that Schaw has the Landlady pronounce the creole ladies to be "spiritless and indolent," and that this assertion is also attributed to the creole men. Nowhere in the *Journal* does Schaw criticize the habits or appearances of creole ladies, describing them rather as the "most amiable creatures in the world," as "modest, genteel, reserved, and temperate" (113), and with skin "pure as the lily" (114). But Schaw does indirectly suggest that their amiability lacks spirit, and their reservation verges on indolence. The custom that Schaw rebels against is a creole custom supported by neither Scots emigrants (the Landlady) nor colonial/creole men. Through her rebellion, Schaw establishes her identity as colonial, and also adopts a masculine code. All this happens in the name of "reason," which is generally understood as the antithesis of sensibility and even "femininity," and underscores Schaw's ability to move between different discourses depending upon her purpose.

Schaw's "rebellion" here can be read as a critique of creole femininity and a support of colonial manners and male custom. As such, it does not represent a coherent attack on either gendered or colonial social identities. Schaw can maintain her position as a "lady of quality" and still buck creole custom. But there is another moment in her *Journal* that complicates Schaw's production of herself as a gendered white colonial subject against a background of white and black creole femininity. In fact, Schaw sets up both Fanny Rutherford and the creole ladies as foils to her own deviant version

of colonial femininity. Fanny, who has been described during the sea journey as "Alabaster, so white, so cold, and so patient" (30), and who on land is by the creole ladies "prevailed on to wear a mask" (114) to protect her whiteness, offers a contrast to Schaw, who writes, "I always set my face to the weather. . . . I hope you have no quarrel at brown beauty" (115). There are a number of interesting issues raised by these remarks. The creole emphasis upon literal whiteness suggests an anxiety regarding racial purity – an anxiety felt throughout the colonies where miscegenation is common and "brown" offspring numerous.[10] Schaw lends a supportive voice to the creole concern with genealogy when she describes the ladies' skin as "pure as the lily," and at no other place in the text is brownness praised or a claim for brownness made by Schaw. In fact, only three pages before her reference to her own brownness, Schaw refers to "mulattoes" as a "spurious and degenerate breed" (112). In Schaw's text, literal colour sometimes does not correlate with racial characteristics, and Schaw, as a visiting colonial, is not under any pressure to establish through the purity of her skin tone her racial identity.

There is another brown beauty in Schaw's text, a "mulatto girl not above five years old" whom Schaw's friend Lady Isabella "retains as a pet" (124). Schaw writes, "[t]his brown beauty was dressed out like an infant Sultana, and is a fine contrast to the delicate complexion of her Lady" (124). In calling herself a "brown beauty," Schaw identifies herself with this little girl, perhaps because she sees her own liberties mirrored in the freedoms with

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[10] Lady Nugent makes several references to the "brown ladies," daughters of wealthy and prominent West Indian men and slave women, whom she entertained in her private quarters (65, 66, 69, 78). While she could not invite them to public functions at King's House, or meet them publicly during her tour of Jamaica, she was fully aware of her duty as Governor's wife to make time for these ladies, all of whom lived "well" and would inherit substantial sums of money upon their fathers' deaths.

which this particular little girl is indulged. Anne Shea argues that this "appropriation of the position of the cultural Other" allowed English women traveling in the colonies to "occupy the position of the Other woman to create their own liberation" (9). But Schaw does not adopt the position of the other *woman*, who is in the *Journal* a figure of licentiousness, degeneracy and insolence (112), but rather of the five year-old mulatta "pet" who is indulged and exoticized. Sara Mills describes this phenomenon as "counter-identity," a form of identity which rejects the terms of subjectivity which have been proposed (16). Not only does Schaw reject what whiteness signifies in a creole context (racial purity and indolence) without accepting what blackness signifies (degeneracy), she appropriates the subject position of a child whose foibles are excused, whose desires are indulged, and whose sexual innocence is unquestioned. This last point is important, for if the source of Schaw's liberation is her brown body, she come dangerously close to forming an alliance with those other brown bodies who are coded as licentious. In order to adopt the position of the Other, but represent her body as appropriately regulated (i.e., white), Schaw designates the little girl as her Other, as her liberating identity. In so doing, she avoids making herself symbolically available to the white men who have sexual access to their pure white creole wives, and who also engage in "unnatural amours" (112) with coloured women.

While it may seem problematic to read the symbolic infantalization of a woman's body as liberating, Schaw achieves through this rhetorical move the positioning of her body outside the sexual economy of the colonies, and is therefore free of the restrictions that that economy demands. The appropriation and misrepresentation of what it means to be "brown" in the West Indies is a part of this semantic move, as is the paradox that this

brown identity shores up Schaw's ideological position as a white colonial woman. Toni Morrison asks, "in what ways does the imaginative encounter with Africanism enable white writers to think about themselves?" (51). Schaw here uses the mulatta girl as a "surrogate and enabler" (Morrison 51) and thereby demonstrates what Morrison calls the "parasitical nature of white freedom" (57). White freedom is dependent upon a subjugated Other who is an "ideological construct designed to uphold and to consolidate imperialist definitions of selfhood" (Fuss 22-3). Schaw's construction of herself as a free white/brown subject depends upon the subjugation and lack of freedom of the black and brown "background" to her story. Schaw is free of the restrictions placed upon both white and black femininity as she represents them within her text. Her brownness represents her desire to escape both creole convention and masculine control, even though the historical reality of a brown skin contradicts Schaw's assertion of what a brown identity enables.

Schaw's flaunting of creole codes of femininity[11] may not represent a sustained challenge to a gendered creole identity, but her adoption of a subject position that marks her body as outside the province of male sexual control can be read as a challenge to that identity. Through a strategy of counter-identification, Schaw, while sustaining the system of regulations that manage the white, middle-class, female body, also rebels against the accepted social custom that a woman's body is ultimately regulated by the demands of male sexual desire and laws of property-ownership. Through the adoption of a "rebellious" brown identity, Schaw resists gender ideology but reinscribes colonial ideology. Her freedom is enabled by exploitative

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[11] She also takes short but physically demanding walks around town and upon her various hosts' properties, and is supported in her endeavours by the men but opposed by the creole women (83, 125).

economic exchange and structural domination. Her critique of and escape from conventions of creole femininity is dependent upon the support of colonial power.

Mrs Carmichael's *Domestic Manners*

Mrs Carmichael's *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833) greatly differs from Schaw's *Journal* both in structure and in content. Whereas Schaw tells the story of her voyage and sojourn in the West Indies through the use of chronology, character and cause-effect events, Carmichael depends upon a classificatory structure and almost entirely avoids a narrative approach to her subject. Of a total of twenty-five chapters, only one full chapter (the first) and fragments of two other chapters (the fourteenth and twenty-fifth) are rendered in narrative style. She also depends heavily upon anecdote (a kind of mini-narrative) and "dialogue" (more on this later) to support her classifications. The rest of the text is comprised of chapters devoted to the description and analysis of subjects, such as "A West India Ball," "Creole Children," "Negro Dress," "Negro Food," and so on. In this respect, Carmichael belongs to a long tradition of travel writing devoted to the description (frequently in minute detail) of foreign lands, whose aim is to instruct and please a reading audience. Carmichael's aim is almost entirely didactic – her purpose is to tell the "truth" about the West Indies and in so doing defend the much maligned West Indian planter, who is "more calumniated" (I 16) than any other class of men. Carmichael also provides long and detailed descriptions of exotic West Indian foods, plants, topography, and domestic social manners.

In her overall structure, Carmichael's text approximates Edward Long's more than Janet Schaw's, since Long also divides his two-volume work into sections such as "Freed Blacks and Mulattoes" and "Creole Slaves." Like Long, Carmichael writes an explicit and spirited defense of the colonial world,[12] frequently referring to the "misconceptions" and "errors in judgement" (I 53, I 54) of the general British public. Those errors are also attributed to female abolitionists whose "delicate sensibility has been so much affected by the bare name of West India slavery," but who would alter their political beliefs "had they found themselves placed upon a wild West Indian estate . . . watching over a young family . . . surrounded by domestic slaves" (I 58). Not that Carmichael sees herself as penning a defense of slavery. While she offers dozens of anecdotes to support her contention that commissioners of inquiry, sent to the colonies to examine West Indian affairs, caused more problems between slave and master than there had ever been in previous history, Carmichael explains that

> . . . it is not my intention to reprobate inquiry, still less, to defend slavery. But I could not be silent as to the unfortunate results of the injudicious harangues made in parliament from time to time, and the support given to impracticable theories – dangerous alike to the slave and the colonist – on the part of the Society for the Suppression of Slavery. Deeply have the colonies suffered from the promulgation of wrong-headed plans, and

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[12] There are also a number of subjects upon which Long and Carmichael disagree. To offer but one example, Carmichael is insistent that "excess and luxury" is "unknown among planters" (I 18), and that therefore sexual impropriety (that is, white men's access to black women's bodies) is also unknown among colonial men of good economic standing. Only "the lower orders of white people" consort with blacks and thereby become "white negroe(s)" (I 59). It is interesting here that, as in Schaw's account, whites lose their status as whites and become "negroes" when they fail to uphold middle-class values, which indicates again the interrelatedness of discourses of race and class.

> from the intemperate zeal and mistaken kindness of the abolitionists. (I 249-50)

Carmichael seeks to oppose "intemperate zeal" with her own rational analysis and objective presentation of facts, the "results of five years' experience and observation in St. Vincent and Trinidad" (I 14). Carmichael's own objectivity, based upon actual experience, is the oft-repeated refrain of her work. She frequently reminds the reader that no one who has not "personally experienced and witnessed" (I 26) life in the West Indies can understand slavery, the black mind, or the white colonial struggle (with the abolitionists and with the blacks) for a decent and moral West Indian society. In fact, Carmichael sets herself up as a surrogate of sorts for the reader when she emphasizes her own past prejudices and errors in judgement which she held before a "long residence" led to a "juster conclusion" (I 55) regarding colonial life. Carmichael frequently refers to her previous lack of knowledge of the "real state of Negro civilization" (I 53), for example, and then seeks to educate and correct the reader, as she herself was corrected, through "very minute inquiry" (II 19). Carmichael promises to record only "facts, to the truth of which I pledge myself" (II 23), and through this method the reader is encouraged to adopt a rational understanding of West Indian affairs. The aim is to position the reader as "eye-witness" (I 323) to the real West Indies, and the effect is very different from Schaw's emphasis upon immediate feeling and the humour of the moment. Of course, by the 1830s, when much of Carmichael's text was written, sensibility as a form of expression was no longer fashionable. Carmichael emphasizes that her approach is based upon observation and experience, and thus allies herself with the scientific discourses of the

nineteenth century that will produce the racial genealogies and typologies discussed in the Introduction.

Although there are some obvious differences, I want also briefly to draw out some preliminary parallels between the works of Schaw and Carmichael. In both texts, the construction of white femininity plays what Vron Ware in another context calls "a pivotal role in negotiating and maintaining concepts of racial and cultural difference" (4). When, for example, Carmichael asks the female abolitionist to imagine herself on a plantation populated by black slaves, or when she constructs a scenario where a planter is off on military duty and his wife is therefore "surrounded on all sides by negroes" (I 57), she is not constructing an exclusively female reading audience so much as she is holding up the threat of white female rape, and the black male rapist, to a middle-class white reading public. Vron Ware argues that in the Empire "gender played a crucial role in organizing ideas of 'race' and 'civilization'" (37), and that "protecting the virtue of white women was the pretext for instituting draconian measures" (38) against non-white populations. Carmichael frequently, if obliquely, refers to her own fear of sexual or other violent assault in her scenarios of the lone white female, in her descriptions of the "savage" and "licentious" nature of the blacks, in her assertion that black men prefer white wives (II 178), and in her horror of cannibalism (II 171-2). While Schaw does not refer to fears of sexual assault or lack of "personal security" (II 334) to the extent that Carmichael does, in both texts the concern – even obsession – with unclothed bodies and unregulated sexuality marks a shared ideological territory. Carmichael writes frequently and at length on the subject of clothed and unclothed bodies. She asserts that her own slaves are well-dressed (I 5), that all slaves are "abundantly supplied by their masters" (I 84)

with cloth, and that therefore any state of ill-dress or nudity on the part of the blacks is a "disgusting" (I 10) sign of savagery. Carmichael's own body is extremely well-regulated, and the reader is frequently offered a description of the suitable dress for every social occasion or recreational activity. As in Schaw's text, Carmichael's imperialist adventure tale reveals how whiteness as a discourse is constructed through and intersects with discourses of femininity and colonialism.

Carmichael's travels in the West Indies are also similar to Schaw's, in that Carmichael's movements are, like those of the travelers studied by Pratt, "emplotted in a centripetal fashion around places of residence" (157). She visits neighbouring plantations or, when in town, neighbouring houses and, as does Schaw, differentiates herself from the creole women through her mobility and their self-imposed restrictions upon movement. The spaces that she occupies are regulated, cultivated, domestic parks or interiors – the gardens, not the wildernesses, of the West Indies. For Carmichael, cultivated space is a marker of civility, and so part of her argument "not . . . to defend slavery" involves raising in the readers' minds the horrible spectre of uncultivated land, since blacks are by nature "idle" (II 270) and therefore would not work as free persons for wages (II 193-4). Motifs or signs of cultivation and of enclosure are dominant in Carmichael's text, in the form of gardens, plantations, and the island itself as a contained space. The figure of the house, so dominant in Schaw's and Carmichael's texts, is an insular space and as such a kind of island within the island, the ultimate figure of enclosure and control. The house is also represented as a feminine space (inhabited and managed by women), and as a white space, since blacks live behind or away from the house, and may only enter it as servants under the domestic authority of the white woman. Island discourse,

frequently reproduced in domestic contexts, is a "primary expression of coloniality" and of the "European ability to manage space through knowledge" (Lane 4, 10). The relationship between space (domestic, landscape) and discourses of race, class, gender and colonialism represents a dominant ideological project within Carmichael's *Domestic Manners*.

Island Discourse and the Imperial Eye

Dorothy F. Lane writes that the island as a figure in colonial discourse is a space that "awaits the arrival of the coloniser, and it then becomes the site for his reproduction, self-replication, and self-discovery" (14). The masculine pronoun is not generic, but specifically masculine: in Lane's argument, the coloniser is a "rational male who penetrates female space" (15) by way of "reason and science" (2). While Lane's theorizing of the function of island space is a useful paradigm for thinking about colonial strategies of management and control, the gendered nature of the paradigm reproduces masculinist readings of colonial history. Constructing the island as an ideological space, and mapping it (literally or figuratively) in order to claim ownership of that space, is not an exclusively masculine act of proprietorship or self-discovery, though it has, of course, been presented as such by male travelers and also by masculinist accounts of colonialism. The "imperial eye" is not necessarily a male eye, although it is an eye actively engaged in the imperialist activity of looking-as-possessing. The imperial eye belongs to the viewing subject who constructs herself as "the monarch of all I survey" (Pratt 201). This emphasis on the eye acknowledges the power and the ideology of the gaze – how looking can enter into the colonial economy, which is, as David Spurr observes, an economy of uneven exchange (14). The colonizer, like the voyeur, prefers

to look without being seen, whether the object of that gaze is the panoramic vista or the body of the colonized. Spurr links the ideology of the commanding view to scientific research, military intelligence and police surveillance, as well as to the more artistic activities of landscape painting and architectural design. And, like landscape painting and architectural design, the commanding view "offers aesthetic pleasure on one hand, information and authority on the other. . . . For the observer, sight confers power; for the observed, visibility is a trap" (15-16).

In the Brantlinger/Batten paradigm, the colonial woman is placed in the position of object upon whom political and historical forces work, and not as a subject who furthers the projects of imperialist exploration and colonialist regimes. She is also theorized as the object of the male gaze. Other colonial critics such as Lane argue that the white colonial male exercises his imperialist, masculine power to make his own all that is encompassed within his commanding view – land and labour, white wife and black mistress. But the commanding view as a device of colonialist discourse in general, and travel writing in particular, is not the exclusive province of the white male writer. Both Schaw and Carmichael incorporate into their travel accounts different versions of the commanding view, offering both aesthetic pleasure and information to the reader. Here are the first words of Carmichael's text:

> I beheld the West Indies for the first time when, at sun-rise, on the last day of December 1820, we anchored in the lonely Bay of Calliaqua, in the island of St. Vincent. I am not about to enlarge in the way of description; – man, rather than nature, is my object; but I may be permitted to say, that the scene which rose before me that morning with the sun, was of the most captivating kind. I saw a succession of small valleys, covered

> with canes and pasturage, intermingled with slight elevations in the fore-ground, upon which here and there a dwelling-house could be distinguished, while the prospect was terminated by mountain heaped upon mountain, in that wild confusion that told of those awful convulsions of nature to which these tropical regions have been subject. The sea, too, – such a sea as in the temperate latitudes is rarely seen, held the island like a gem in its pure bosom . . . . (3-4)

Carmichael's sweeping visual mastery of the scene imposes "spatial order from a fixed point of view" (Spurr 17) and establishes Carmichael as the monarch of all she surveys. Pratt identifies three strategies of this rhetorical convention: the landscape is first aestheticized, then it is invested with a density of meaning intended to convey its material and symbolic richness, and finally it is described so as to subordinate it to the power of the speaker (204). Carmichael orders the landscape in a manner that is pleasing to the eye (pasturage and dwellings in the fore and middle grounds, and mountains in the background – order recedes into chaos), and in doing so ties the story of colonization to the "natural" order of things and claims the territory under surveillance as her own. The tropical regions, wild and awful convulsions of nature, become tamed, beautiful and useful to humanity after colonization and cultivation. The same could be said, and indeed is frequently said by Carmichael, about the slaves, who are constructed as wild in Africa but tame, useful, and as a result sometimes even beautiful after transportation to, and creolization in, the Caribbean.

The commanding eye, the imperial eye, can be a feminine eye, through the appropriation of what has been traditionally assumed to be a masculine subject position: looking as possessing. But masculinity is not the only source of authority within colonialist discourse; whiteness confers authority

upon the female colonial eye. The white colonial woman orders the landscape (natural and human) and invests it with meaning, in part by the authority of her whiteness. This authority is obliquely present on the next page of Carmichael's text when she describes how her family, while still upon the ship at anchor, was "speedily visited by several of our own people, who came on board to see us" (5). The phrase "our own people" is often used to designate people of one's own race or class, but in this case Carmichael literally means the people that her family owns. "Our own people" is Carmichael's way of saying "our slaves" without having to refer explicitly to colour or economic relations, just as Schaw refers to slaves at the market as milk-maids. In referring to her slaves as "our people," Carmichael simultaneously effaces and privileges colour difference. She effaces it by eliminating any chromatic references, but calls it up through the possessive pronoun. Owning slaves is largely the privilege of free propertied whites. "Our own people" is a class and race inflected expression which seeks to render invisible, through the euphemistic language of the familial bond, its own power relations. I would also add that the plural form of the possessive – our – implicates the white reader in the racial politics of slavery. Carmichael suggests to such a reader that slavery is as natural as the familial bond, is a matter of reciprocal attachment rather than coercion, and invites the reader to claim her place as a white in the colonial order of things.

In this excerpt from Carmichael's text, whiteness functions as a perceptual vantage, a position of privilege not only assumed by the looker but confirmed by nature itself, which rises before her very gaze. It also functions to support the possessive pronoun and all that it implies about racial and economic advantage. I would also argue that these two textual

fragments speak from, and about, a gendered social identity. In the commanding view of St. Vincent, the land rises up before Mrs Carmichael's eyes, is terminated by convulsions, and then is held by the sea in its bosom. The sexual, and specifically heterosexual, energy in this portrait is striking. Carmichael reverses the male explorer's typical gendering of the island as feminine (to be penetrated, tamed, controlled) by rendering it not only as masculine but as an emblem of male sexual potency. Further, Carmichael's position as subject, rather then object, of the gaze contradicts and implicitly questions a number of assumptions about colonialist discourse, such as that within the colonial paradigm the landscape and the "natives" alike are feminized, or that the landscape is consistently represented as opening itself up to the male explorer in a posture of female sexual submission, asking to be penetrated and conquered. Carmichael, as monarch of all she surveys, is placed in an interesting position in relation to the masculinized island: female visual mastery and male sexual potency coexist in this commanding view.

While Carmichael is capable of producing a sexualized portrait that reverses, escapes or challenges masculinist constructions of possessing and penetrating, she also adopts the dominant discourse of looking in some panoramic descriptions. She notes, for example, from atop a hill looking down, that "a prospect of singular beauty opened before us" (I 43). This vocabulary of opening and unfolding (depth) is unlike the earlier emphasis upon vertical elevations (height), even though in the second more conventional, feminized description the prospect is, as in the first scene, layered with different textures and "terminated in the lofty mountain of St. Andrew" (I 44). Although the topography is similar, one difference between the two scenes that may account for the shift in gendering the landscape is

the construction of the looking subject. In the first, Carmichael is an "I," and in the second her pronoun is plural, "we" and "us." In both cases, Carmichael is in company, but the first view is presented as singular and the second as collective. Speaking as a collective figure, Carmichael loses her uniquely feminine eye as a source of colonial authority, as she does when she writes that "we" were met on the ship by "our own people." I have already indicated how this description effaces the material reality of slavery, but it also speaks to the material position of Carmichael herself. Carmichael always refers to the slaves as "our" rather than "my," for the simple reason that she does not own the slaves or the plantation or the capital gains produced by both. The plural pronoun points to Carmichael's economically subordinate position as planter's wife, and consequently when she speaks as a plural "we" she adopts a generically masculine speaking position. As an "I" Carmichael does not depict the island as a feminine space awaiting penetration, does not depend upon a masculine eye to confer authority, but rather finds the authority for visual mastery in her identity as white and colonial.

The commanding view, as "an originating gesture of colonization itself" (Spurr 16), is one rhetorical strategy in island discourse. Related to this strategy of domination and position of organizational privilege is the representation of foreign colonial space as domestic landscape. The Caribbean island is established as a reflection or repetition of that "original" island, England. In island discourse England becomes a kind of transcendental signified – *the* island – and therefore a site of absolute meaning and signification (Lane 12). Imitation is, of course, a form of flattery – the more the island is like "home" the better – so Carmichael pays a compliment to Trinidad, her second island residence, when she asserts

that one plantation "is a very English-looking place, and extremely beautiful," or that the "view at the ford of Tacariqua river, is decidedly English scenery" (II 110). Her insistence upon the "picturesque" quality of many of the panoramic scenes also speaks of the imitative nature of the island. Coetzee explains that landscape is "picturesque when it composes itself, or is composed by the viewer, in receding planes according to the Claudian scheme: a dark *coulisse* on one side shadowing the foreground; a middle plane with a large central feature such as a clump of trees" and a "plane of luminous distance" (39). Carmichael arranges her portrait of St. Vincent in the first pages of her text along these lines, and also repeats the formula on other occasions:

> The view from the house in front was, for a land view, very extensive: there was a good deal of cultivation, and beyond that a dark, thick forest, many parts of which I understood had never been trodden by the foot of man. The landscape terminated by the mountain of Tumana to the south-east: this mountain is generally the refuge of run-a-way negroes. (II 115)

Coetzee explains that by 1800 "the picturesque had ceased to be a living force in English aesthetic thought" (40), but that it continued to be in the early nineteenth century "in wide currency among educated people" (41). Carmichael's eye is certainly trained in this European tradition, noting wherever she finds "the most perfect style of picturesque beauty" (II 116).

The discovery of the picturesque is one method for asserting and placing value upon the imitative nature of the Caribbean island. The picturesque is also a form of appropriation, of "claiming the territory surveyed as the colonizer's own" (Spurr 28), or of asserting the European ability to manage space through (aesthetic) knowledge. As such, it enacts a "repeatable

celebration of the Empire's origin" (Lane 10). The assertion that Trinidadian topography is picturesque, "English-looking," and as a consequence extremely beautiful not only celebrates England as the origin of beauty and value and Trinidad as an excellent copy, but also celebrates imitation or mimicry itself as a colonial achievement. Homi Bhabha argues that "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (85). The discourse of mimicry "is a desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86). Carmichael marks the difference that is almost the same through the reference to Trinidadian land never "trodden by the foot of man," and to the mountain refuge for runaways. It is a copy of the English picturesque, but marked as a copy through these references to differences in the use made (or not made) of the land. In landscape passages, Caribbean topography functions as the Other that mimics the real Empire, but Carmichael's discourse of mimicry also extends to the Other that is white but not quite – the black object that mimics (and thereby signals its difference from) the white subject.

Mimicry: White Presence and Black Semblance

In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man," Homi Bhabha argues that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence and "stricken by an indeterminacy" (86). This indeterminacy is the result of the double articulation of mimicry, which is both "a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" and also "the sign of the inappropriate . . . a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both

'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers" (86). In other words, mimicry is both a strategy of colonial regulation and a threat to that regulation, because the site of the repetition with difference (for example, the "native") is simultaneously like (the same) and unlike (different from, and therefore a threat to) the original colonial subject. The Other cannot be fully contained through a discourse of mimicry, since its status as a copy or imitation or as "in excess of" the original marks it as different to that which it mimics. Bhabha therefore sees mimicry as an ambivalent discourse since it is both a support and a threat to the authority of colonial discourse. The ambivalence of mimicry does not merely rupture colonial discourse, but "becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence . . . both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'" (86). So, the difference of the mimic man or woman[13] marks the colonial subject also as different, as provisional, or as incomplete. Mimicry, as a result, is at once "resemblance and menace" (86).

Carmichael's ambivalent attitude toward mimicry in the "native" gestures toward the ambivalence within the discourse of mimicry. While Carmichael is approving of the ways in which the island repeats the master discourse of *the* island, she is at once both contemptuous and approving of "imitation" whites within the slave economy. Carmichael notes that the

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[13] The colonial subject in Bhabha's collection of essays *The Location of Culture* is a masculine subject, despite the occasional assertion that gender makes a difference. One pattern of argument in Bhabha's collection is the introduction to the colonial subject marked by race and sex (Bhabha does not explain what he means by "sexual difference"), and then the gradual effacement of sexual or gender difference as the essay progresses. So, for example, in "The Other Question" Bhabha begins by talking about the "cultural/historical/racial" (66) difference that marks the Other, then for a paragraph or two refers to "racial and sexual" (67) difference, then returns to "racial/cultural/historical" (67) difference again. Sexual or gender difference is not a serious concern for Bhabha in the colonial construction of the Other. Despite this, I believe that Bhabha's work is of some value to the study of the gendered colonial subject or object (white or black). I make use of his concept of mimicry here, although his mimic is a man. I also believe, however, that it is important to note Bhabha's limitations on the relationship between gender and colonialism.

ability "to mimic" is a "talent which is conspicuous in negroes" (I 25), and offers numerous anecdotes which attest to this fact. On the subject of clothing, for example, Carmichael notes on attending a private ball crowded with black servants, "I was very much amused by observing what connoisseurs the negro women are of dress, – standing near me, at one time, I heard them criticize every thing I wore, both in the materials and make" (I 46). Carmichael is amused at the manner in which a black woman, and a slave, appropriates the privilege of a white English lady in criticizing another white lady. Later, Carmichael describes the habits of dress of the female coloured population:

> Generally speaking, the coloured women have an insatiable passion for showy dresses and jewels, and are decked out, not in gorgeous, but in costly articles of this description. The highest class of females dress more showily and far more expensively than European ladies. (I 75)

Again, Carmichael is amused by this show of excess that signals both sameness and difference. Here, mimicry is a source of amusement and is non-threatening, because the copy so exceeds the original as to mark it as more different than the same. This is an instance of a "flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English" (Bhabha 87).

What Carmichael fails to recognize in these amusing portraits is the subversive potential of parody. Parody, as exaggerated imitation, produces a distorted mirror image of the object of parody and as such functions as a critique. What is potentially subversive about parody in the colonial context is that it refuses to be representative or representational, and it therefore "conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" (Bhabha 88). As a masking of identity, parody prevents the colonial subject from

knowing the "native," and it is knowledge that confers colonial power. If, in looking at the native, the colonial subject sees a distorted image of herself, then she is barred from access to an Other identity, prevented from plundering that identity or feeding off of it parasitically in order to understand and assert the ideological meaning of whiteness. This is not, of course, Carmichael's view. She prefers the black who mimics because that is a black who is well-clothed, polite and mannerly. What she does not understand is that these parodic performances of whiteness reveal the myth of the "whole white body" (Bhabha 92). Whiteness as an identity is a performance. That it can be performed ill according to the metropolitan colonial subject means, even more significantly, that it can also be performed well – that it *is* performed well by that very subject. Carmichael's amused responses to "bad" white performances only confirm that whiteness is in fact a matter of performance, just as drag performances "dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established" (Butler viii). If gender is a kind of "persistent impersonation that passes as the real" (Butler viii), then so is race. I have already argued that race tends to be identified in colonial texts with particular civilities or behaviours generally associated with the middle or upper classes, rather than exclusively with biological markers such as skin colour. Black or coloured persons can sometimes "pass" as white if they meet class criteria – if they, for example, own property and are well-educated. In these excerpts, Carmichael underscores the fragile, impermanent nature of racial identity. Those black bodies mimicking and parodying white custom denaturalize white culture and privilege. Black semblance radically questions white presence.

Other scenes of mimicry within Carmichael's text raise similar questions about myths of a "natural" and stable white identity. In a number of

passages, Carmichael asks blacks to speak about their conditions as slaves, their opinion on slavery, and their memories of Africa. While Carmichael avers again and again that blacks are deceitful (I 25), artful (I 85), and that their "testimony is worthless" (I 30), she devotes an entire chapter (and fragments of other chapters) to "Conversations with Native Africans," in which she relates "faithfully what was told to me by the negroes themselves" on those subjects listed above (I 299). (Carmichael is not bothered by the contradiction inherent in gaining the truth from a people who cannot tell the truth.) Carmichael asks F., an African slave, what happened to her mother in Africa after a tribal war:

> "Well, misses, they take me mamma too; she be once nice nigger, fat so; they take her, kill her, boil her, fry her, yam her (eat her) every bit all: dey bringed her heart to me, and force me yam a piece of it. . .". "Did you know you were going to be sold to a white man?" "Yes, misses, me happy at dat; nigger massa bad too much, white massa him better far, Africa no good place, me glad too much to come to white man's country." (I 304)

Carmichael asks P., a "female field negro, a good character upon the whole," similar questions:

> "Would you like to go back to your country?" "Eh, misses, me no like dat. St. Vincent fine country – good white massa dey." "Were you slave or free in Africa?" "Misses, me one time slave, one time free, just as our grandee massa fight (beat) next grandee massa." "And you would rather be here?" "Yes, misses, I no like me country at all." (I 307)

And so it continues. Each conversation invariably ends with the assertion that "me glad too much, when me sent a coast o' Guinea for a Buckra to buy us" (I 314), thus confirming the official colonial story that the British saved

the Africans from a terrible existence as slaves in their own countries, and are offering them a better life as slaves in the West Indies.

These extraordinarily monologic dialogues appear to present a unified picture of Africa and slavery in the "new" world, but what is truly extraordinary about them is how fractured and indeterminate these exchanges really are. Carmichael re-presents for the reader "faithful" transcriptions of black testimony and *patois*, and in so doing presents a scene of double mimicry. Carmichael mimics slave mimicry. The responses that Carmichael receives to her questions are parodies of what a white colonial woman believes or desires to be the truth about slavery. Her own colonial desires are reproduced for her by the slaves in an exaggerated and distorted form. Carmichael is unable to read mimicry as parody, and parody as subversion, and nor does she acknowledge the role of discourse (racial, colonial, gender) in the construction of the slave and the "Misses." In answering her questions as they do, the blacks impersonate the "good negro" who is polite and civil and who is thankful for the institution of slavery run by whites. Through this impersonation, the "good negro" is revealed to be as much a construction of colonial discourse and a manifestation of colonial desire as the "bad negro," therefore revealing how colonial discourse functions to naturalize categories such as good and bad, black and white. The black mimic resembles what colonial discourse calls black; she also calls attention to how whiteness resembles what colonial discourse calls white and how, in the end, both are discursive constructions with shifting parameters. Black semblance reveals white presence to be partial and incomplete.

In both Schaw's and Carmichael's travel accounts, an ideology of whiteness is constructed out of discourses of race, gender and empire, which are themselves dependent upon the construction of blackness as not-white. While both writers attempt in different ways to challenge restrictive gender codes, they both fall back on colonial ideology as a method of escaping gender restrictions. Each woman, as wife or sister/companion, is in a position of economic dependence within a patriarchal order, but also asserts the power and privilege of her identity as white in the colonies. In their contradictory social positioning as female (economically disadvantaged) and white (race privileged), Schaw and Carmichael devote much of their differing accounts to the assertion of whiteness as a site of dominance. Whiteness offers them both an inclusive history and insider status in the empire. However, their discourses of whiteness reveal fractures and inconsistencies that neither can afford to acknowledge, for to acknowledge them would mean accepting that white presence as a "real" condition is a colonial myth constructed out of the myth of black absence. It is a powerful, and destructive, myth – as is the "fact" of race itself – but it is also a discursive formation subject to contradiction, instability and deconstruction.

CHAPTER TWO

Miscegenation and the Mulatto/a: Esther Hyman and Phyllis Bottome

> Compared with the vital matter of pure Blood, all other matters, as of tariff, of currency, of subsidies, of civil service, of labour and capital, of education, of forestry, of science and art, and even of religion, sink into insignificance.
>
> – William Benjamin Smith, 1905.

The history of miscegenation – as an idea and as a social/sexual practice – predates the term itself, which was introduced in 1864 by the American authors of a pamphlet entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro.* The pamphlet was published anonymously, but it is now known that the authors, Democrat journalists David Goodman Croly and George Wakeman, intended to blacken the Republican image on the eve of the 1864 election by posing as a Republican abolitionist author, and then suggesting in the pamphlet that the party was "pro-amalgamation." The Democrat strategy, explains Robert Young, was to "claim that the subtext and secret agenda of Lincoln's two principles of amalgamating the North and the South, and emancipating the slaves, was to bring about racial amalgamation between black and white" (146). Before this publication, "amalgamation" was the preferred term for the mixing of the races as a result of sexual union, but "amalgamation" historically refers to the combining of metals, and it was also in current use as a term for the restoration of the Union. Croly and Wakeman seem to have believed that a second term was needed

by which to differentiate between political and sexual unions of unlike bodies, and so the notion of miscegenation functioned for them as a grotesque substitute, a metonymic figure, for political amalgamation. And, given the satirical tone and intent of the pamphlet – to expose and discredit Lincoln's folly – miscegenation arrived as a term that is both "scientific" (from the Latin *miscere* and *genus*, and based in nineteenth century racial theories) and in the service of racial apartheid. It is a term that belongs to the history of racial discourse and that, in its original form, speaks loudly about white anxiety regarding political power and racial-sexual boundaries.

Early in the pamphlet Croly and Wakeman adopt the posture that the union of races is a natural human phenomenon, and that "a people, to become great, must become composite" (1). The equality of black and white under the same advantages of education and condition is proclaimed, and then European history is examined to prove that miscegenetic races (the result of the mixing of the "diverse bloods" [9] of Slavs, Teutons and Saxons) are the most powerful. The rhetorical strategy is to start small, by reproducing commonly held liberal beliefs, and then to follow the logical progression of these beliefs to the inevitable conclusion that "all that is needed to make us the finest race on earth is to engraft upon our stock the negro element" (11). Croly and Wakeman take aim at well-known abolitionists and implicitly suggest that the abolition of slavery is the first step toward a fully miscegenetic society:

> The sympathy Mr. Greeley, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Tilton feel for the Negro is the love which the blonde bears for the black; it is a love of race, a sympathy stronger to them than the love they bear to woman. It is founded upon natural law. We love our opposites.... Nor is it alone true that the blonde love the black. The black also love their opposites....

> Our police courts give painful evidence that the passion of the colored races for the white is often so uncontrollable as to overcome the terror of the law. It has been so, too, upon the southern plantations. The only remedy for this is legitimate melaleuketic marriage. (27-8)

The spectre of black violence against whites is raised to argue in "favour" of legalizing black-white relations, while the authors simultaneously suggest that this "uncontrollable" passion of blacks for whites will not be subject to any law. As the argument progresses, the satire is more directly aimed at the South:

> It is a notorious fact, however, that, for three generations back, the wealthy, educated, governing class of the South have mingled their blood with the enslaved race. These illicit unions, though sanctioned neither by law nor conscience, and which, therefore, are degrading morally, have helped to strengthen the vitality and add to the mental force of the Southerner. (41)

Later still the image of the white woman is called up in "support" of abolition and legal miscegenation:

> The mothers and daughters of the aristocratic slaveholders are thrilled with a strange delight by daily contact with their dusky male servitors.... And this is the secret of the strange infatuation of the Southern woman with the hideous barbarism of slavery. Freedom, she knows, would separate her forever from the colored man, while slavery retains him by her side. It is idle for the Southern woman to deny it; she loves the black man, and the raiment she clothes herself with is to please him. (43)

These statements ironically address the common argument made by Southern slave-holders (and slave-holders in the West Indies) that "freeing the slaves would bring about sexual pandemonium between black men and

white women" (Young 145). The sly suggestion here is that the most taboo of sexual relations, those between black men and white women, already exists in the South – so why not sanction such relations by law? Croly and Wakeman have already insinuated that the abolition movement is motivated by a desire for sexual access to black bodies. These arguments point to the fact that the question of race is fundamentally a question of sex, and that racial, sexual, gendered and even national identities are intertwined to the point where talking about one means always talking about the others. Peggy Pascoe notes that miscegenation is not just an issue of race relations or racial hierarchies, but that it is also an issue of gender or gender hierarchies (6). For example, the delicate "pure" white woman ("pure" because "white"), who requires the guardianship of white men, must be sexually regulated for her own protection and for the protection of the entire white race. Sexual access to white women is reserved for white men, as it represents not only racial supremacy but male privilege.

My aim in these introductory remarks is to give some sense of the historical context for the term miscegenation, the term which I shall use throughout this work, and which continues to dominate as a description of the mixture of races. Its roots are tied to questions of national, racial, sexual and gendered identities, and while it in some way "neutrally" refers to a recognized social-sexual act, it is not, of course, a politically neutral term. It is a problematic term, as problematic as "race" itself, for as I suggest in the Introduction, if "race" is a scientific fiction then so must be the notion of race-mixing. A "race" can be neither mixed nor pure, and yet the discourses of racial purity and racial contamination are pervasive and powerful. Like race, the concept of miscegenation is socially constructed and continues to

have social and cultural significance. The question is not so much what does the term mean, but what does the need for such a term mean? And, within the context of this study, what does its deployment say about white identity, white anxiety, white hegemony? The fact that miscegenation was a powerful idea during the American elections of 1864 suggests that the big issues – the union of North and South, and slavery – were tied to questions of white identity as much as to ideas of democracy, freedom, and economic and agricultural reform.

Before miscegenation, as I have mentioned, there was amalgamation, and before amalgamation any term or phrase that suggested the mixture of two dissimilar objects. Edward Long, in 1774, makes reference to "heterogeneous mixture" (II 274) and "illicit connections" (II 330) to describe cross-racial unions. Also in 1774, Janet Schaw briefly makes a note of the "licentious and unnatural amours" (112) of a select group of white men, and does not have to specify that the amours are interracial. Lady Nugent (c. 1804) refers more frequently to the products of interracial sexual unions – "yellow children," (29) "brown and yellow ladies," (65) and "half-black progeny" (214) – than to the act itself, but she does casually make note of the "improper connections" (173) of young soldiers. Although interracial sexual contact was a colonial tradition and a subject of veiled discussion for centuries, it was only during the nineteenth century, in the glory days of American scientific racism and abolitionist debate, that a specific term was deployed to designate this practice. The invention of the term is linked to contemporary scientific discourses of racial purity (such as the division of the world into black, yellow and white), and reveals white fears of racial contamination with the abolition of American slavery on the horizon.

As a term, "mulatto" has a longer history than either amalgamation (in

a social/cultural, rather than a metallurgic, sense) or miscegenation. Its English use has been traced to the late sixteenth century, when it was borrowed from the Spanish who had derived the term from the Latin *mulus* (Gillman 226). The mulatto, as a hybrid cross between what was understood to be two different species (white and black), was also originally believed to be sterile, like the mule. Edward Long both articulates and slightly amends this belief when he discusses the social habits of the "Mulattoes":

> Some few of them have intermarried here with those of their own complexion; but such matches have generally been defective and barren. They seem in this respect to be actually of the mule-kind, and not so capable of producing from one another as from a commerce with a distinct White or Black. (II 335)

This is an example of the power of a cultural idea in the face of contradictory evidence. The mulatto/a is not sterile, and reproduced, as far as parish records are able to show, at the same rate as any other racial "type" in any combination.[1] In fact, Long himself states only a few pages further on in his *History of Jamaica* that both blacks and mulattos "increase very fast," and he provides census figures to support this observation (II 337). Long attempts to account for this contradiction by asserting that mulattas who have successful births within marriage to a mulatto must "have privately intrigued with another man, a White perhaps?" (II 336). Long and his contemporaries, through this stubborn discourse of sterility, exhibit a desire to mark the mulatto/a as distinctly *not* white. This is clearly a primary

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[1] Edward Brathwaite has collected census data on the coloured population in Jamaica in the nineteenth century: 23,000 in 1803; 35,000 in 1823; 60,000 in 1830; almost 70,000 in 1844 (168). Of course, it is not possible to know what the racial make-up of this population was according to the "scientific" categories of the day (i.e., sambo, mulatto, mustee, quintoon, octoroon, and so on), but the evidence before Long's eyes was of a fast growing community.

concern, given that light skinned mulatto/as look just the same as dark skinned whites. John Mencke explains that the ultimate "horror" for the white "is the inability to see on the surface (the skin) the moral degradation of the negro race" (221). If the mulatto/a is not marked externally as "having" race (as opposed to being raceless, or white) then there must be found some hidden, secret code written within the body that denotes a distinct racial identity. The comfort to whites that this discourse of sterility provides is that the mulatto/a body – a disruptive, excessive, threatening, white-like body – is programmed for extinction.

The contradictions within Long's text raise a central question: what exactly is the *idea* of the mulatto/a in white Caribbean writing? What are its attributes, its social and cultural functions, its status as a "type," and most important for this study, what does this figure say about cultural constructions of whiteness? Needless to say, the mulatto/a takes on varied forms in different texts (sociological, political, fictional) and at different times, but it is possible to trace out a racial discourse devoted to this culturally and racially hybrid figure. I want to trace forward, from Long, a brief history of representation in both nonfictional and fictional texts mainly within the tradition of white writing in the Caribbean, although some American constructions of the mulatto/a are also considered. As I have already suggested, the mulatto/a is a figure of excess who by definition crosses boundaries and deconstructs binary racial codings. Its function in texts by white writers is multiple, but it in some way seems always to be about whiteness. To paraphrase Toni Morrison, in what way does the imaginative encounter with the mulatto/a enable white writers to think about themselves?

The Mulatto/a as a Racial "Type"

Hortense J. Spillers investigates what she calls the "invention of the mulatto" and argues that both the "mulatto/a" and the "nigger" tell us "little or nothing about the subject buried beneath them, but quite a great deal more concerning the psychic and cultural reflexes that invent and invoke them" (166). The mulatto/a, as a literary device, articulates and negotiates racial and sexual tensions both within a text and within a culture, and one way to access and analyze those tensions is to explore issues of representation – how the mulatto/a is presented as a "racial type" in various historical writings on the British Caribbean. The most common representations found in writings by Edward Long (1774), Janet Schaw (1776), Bryan Edwards (1819), and Mrs. Carmichael (1830) are: the mulatto/a is proud and disdainful, vain and haughty, owing to his/her "amended blood" (Long II 329, 335; Carmichael I 70); the mulatto/a is humble, submissive and unassuming (Edwards II 25); the free mulatto is a cruel and vicious slave-owner, because he needs to assert his superiority over the degraded being he once was and now legally owns (Edwards II 25; Carmichael 123); the mulatto/a is more "artful" and deceitful than the black (Carmichael I 83); the mulatto/a is physically attractive with straight "white" features and a "brown" skin (Long II 335; Schaw 124); the mulatto/a is a "spurious and degenerate breed" lacking in decent moral habits; the mulatta is especially licentious and lures white men into indecent relations (Schaw 112; Long II 328; Carmichael I 70); and, mulattas are modest and reserved (Edwards II 25). There is, obviously, disagreement here, and the disagreement generally can be found on the subject of the mulatta. She is seen as either a superior racial type to the black woman, because she is morally and physically one step closer to being white, or she is constructed

as more degraded than the black woman because her blood has been contaminated through racial mixing. This second construction seems to be based on the notion that a lack of racial purity translates into a lack of moral or sexual purity, so that the mulatta is said to be even more of a sexual creature than the "full blooded" black woman – and that is saying a lot, given the pervasive racist/colonialist stereotype of the over-sexualized "native" female.

In the American context, the mulatto/a as a racial type fares worse than in British Caribbean writings.[2] A brief selection of the typical characteristics of the mulatto/a according to American race writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century include the notion that the mulatto/a is a mongrel, "deficient in physical and mental energy," and thus belongs to a "degenerate, depraved people" (Spring 73-4); that the mulatto/a "has produced a wonderful amount of evil in the world" and "is a destroyer" of whites (Quinby 393); that the "mental type" of the "average mulatto is nearer to the type of the more advanced than it is to that of the more backward race," possibly because "it is usually to the higher race that the male parent belongs" (Bryce 21, 24); and that the mulatto/a is "more criminal than either pure black or white" (Shannon 394). None of these descriptions are new to racialist writing, but it is interesting how much consensus there is among American writers. Again and again, from 1863 to 1925, American racialist writers attest to the vicious and degraded nature of the mulatto/a with virtually no change in theory or supporting evidence.

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[2] It is worth mentioning in passing the recent (nineteenth and early twentieth century) history of racialist "scientific" or sociological writing in the United States, because of the geographical proximity of the West Indies to North America (and the resultant movement of peoples between the two areas), because of a shared British cultural heritage between the United States and the English speaking West Indies, and because American ideology dominates global cultural capital in the twentieth century.

John David Smith argues that the fear of miscegenation permeates virtually all of the racialist literature of post-Civil War America (xxvi). I would not suggest that this fear is absent in British Caribbean writing – quite the contrary – but it is worthy of note that anti-miscegenation laws in the United States reach as far back as 1662 and continue to exist (though largely ignored) in some states today (Kinney 5).[3] In the British West Indies, there was only one law passed prohibiting "Carnall Coppullation between Christian and Heathen," in seventeenth century Antigua (Enriques 93).[4] Mencke argues that the mulatto/a in the West Indies was viewed as an ally by whites as much as a threat, given the overwhelming black majority and the resulting white anxieties regarding control and safety, while in the United States the mulatto/a was not "needed" by whites as a safety zone as they formed the majority population (4-5).[5] Long in 1774 offers support for this observation when he proposes to establish the mulatto at the "centre of connexion between two extremes, producing a regular establishment of three ranks of men, dependent on each other, and rising in a proper climax of subordination, in which the whites would hold the highest place" (Long

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[3] The famous Loving V. Virginia case of 1959 challenged the anti-miscegenation laws of that state, with the result that the judge ruled against the Lovings' right to be legally married in Virginia. In his trial opinion the judge stated: "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with His arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that He separated the races shows that He did not intend for the races to mix" (Enriques 25). In 1965, again in Georgia, another judge upheld the anti-miscegenation law because "Our daily observation shows us that the offspring of these unnatural connections are generally sickly, effeminate, and that they are inferior to the full-blooded of either race in physical development and strength" (Washington 86).

[4] Rather than pass anti-miscegenation laws, the general rule in the Caribbean was to focus on economic control over inheritances. So, for example, in Jamaica in 1748 a law was passed to limit the amount of property to £1200 sterling which could be inherited by a non-white spouse or child (Enriques 101). This law could be overturned, however, if the father had no white children and the mulatto child was educated and "found well deserving to possess" the father's fortune (Long II 326).

[5] To suggest the ratio of whites to non-whites in the early nineteenth century: In Jamaica in 1820 there were 170,000 slaves, 35,000 free coloured and 30,000 whites (Brathwaite 151, 168, 135).

II 333). Edwards adds in 1819 that the mulattos ought to "become a barrier against the designs of the black," though he does not elaborate on what he means by designs (30). My point is not that the mulatto/a was better loved or respected in the West Indies than in the United States. Long's and Edward's comments reveal fear of the loss of political/economic control, and I would suggest that their relatively (compared to the American model) benevolent attitude toward the mulatto/a is based in that fear, not love. I wish merely to suggest that the representation of the mulatto/a in the socio-historical writings of eighteenth and nineteenth century British colonials is more complex, fractured, and riddled with contradictions than that of nineteenth century Americans, especially on the subject of the mulatta. It is partly out of these contradictions that white Caribbean writers have constructed themselves as whites.

The representation of the mulatto/a in literature shares some territory with his/her sociological or "scientific" counterpart. Abena Busia, in her study of colonial African novels, concludes that the fictional offspring of miscegenetic unions are the "most morally degenerate of beings: villainous, treacherous, manipulative degenerates who, contrary to genetic laws of breeding, manage to inherit only the most repulsive physical and spiritual traits of their parents" (367). Judith Berzon in her study of American fiction, argues that the American mulatto/a is frequently represented as one of two polar opposite types: either extremely beautiful, intelligent, sensitive and respectable, or ugly, vicious and degenerate (54, 59). The first type belongs to the tradition of the "tragic mulatto/a," and is a sensitive being caught between two worlds and crushed by the inevitable racial and cultural tensions that s/he literally embodies, while the second type functions simply as the villain of the fictional piece and is accordingly destructive and

vengeful. The tragic type is almost always a female "almost-white character whose beauty, intelligence and purity are forever in conflict with the 'savage primitivism' inherited from his or her Negro ancestors" (Berzon 99). The tragic mulatta, frequently an outcast and a wanderer, is a discordant individual, at war with her "one drop" of black blood. One drop of black blood, explains Mencke, was "enough to brand its possessor as a child of Africa, with all the connotations of savagery and sensuality which such a designation inherently involved in the white mind" (61).

A preoccupation with blood – pure or defiled – as the means by which fixed racial tendencies are transmitted can be found in both socio-historical and fictional texts. James Anthony Froude, in his *The English in the West Indies* (1888), suggests that blood carries common language, social habits and cultural traditions (3). He avers that "pure" blacks "feel their blood as a degradation" (25), but he also argues that "a Negro of pure blood" could, with education, become a distinguished man (124). Froude's greatest fears, like those of many of his predecessors and contemporaries, are of cannibalism and "Hayti"[6] (the terms generally function as synonyms), and

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[6] "Hayti" refers to the slave revolt in St. Dominique in 1791. The revolt was initiated by the white planters, who demanded that the National Assembly of France refrain from legislating on colonial matters unless invited to do so from the colonists. Despite this demand, the Assembly passed a decree in May 1791 on the status of mulattos, allowing free persons of colour to vote for the provincial and colonial Assemblies. The white inhabitants viewed this as a threat to their authority and refused to obey the decree, and the governor refused to enforce it. There was talk of secession from France, and the mulattos were arming themselves to fight the white colonists for their newly acquired rights. Both whites and mulattos, preoccupied with their interests, were taken by surprise when in August 1791 the northern slave population began to revolt. While slaves revolted in the north, in the west whites and free mulattos were at war with one another. Eventually, the entire island was involved in revolt – against France, against each other, against slavery. Toussaint L'Ouverture, the first in a series of ex-slave Haitian leaders, successfully organized the ex-slaves into fighting troops and took on the English and the free mulattos (who would not support the anti-slavery movement). Although L'Ouverture was eventually kidnapped, shipped to France and executed, Haiti was never reclaimed by any colonial power. The "example" of Haiti terrified colonists on other islands, and the ex-slaves who revolted were quickly characterized as blood-thirsty cannibals acting out of inherent savage tendencies rather than fighting for emancipation. One hundred years later, "Hayti" stood

he frequently suggests that the black taste for blood, which is *in* the blood but has been suppressed by European instruction and example, "will be free to assert itself" were English authority to die away (126). Froude is here speaking indirectly of atavism, the notion that a "pure" black or a "mixed" mulatto/a "who has attained a veneer of white civilization can, at any time, 'revert' to the savage, primitivistic behaviour of the jungle from which his ancestors came and to which he is inextricably tied" (Berzon 31). Atavism was considered a scientific fact in the nineteenth century. The idea was that black blood "always tells" (Dearborn 152), which is why late nineteenth century distinguished American medical doctors such as Josiah Nott devoted much of their lives' work to demonstrating that "the white race is deteriorated by every drop of black blood infiltrated into it" (17). In an interesting variation on this theme, the American scientist William Smith states in 1905 that "we admit and deplore the fact that unchastity has poured a broad stream of white blood into black veins; but we deny, and perhaps no-one will affirm, that it has poured even the slenderest appreciable rill of Negro blood into the veins of the whites" (68). This "one-way" rule defends white racial purity while it also articulates the "one-drop" rule: there cannot be black blood in white veins, because one drop of black blood renders the subject "black."

The fear of blood contamination is also a fear of degeneration. Anne McClintock explains that the "image of bad blood was drawn from biology but degeneration was less a biological fact than it was a social figure" (47). McClintock argues that racialist discourses of contagion and degeneration associated with the notion of bad blood reveal a "paranoia about boundary

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for Froude as an example of the savage Negro nature that had been, and must continue to be, tamed by British rule.

order" – bodily boundaries, racial boundaries, political boundaries – and also attempt to justify the policing of those boundaries between the ruling elite and the "contagious" classes (47). The discourse of bad blood provides a biological basis for the social, political and economic exclusions necessary to support imperialism. Sexual contact between whites and people of colour is constructed as a biological battleground, and blackness figured as a contagious disease. McClintock equates ideas of contagion and degeneracy with masculine anxieties regarding white male and imperial potency (47), as does Anne Laura Stoler when she argues that "through sexual contact with women of color European men 'contracted' not only disease but debased sentiments, immoral proclivities and extreme susceptibility to decivilized states" (1991 78). As sexual contact provides the occasion for contagion, discourses of race and gender intersect when the female body is identified as the original site of contamination, or as a factory for contagion. Either the woman of colour infects the white man, or her body produces the ocular evidence of miscegenetic union, the mulatto/a. The white woman's body, then, must be sexually regulated to prevent the contamination and degeneration of an entire race, since white women were frequently constructed not as individuals but as keepers of the race. The white woman in a sexual relationship with a black man cannot produce a white child, and thus her white family tree is terminated with herself. The fear of racial contagion can be said to exceed its own racial boundaries, as the discourse of bad blood is as much about class constructions of gender and sexuality (the stringently regulated female body) as it is about the "biology" of race.

This fear of blood contamination can be found in West Indian literary texts as well as those historical works cited above. In Ada Quayle's novel *The Mistress*, published in 1957 and set in Jamaica in 1915, Neil, a white

land owner, is distressed that he has gotten some blood on himself during his whipping of Sammy Johnson, a black labourer who has been caught stealing. He cannot bear to wipe it off, so his neighbour Laura uses her handkerchief:

> "Take the kerchief home and burn it," he said angrily.
>
> "No, it will wash."
>
> "Burn it, I say. You can't never wash out blood. You'll leave something. I don't want the smell of nigger on me. Sometimes I so afraid I will get their blood on me – that it will go down my veins and spoil me. You know what my great-grandfather would do, Laura? He would kill Sammy Johnson for this." (53)

Neil's fear of racial defilement carries sexual overtones in this scene. The beating is described as an erotic spectacle that "excites" (50) Laura in its violence and in its display of Neil's "bare ... strong ... oiled" (51) and blood-stained body. Neil's blood aversion is clearly a fear of racial contamination, but as that contamination conventionally occurs through a sexual act (miscegenation), his aversion to blood can also be read as a delayed response to, and rejection of, his erotic pleasure in laying hands on a black man's body. Sammy's body spills and spreads blood as semen is spilled in the sexual act: "Neil brought the whip across his face. The man's lips seemed to burst. Blood poured out" (50). The discourse of blood, in racialist scientific discourses and in fiction concerned with racial identity and miscegenation, is always also a discourse of sex, through metaphoric substitution (the bodily fluids blood and semen) and through the physical fact that "mixing" blood (that is, races) requires a sexual act. Neil's fear of blood-mixing is also a displaced fear of his own desire for a male body and a black body, and his anxiety over smelling like a "nigger" betrays the fear that, through sexual

contact, he will in fact become black and lose his status as white. J. M. Coetzee argues in *White Writing* that the "poetics of blood" often functions as a displaced articulation of the "politics of race" (138). The ideology of racism is conveyed through the "tragedy of blood," (140) the tragedy being that doom is passed on in the blood, that suffering is genetically fated, and that the "flaw" of black blood is "an inherited reminder of a fall from grace, the grace of whiteness" (141). Neil fears exactly what tortures the mulatto character Van in another Caribbean novel, *Too Much Summer: A Novel of Jamaica* (1953) by Esther Chapman, namely "the black blood that leaps about in my veins" (95), which "tells" of Van's self-loathing, masochistic, miscegenetic identity. Van is a version of the tragic mulatto who is a victim of the flaw of his black blood ("it won't keep still" [95]) and who is constantly reminded by that blood that he is a degraded, fallen, not quite white, man. Neil's fear is that he might become, like Van, a contaminated man.

Filth, defilement, taint: these terms describe both the act of miscegenation and the result of that act – the mulatto/a – within eighteenth and nineteenth century white Caribbean discourse, and within Caribbean novels by white writers in the early to mid twentieth century. The dynamic of attraction/repulsion, and the rhetoric of blood, with its attendant preoccupation with bodily fluids and shameful sexual acts, are integral parts of that discourse. This confluence of blood, semen, attraction, repulsion, filth and contamination suggest that the mulatto/a functions within white Caribbean discourse as the abject. Julia Kristeva introduces the notion of the abject:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable,

> the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects.... And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. (1-2)

Kristeva's abject is neither subject nor object. It does not have a place within the conventional colonial dynamic of subject/object, colonizer/colonized, self/other, European/native, white/black as theorized by both colonial and post-colonial intellectuals. The mulatto/a as abject represents the projection of anxiety onto a racial and cultural other that is not "other" but "another," a third term that "disturbs identity, system, order," that "does not respect borders, positions, rules," and that is the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4). The problem of the abject is that it is not simply outside the borders of the body, and nor is it inside, but instead it operates at the threshold of identity. Kristeva's examples are bodily by-products that, once they leave the body, are viewed as improper and unclean, such as vomit, feces, blood, semen. They are not definable objects, the correlative of the self, but they do not belong to the clean and proper self as conceived (or fantasized) by the self. Through the lens of abjection, Neil's blood aversion could be read as a necessary component of the constitution of the white self in a colonial context. McClintock explains that "in order to become social the self has to expunge certain elements that society deems impure" (70). To expel or to cast out is to define the self, though the expelled elements can never be fully obliterated. Neil literally, through whipping, causes the expulsion of blood, and his simultaneous attraction to and repulsion of that blood constitutes himself as the subject. The blood of a coloured man could be described as doubly abject – the despised by-product of an outcast body –

and this bloody scene a proof of Neil's identity as white, male, and colonial.

The mulatto/a occupies the position of the abject within white Caribbean discourse. The mulatto/a fascinates, attracts, repels, and is both self and other and also neither. The mulatto/a is articulated through a discourse of blood and defilement because that abject discourse best describes the inside/outside, impossible, intolerable, unthinkable position of the figure who is simultaneously neither/nor and both/and. David Spurr argues that the "obsessive debasement of the Other in colonial discourse arises not simply from fear and the recognition of difference but also, on another level, from a desire for an identification with the Other which must be resisted" (80). The debasement of the mulatto/a as self/other is related to this colonial dynamic, with the added feature that recognition of difference is also recognition of sameness. The problem of the mulatto/a is that s/he is kin to the white. S/he cannot be conceived of or theorized as pure difference, and it is this absence of difference and purity that both threatens and constitutes a white sense of self which is constructed as the clean and the proper. The discourse of blood, contagion and defilement, which identifies the mulatto/a, is also always a worried and embattled discourse of whiteness.

There are a number of British/Caribbean women novelists of the early twentieth century who engage with, and contribute to, white Anglo-Caribbean discourse. None of them have received any critical attention, and I would imagine that many students of literature would probably, were they to peruse the novels, assert that their writing does not deserve such attention. The authors to whom I refer – Mrs. Henry Lynch, Clarine Stephenson, Mary Gaunt, Esther Hyman, Alice Durie, Phyllis Bottome, and

Ada Quayle – have produced no works that would be considered "great" by literary historians. Mrs Henry Lynch's *The Mountain Pastor* (circa 1908), for example, is comprised of rather tedious disconnected "tales" of white creole Jamaicans who are blessed by, or find, God's love. It is a long sermon in the shape of a novel, and rather dull, but is of some interest for its literary constructions of creole identities in Jamaica around the turn of the century. Clarine Stephenson's novel *Undine: An Experience* (1911) tells the story of a "creole child of wealth, reared in the midst of luxury and idleness" (13) who recklessly follows her heart, has it broken by an Englishman, dies a spiritual death, then dies in body too as she is confronted with a portrait of her former lover in the guise of Jesus Christ. It is a strange yet pedestrian story of the true soulful love of a creole "girl" for an English man, set against a Jamaican landscape, which is figured as England's garden and "jewel of the British crown" (32). It is a thoroughly colonial novel, and as such would be of interest to scholars engaged in colonial studies. Gaunt's *Harmony: A Tale of the Old Slave Days* (1933), Durie's *One Jamaica Gal* (1939), and Quayle's *The Mistress* (1957) are also interesting for their engagement (and often complicity) with colonialist ideology. Quayle's novel is the most complex of them, and the only work mentioned here that adopts creole (Jamaican) english for all speaking characters, white or black. Quayle also explores the psychological (and psycho-sexual) legacy of a slave economy in post-emancipation Jamaica (as the whipping scene discussed above suggests), in terms of its impact on both white and black communities.

In the rest of this chapter I pursue the intersecting and co-creating discourses of blood, defilement, inbetweenness, and abjection in two novels written by white British women with Caribbean "connections" – Esther Hyman's *Study in Bronze* (1928) and Phyllis Bottome's *Under the Skin*

(1950) – and explore the manner in which they merge in the body of the mulatta. The eighteenth and nineteenth century racial discourses of miscegenation and the mulatto/a that I have briefly introduced inform these works in various ways. In both novels, the mulatta is constructed as a racial "type" who carries within her body a dangerous, and sometimes deadly, conflict between cultures. She is a transgressive and threatening figure, a figure who crosses national, social, cultural, and racial boundaries in a manner that threatens white "either/or" conceptions of racial identity. As a female, she represents another kind of threat related to her body, namely her (hetero)sexual power as a seducer of white men, and her power to reproduce her own defiled nature. Her body is capable of passing on the "legacy of evil" (Coetzee 143) that is encoded in her blood. Hyman and Bottome approach the mulatta differently, but in both cases this figure negotiates racial and sexual tensions and functions as a "psychic double for the white mind – a double with a difference," testing the boundaries of the white self (Dearborn 135).

Esther Hyman

At about twenty years of age, Esther Hyman decided to leave her home of London, England, and consequently set about looking for "some not too complicated part of the world" in which to settle, "somewhere with a good climate, where English was spoken, where existence would offer some enjoyment" (1955: 19). Seeking a place with "an essential life of its own," and shunning "tourist resorts" and "pleasure haunts" (1955: 19), Hymen emigrated to Jamaica in 1925 and found work on the daily *Jamaica Times*. She intended to stay for two years, but remained in Jamaica almost all of her life. In 1934, Hyman founded *The West Indian Review*, a monthly literary

magazine intended to establish cultural links across different West Indian regions, which boasted an entirely West Indian identity: "Every article is written, every picture taken, every block made, all printing done, within the West Indies, by people who are themselves West Indians or who have chosen to identify themselves with these parts" (1934: 1). Hyman was also editor of *Jamaica*, a weekly news-magazine, and of a later annual periodical by the same name. Throughout her life, Hyman founded and belonged to many literary and cultural clubs, wrote for many local newspapers (including *Jamaica Daily Express*), was the chair of a number of national arts committees, and also wrote poetry, short stories, plays, and four novels. Two of her novels – *Study in Bronze* (1928) and *Too Much Summer* (1953) – are set in Jamaica, and the earlier text, as the title suggests, explores the phenomenon of a mulatta identity.

Study in Bronze tells the story of Lucea, a mulatta born in Kingston, Jamaica, at about the turn of the century. At the beginning of the novel, Lucea is seven, her mother has recently died, and she has been adopted by her white father whom she has never seen. Raised in a poor, urban environment, Lucea has had no personal contact with whites and her "new white daddy" (13) is a god in her eyes. Her father's project is to get the child out of the yard, and the yard out of the child. He implores Lucea to "try to speak English... get rid of that Negro twang" (15), and begins a course of instruction and improvement the purpose of which is to whiten Lucea's manners and habits. Caught one day in a childish lie (she says she has not been bathing in the ocean, which her father forbids, when in fact she has been), her father resolves to rid her of this "black" trait, informing Lucea that the vice of lying is "inherited from the other side" (34). The "other" side, which is also the mother's side, has other racial traits according to her

father:

> Luscious, oozing with emotionalism, despite their fatalism, moved to easy tears, wailings, weepings, demonstrations of affection.... And so Lucea's first lesson must be the suppressing of all those feelings which, he sensed, would come welling over at the first opportunity. He would teach her stoicism.... If he was to interest himself in her, no negro wallowing in emotionalism for him. (74)

So Lucea learns to suppress her "blackness" and her mother and privilege her "whiteness" and her father. She grows to be a quiet, reserved, poised young woman who, after the death of her father, sails to England to become a poet. England is to Lucea "the place where all her perplexities should be solved; where men lived together in peace without regard for such petty considerations as the colour of one's skin; where one met clever people wherever one went..." (93). In the course of the story, Lucea has a love affair with a tall, blonde, blue-eyed Englishman, writes a lot of promising but not extraordinary poetry, breaks off her relationship with her lover who cannot fully reconcile himself to her colour, finds England not to be the land of fairness and goodness, and returns to Jamaica. At the end of the novel, Lucea is on the verge of writing her first great poem – not an interpretation of England "with new eyes" (91) as she had originally intended, but of her "native land" (313) instead.

The creation of art is the unifying idea of the novel. Lucea herself is positioned as an aesthetic object (the three parts of the novel are entitled "The Clay," "The Modelling," and "The Cast"), and she is also an artist. Her project is to wrestle control of her destiny out of other hands (her father's, her lover's) and to write herself an identity in poetry that belongs to herself alone. Hyman's project is to argue that the individual can, and must (in

order to be fully "cast"), triumph over identities thrust upon her – racial, cultural, and national identities. Lucea's realization that she belongs to no-one and nothing but her "own soul's self" is articulated at the end of the novel. Arriving back in Jamaica, Lucea is confronted with "shabby black men" and "fat, voluptuous black women" (314):

> "These are my people!" she thought, bitterly; but again the bitterness passed into a smile. They were not her people; any more than her people were the white people that thronged the streets of London. It was not true to say that she was outcast from either or from both. She was herself, her intense, individual self, strong to suffer, strong in recovery, not part and parcel of any race or set of people. Her mixed blood gave her an independence, a freedom from both of them.... [S]he felt a great elevation of spirit, aloof, free, because she belonged to no race and no people, was saddled with no cramping beliefs, no obligations of patriotism or loyalty. She was her own soul's self. (314-5)

This self – a raceless, cultureless, ahistorical self – is the one who writes upon her return to Jamaica the first line of what is clearly to be her first great poem: "I have found Beauty infinitely sad" (315). Art, suggests Hyman, can only be achieved when all the impurities of context have been boiled off and the unalloyed self, the self-as-text, remains.

Given this central concern with art and poetry it is not surprising that the novel is prefaced by a poem. Somewhat unusual, however, is the choice of the poem: "Mulatto" by the Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes. This choice is interesting for what it says, and what it does not say, about the concerns of the novel. The mulatto of the poem is "A little yellow/Bastard boy" who opens the piece with the assertion, "I am your son, white man!" Organized along the dialogic and repetitive principles of call and response

(like gospel, blues, jazz and religious revivalism), another voice responds: "You are my son!/ Like hell!" The poem proceeds to describe the nocturnal sexual act that produced the son ("Juicy bodies/ Of nigger wenches/ Blue black/ Against black fences"), reproduces other voices in dialogue ("Naw, you ain't my brother,/ Niggers ain't my brother," and, "Git on back there in the night,/ You ain't white"), and then ends with the opening repeated: "I am your son, white man!/ A little yellow/ Bastard boy." It is somewhat ironic that Hyman has chosen this poem. First, its author is known as a folk artist, in his use of popular African-American musical forms, vernacular language, and socially marginal characters and speakers (gamblers, drunks, drug addicts). As Walt Whitman's "darker brother" (Hughes 46), Hughes explores the other America, the one not sung by Whitman or heard by dominant white culture. Hyman's project does not intersect with Hughes' at any of these levels: the class she explores is middle class; she employs traditional "literary" language (Standard English) rather than nation language (Jamaican english), even when a character comes out of the Kingston yards or belongs to the rural labouring population; and her protagonist finds her self (as poet/artist) only after shedding her racial and cultural identities.

Second, "Mulatto" is a song of biracial masculinity. As a son's address to a father, it is primarily concerned with patrilineal issues of identity and inheritance, including the inheritance of whiteness. There is no address or appeal to the black mother, who is situated in the poem as a passageway from father to son. Hyman's novel explores female biracial identity, but it may be this focus on the father as a figure to be reckoned with that provides the transition from poem to novel. Lucea's mother is absent from the novel except that as a ghost she constantly reminds both father and

daughter of Lucea's "other" side, the side of sexual license, deceit, and slovenly habits. Lucea ruminates on her surroundings:

> And then the black people, ragged and unkempt, of the villages.... Women with heavy breasts and swaying hips, and men who looked coarsely and spoke coarsely. That was the time when you wished most passionately, with your whole heart and soul, that you were white.... And sometimes, but not often, for that was the most dreaded thought of all, you remembered that your mother was a woman like these, and you hated her, hated her, hated her, with a terrible fury of resentment. (42)

Lucea only infrequently remembers her mother, but, as Coetzee notes, in the colonial novel "blood remembers sin" (151). The sin is the coupling of Lucea's mother and father, the result of "opportunity" and "desire easily stimulated by drink so that the horror of that casual union of black and white might be forgotten in the sudden flame of a manufactured passion" (19). The manufactured nature of that desire is important, for if the desire were figured as natural then Lucea would be a product of nature. Instead, she is the unnatural progeny of an act "revolting in sober mood" (19). The manufactured attraction is countered by a natural revulsion, and Lucea, the product, "must pay during her lifetime" (19) for this sin. Her punishment is written on her body, *is* her body. The mulatta's body is figured in this text as a form of punishment – for the father, who cannot forget his shame while he is faced with Lucea's coffee-coloured skin, and for Lucea whose shame is her "forgotten" mother, remembered by her body. What Hyman's novel has in common with Hughes' poem is the effacement or forgetting of the mother, and yet at the same time both Hyman and Hughes privilege the mother's body as the site of racial identity. An unidentified voice in "Mulatto" asks, "What's the body of your mother?... What's the body of

your mother?" This is the central unarticulated or "forgotten" question of Hyman's text that Lucea's body remembers.

The punishment is both remembered by the body and "recorded in the blood" (Coetzee 150). The discourse of blood pervades Hyman's novel, just as it is omnipresent in those earlier Caribbean texts discussed above. Lucea is said to have both her father's "wandering blood" (21) and the "taint of negro blood" (74) flowing in her veins.[7] The nature of her "mixed blood" is frequently opposed to that of the "full-blooded blacks," (57) and it is from "taint of them" that her father wishes to "protect Lucea" (75). What the tainted black blood means has already been alluded to: emotionalism, fatalism, superstition, licentiousness, shiftlessness, immorality, deceit, cheating, lying and corruption (74-5). Lucea's father executes a course of treatment designed to cleanse Lucea of the corrupting influences of her black blood. What are identified as white traits or habits form the basis of Lucea's racial education: Standard English (15), emotional restraint (22), stoicism (47), a disciplined mind (86) and body (121), a reverence for Mother England (93), and a contempt for both blacks (42) and the coloured population (102). What is fascinating about this novel is that Lucea does not unlearn any of these lessons based on her experiences abroad, with the exception of the reverence for England and all things English. Lucea lives

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[7] It is worthy of note that this "negro blood" is rarely personalized – it is not so much her mother's blood as the blood of an entire corrupt race – which represents another way in which Lucea's mother is erased from the text. Her mother is blackness; that is all that is necessary to tell this story. Her father is white but he is also a speaking subject rather than a silent object. This racial dynamic operates within other fiction by white British/Caribbean writers. In Mary Gaunt's *Harmony: A Tale of the Old Slave Days in Jamaica* (1933) the slave woman Hesba is "honoured" (29) by the plantation owner Roger Thole's sexual attentions, and "dumbly thankful" (32) to him for giving her a son. Hesba's silence/absence is essential to later plot developments which include the passing of this coloured slave child as the legitimate white heir of the plantation. Her function in the story is purely biological: her mute black body passes the "taint of mixed blood" (44) onto her son, though he appears to be white.

through a brief period of "forgetting" her whiteness when her black blood "remembers" its legacy of sensuality and sexual shame, but this does not culminate in a new understanding of her dual cultural heritage; rather, as already illustrated, it leads Lucia to reject all social, cultural, national and racial components of her identity.

It is while struggling to become a poet in London that Lucea's black blood "tells." She meets and falls in love with the "typically English" Ronald Petty, with his "smooth fair hair, his fresh colour and clear skin [and] blue eyes" (219). Their relationship falls into a pattern: rather than go out in public, Lucea waits for Ronald at her apartment every day, and they spend their evenings together talking and making love. Lucea enjoys the traditional passive/active dynamic, "he making love to her with masculine fierceness, ... she languorous in his arms" (261). But there are moments of terror for Lucea, when she fears that "her own perverted heredity might be whispering through her tingling flesh" (262). Lucea's problem is that she is repeating the blood sin of her parents:

> For a moment a gulf opened before her, a chasm so deep that she recoiled before it. She saw the little Lucea of the negro yard, the fat women, the gross men, the promiscuity of it, the utter carelessness.... She saw the little Lucea taken by the hand, and led by her father along the hotel verandah.... Her father. The man whose lust had joined him to her mother.... She, Lucea, the product, with that double heritage of sheer, sensual depravity.... She shivered. With their blood coursing through her veins, firing it to desire and passion, to what end would that first step, once taken, lead...? (296)

Lucea's double heritage is on the one side a single social act of manufactured lust (her "white" side), and on the other side the immutable biological fact

of immorality and inferiority (her "black" side). The irony here is that her father, the bastion of emotional restraint and white values, is also a "carrier" of depravity because of the single time he wandered away from his racial training toward a "primitive and ugly ... woman" (74) who would become Lucea's mother. Lucea inherits both his wandering blood and her mother's moral turpitude and is therefore fated to repeat the sin of inter-racial sex. The sin is in her blood: she cannot escape the "doom passed on" (Coetzee 140).

Lucea embodies most of the racial traits traditionally assigned to the mulatta in white Caribbean discourse. She is described as physically attractive, mainly because her bronze skin covers "refined," "pinched," (20) "regular" (41) – that is, "white" – features. Her nose is pointy rather than flat, her mouth is narrow rather than full, and her hair is straight rather than kinky. Physically, she is the ideal embodiment of two cultures, but she is also an immoral temptress. Cornell West describes three stereotypical representations of the woman of colour: "There is Jezebel (the seductive temptress), Sapphire (the evil, manipulative bitch), or Aunt Jemima (the sexless, long-suffering nurturer)" (1994: 119). Lucea, like the mulatta in Caribbean discourse, has been assigned to the first category, as she discovers herself when her lover Ronald admits that "the attraction she had exercised had been against his will," and that "he had yielded to it only because he could not resist the allure she had for him" (269). Eventually Ronald summons all his strength to resist Lucea's exoticism, what he calls "'palm trees and niggers and all that sort of thing,'" (284) and the relationship ends. Lucea ruminates upon this rejection:

> She could have endured it if it had been based upon some rational theory against racial intermixture. She could have endured it if it had

> been based upon some logical biological belief in the danger of diluting the white blood with negro blood. She could have endured it if it had been based upon some strong theory that irregular union was dangerous to the social structure of the community. (273)

Ronald's rejection is irrational and illogical; in other words, it is based in emotion rather than reason and is as a result "natural" rather than "manufactured." The argument that miscegenation is unnatural is again rehearsed. Neither Ronald nor Hyman need resort explicitly to science or logic to make this argument (although the novel is indebted to scientific racism), when nature itself asserts the fact that miscegenation is immoral. The author's interest in and sympathy toward her protagonist does not mitigate one of the underlying lessons of the novel, namely that only intoxication (sexual or alcoholic) leads a white man to a coloured woman, and that on those rare occasions the woman herself is responsible for the seduction and cultural contamination of the white man.

And yet as a whole *Study in Bronze* is a contradictory text in its construction of the mulatta. Like Long, Edwards, and others, Hyman both repeats the construction of the mulatta as sexually corrupt and destructive, and at the same time contradicts this construction with the assertion that the mulatta is a modest and reserved figure. Lucea is alternately constructed as moderate (poised, self-contained, aloof) and immoderate (sexually unrestrained), reserved and excessive, clean and defiled, and this contradiction sits uneasily in Hyman's text. The mulatta for Hyman is a site where racial and gender stereotypes converge or perhaps collide – where the stereotypes of the white woman (pure and chaste) and the black woman (dirty and wanton) meet uneasily in one body. Homi Bhabha has argued that "the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and

repetitive chain of other stereotypes" (77). Hymen deploys a series of related colonial stereotypes in her construction of the mulatta: white/black, pure/defiled, intellectual/emotional, mind/body, European/Native. Lucea alternates between these opposed positions, neither fully occupying any single position nor deconstructing any set of terms. And in the end, Lucea's rejection of these terms marks out no alternate space – physical, cultural, psychic – for her to inhabit. This is, in the end, what marks her as the abject. Neither Hyman nor Lucea can imagine an identity beyond the boundaries of the binary systems alluded to above. Lucea is left in a state of pure negation: not-white, not-black, not-European, and so on. Hyman gestures toward a utopian future based on this negation, a future where "the only thing that mattered was the live, creative impulse, that urged you to take all you had... and turn it into the gossamer beauty of words weaving their way in a divine pattern over a sheet of white paper" (316), but Lucea, neither subject nor object and lacking all the signs of a social identity, has nothing to "take" and nowhere to take it.

Lucea's body is the visible sign of her abjection. As a liminal space, an in-between place, it is merely, in the terms of the novel, a "brown thing" (215). This affectionate epithet is employed by Lucea's white friends in London, but as a phrase it negates or delimits identity. Lucea's brownness is attractive to her father, to Ronald, to her white friends, and to the white reader, but she is also repulsive to this same imagined community.[8] The

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[8] The reader is repeatedly situated as white when s/he is educated as to how to read Lucea's brown body. Lucea is described in detail at twelve years old (clear skin, regular features, luminous black eyes) and the narrator's conclusion that her body makes an "attractive picture, once you had reconciled yourself to its colour" (41) seems to offer a suggestion, a recommended aesthetic interpretation, to the reader. Later, as an adult, Lucea meets a white man aboard ship on her passage to England: "The colour of her skin was ceasing to be all-important, and already an impartial, unprejudiced Englishman was seeing the beauty of feature and form that she knew to be hers, and thinking nothing at all about her colour" (121). This implicit appeal to the reader to occupy a similarly impartial position is repeated later

reader, for example, is encouraged to admire Lucea's not quite white body, but also to view it as outside the binary boundaries of identity as constructed by the novel. Without those clearly demarcated boundaries (black/ white), Lucea is figured as a threat to subject/ object distinctions and her miscegenetic body is therefore coded as the by-product and carrier of contamination. As a "brown thing" and a contagious thing Lucea's abjected body poses a threat to the boundary between (white) self and (black) other, a boundary that can be destroyed by bad blood. The result is an ambiguous, composite, hybrid figure that threatens "the precarious state of the European subject who is constantly menaced by the collapse into a chaos of indifferentiation" (Spurr 80), and a figure that embodies the attendant degeneracy that hybridity frequently signifies within white Caribbean discourse. And, as a "brown thing," Lucea's body is no-body. Without culture, nation, gender, race or sexuality she lacks a social identity. Lucea "triumphs" at the end of the novel as a disembodied spirit, "free" from all confines of identity, free to write poetry, free to finally say, "I have found Beauty infinitely sad." The problem is that Hyman has emptied that "I" of all possible meaning, expelled it beyond the limits of possibility, even beyond the limits of speech. The abject is not a social being; it is a state that allows another being – the white reader, the white writer – to constitute itself through the force of expulsion. In white Caribbean discourse, the impure mulatta is expelled so that the white self can imagine itself as whole, clean, pure.

If the mulatta as abject represents the expulsion of the unclean, she also

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when we are implored to "only concede the brown skin as a possibly beautifying factor, and it *must* be admitted that she was unusually attractive" (199). The narrative depends upon the reader imagining the possibility that Lucea is beautiful while simultaneously understanding Ronald's rejection of her based on her colour. This education of the reader suggests that s/he is posited as white.

"haunts the edges of the subject's identity with the threat of disruption or even dissolution" (McClintock 71). In Hyman's text Lucea's social and physical erasure leaves a trace: her brown "thingness." When I say above that Lucea is beyond the limits of speech I do not mean that she is unable to communicate, only that without a social identity she cannot occupy (whatever Hyman suggests) an "I" position, or function within the conventions of a social speech-act or dialogue. Lucea does not often speak directly in Hyman's text. The narrative voice that identifies itself as white, or as the surrogate for the white reader, dominates the novel. Scenes of "unmediated" dialogue are relatively rare, and representations of Lucea's thoughts are usually combined with narrative commentary and interpretation.

I would suggest that Lucea's text is not her poem but her body. Her speech is played out on her body, signified by her body, and it is her body that haunts and threatens to disrupt a white sense of self. In another context, on the subject of a different novel, Jeffrey Gray argues that the mulatta's body "is the event of the novel, whose plot consists of a series of descriptions of that event" (263). This could also be said of *Study in Bronze*, only I would add that it is Lucea's body as a brown *thing* that is the central event of the novel. This emphasis reminds us that the mulatta's body is frequently divorced from any social identity and posited as a repugnant by-product of colonialism and white subjectivity. It also reminds us that whiteness is a fundamentally relational category, defined by reference to that which "it has flung out to its perimeter" (Frankenberg 231), and dependent upon the constant supply of "images of chaos and disintegration, against which the principles of unity and order may be continually invoked" (Spurr 121).

Phyllis Bottome

Phyllis Bottome was born in 1882 in England of an English mother and American father. The family traveled a great deal while Bottome was young, mainly as a result of her father's occupation as parson and his need to seek new positions from time to time. Travel seems to have spurred Bottome to write. Her first novel, *Crooked Answers*, was published in 1911 when she was eighteen years old, and from then on until her death in 1963 Bottome published regularly. Her output includes novels, short stories, autobiographies (three in total), and biographies (most notably *Alfred Adler, a Biography* in 1939). From dust jacket blurbs and the rare reference to Bottome in literary-critical texts devoted to other writers or broad historical periods, it would appear that Bottome was, at least at one point in her career, a very popular writer. The American edition of her most known novel, *The Mortal Storm* (1937), was reprinted thirteen times within the year of its release (Brothers 248), and was made into a film starring Margaret Sullavan, James Stewart and Robert Young in 1940. The novel is set in Munich and tells the story of a Jewish family living through the years 1932-34.

Bottome traveled widely as an adult (she lived in Europe for much of the 1920s and 1930s), and seems to have written novels based on lived experiences in Europe, England and the United States. She died in 1963, shortly after the publication of her third autobiography, *The Goal*, in 1962. Though *The Goal* was completed well after Bottome had written her 1950 novel *Under the Skin*, which is set in the Caribbean, the period of time that she chronicles in this last autobiographical work are the years from 1930 to 1938. To my knowledge, nothing is known of Bottome's connection to the

West Indies. Based on her pattern of setting novels in places in which she had lived and to which she felt connected, it is likely that Bottome resided in the Caribbean some time in the 1940s, but this can only be a guess. Bottome's socialist leanings and her sympathy for the victims of racial oppression can, however, be gleaned from her published works, especially *The Mortal Storm*. Bottome's characters discuss the ideologies of nazism, communism, Judaism, and feminism, and, as Barbara Brothers notes, the novel "directs our attention to the practice of these ideologies" (251). Bottome may have been interested in the complex racial dynamics and history of imperialism in the Caribbean, since much of her novel *Under the Skin* is concerned with the racial education of the English protagonist Lucy Armstrong.

In *Under the Skin* the social dynamic between mulatto/a and white forms the basic substance of the narrative, and like Hyman's work this novel explores the racial and sexual tensions between black and white that the mulatta represents within her body. The difference between Bottome and Hyman is that Bottome interrogates more rigorously than does Hyman notions of racial, gender and class identities within a West Indian social scene, although this interrogation at times lapses into colonialist representations and ideologies. Bottome's work is more complex and more conflicted than Hyman's admittedly contradictory representation of the mulatta, and is also more ambivalent on the subject of race "mixing," the results of which are presented in surface/depth oppositions as (alternately) physically beautiful but morally corrupt; physically repugnant but morally beautiful; and potentially both physically and morally superior. The discourse of blood is reproduced in a muted and slightly altered form, and degeneracy is not necessarily viewed as the consequence of miscegenation.

Miscegenation is seen as the central social problem in the text, but is not figured as the ultimate scene of defilement.

As in *Study in Bronze*, Bottome's text is structured around the journey motif. But in *Under the Skin* it is not the West Indian mulatta who literally crosses boundaries (national, cultural, racial) during the ocean voyage, thus signifying her inbetween position as an outcast and wanderer, but rather the white and British Lucy Armstrong, who occupies the centre of this story and passes between two worlds.[9] Lucy is in mourning for her "old world" (18) which has been destroyed by war and by the deaths of her two lovers in the war. Having lost her own identity in the war, she is also in mourning for herself, for her own "frozen state" (11). Like the colonialist archetype, she sails to the "new world" (18), which is figured as a blank page, in order to reinvent herself or to find a new identity. The unnamed Caribbean island to which she journeys represents a space that awaits Lucy's arrival, and then becomes the site for her self-discovery: "... looking across the golden sea she could invent whatever life she liked out of the deep purple shadows, which she now knew were land" (15). But unlike the typical colonial scene wherein the colonizer views the island as a simplified replication of the old world, or as a space the value of which will be measured against that of the original model (England), Lucy's island functions as a transitional space between old and new, between colonialist and creole identities, between

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[9] It is interesting that the protagonists of both Hyman's and Bottome's texts share the same name and also some characteristics of St. Lucy. Stories have circulated that St. Lucy was denounced as a Christian by her rejected suitor, which offers an ironic counterpoint to Lucea's rejection by Ronald and his denouncement of her as a "barbarian" ("palm trees and niggers and all that sort of thing..."). Hyman also possibly plays with the suggestion of light (light skin) associated with Lucy's name. Bottome explicitly associates her Lucy with lightness (purity and whiteness), and is also more directly engaged with St. Lucy's reputation as the "virgin martyr," famous for her refusal of marriage (Lucy will refuse a very good match). In the end, Lucy is once more in Bottome's text an ironic "saint" who, in marrying a black man, gives up her light/whiteness and status as virgin.

white and black. In the course of the novel, Lucy relinquishes all of the sources of her power: her status as British, her position as headmistress of a prestigious girl's school, and even her identity as white. Like Lucea's, Lucy's ocean voyage involves the crossing of national, cultural and racial boundaries, but unlike Lucea, Lucy does not go back.

"Saint" Lucy is established early in the story as the model of white English womanhood. Her colour is repeatedly described as "shell-pink" (9) and "pink and white" (39, 69), and her erect, slender, well-balanced and well-regulated body represents the ideal of femininity. Lucy's "white" characteristics include restraint (9), good breeding (10), a sense of duty (10), and "innocence" (17). She is described as "well-born" and "well-bred" but also as preventing herself "from using these privileges in a self-indulgent manner" (10). She knows how to treat her inferiors (with kindness, compassion, and gentle correction), and most important she is directed by an all-powerful sense of duty and good faith. Lucy fully understands her burden as a white woman, evident when she explains to her new charges in her inaugural appearance as headmistress that she "came from another island – an old, rich, friendly island, full of knowledge; and she had brought them some of that knowledge" (40). Lucy is in part coded as white when she adopts the feminine equivalent to what Spurr calls the position of the "cultivated man," who is "a figure of ennobled subjectivity defined by enlightened *human* ideals rather than by the narrow interests of a tribe" (111). Lucy determines, upon meeting the creole children of the Everslade School, that out of "the alien speech and manners which had been thrust upon them only a few generations ago, the children wanted to gain a quality that was universal which would put them into a position in which they no longer felt any sense of inferiority," and that she would "bestow this quality

on them" (54-5). By "universal" Lucy means, of course, "British." She wants these children to trade in their island language, culture and identities for "universal" qualities. The question is one of civilization: Lucy's civilizing mission is justified by the "universal" philosophy that "backward people... had to be controlled by more civilized ones, and the British *were* more civilized than Africans" (52).

As a war heroine, and as a white woman with the right sentiments, Lucy is welcomed into the white community on the island, which is represented by the Anstruthers. The Anstruthers and their set regard Lucy as "a modest, unassuming girl of the old Victorian type, only considerably more active and useful" (161), and value her accordingly. As a Victorian "girl" whose "proper Victorian sensibilities place her above the sexual temptations which might lead to interracial mixing" (Mencke 64), Lucy is ideal marriage material for Bob Anstruther, who has in the past dallied with black island "girls" but who now, as he tells Lucy, wants a "girl who's lovely and kind, white inside and out" (169). White inside and out, Lucy is a valuable commodity for the Anstruthers, just as this Victorian "type" has been valued within colonialist discourse. The white woman of good stock in the colonies is the "fountainhead of racial strength" whose duty is to keep order, peace, hygiene and economy, and to "perpetuate a vigorous race" (Stoler 1991: 73, 81). In the colonies, as in this novel, good European women are seen as able to "safeguard prestige, morality, and insulate their men from the cultural and sexual contamination of contact with the colonized" (Stoler 1991: 81). The key to the preservation of white racial purity lies in the moral sense of the white woman, as the race theorist Daniel Brinton explains in 1890:

It is to the woman alone of the highest race that we must look to

> preserve the purity of the type.... They have no holier duty, no more sacred mission, than that of transmitting in its integrity the heritage of ethnic endowment gained by the race through thousands of generations of struggle. That philanthropy is false, that religion is rotten, which would sanction a white woman enduring the embrace of a coloured man. (287)

Bob needs a little safeguarding: his long-past relationship with Jenny, a coloured woman, produced a child who died as a baby, and ended with Jenny's suicide as a result of Bob's abandonment. Lucy is viewed by the Anstruthers as Bob's corrective and Jenny's proper white correlative.

Where, in all this, is the figure of the mulatto/a? I have dwelled on the symbolic value of Lucy's whiteness in order to preface the central conflict and opposition within the novel between the all-English, all-white Lucy and her not quite white rival, Elvira. Lucy has come to the Island to take up the position of headmistress of Everslade, a position which Elvira has been temporarily holding "between" headmistresses until a suitable white replacement could be found. Lucy does not realize that she has been recruited to supplant a "coloured" woman – in fact she does not even realize that Elvira is coloured until Elvira herself explains her position:

> "... I'm colored."
>
> "Oh!" Lucy exclaimed with a little gasp of horror. "But why – if you are – should it make the slightest difference?"
>
> Elvira was pleased at Lucy's horror.... "It makes *all* the difference on the island," Elvira said with tragic intensity. "For one thing it's the reason they brought you over. You see, I couldn't be a real headmistress unless the children were all black. I could only be a sort of deputy, and they found that wasn't quite enough." (28-9)

Elvira is positioned within the novel as the tragic mulatta, the near-white ("seven-eighths," she asserts [240]) malcontent who "yearns to be white and is doomed to unhappiness and despair because of this impossible dream" (Dearborn 140). Elvira is white – Lucy cannot see her "colour" – but she is not "white." She lacks Lucy's interior whiteness. She asserts that she is "one with the British Empire" (240), but inside her body her black blood, her lack of purity, her racial taint, denies this assertion. The outside of her beautifully manicured, pale-skinned body is marked by Bottome to signal this invisible flaw. While Bottome does not explicitly reproduce the discourse of tainted blood that we have seen associated with the mulatta, she does repeatedly associate Elvira with blood: her "carefully reddened lips" (21), her "ruby ring" (35), her "blood red" (35) or "brilliant crimson" nails (69), and her "crimson-tipped fingers" (200) all mark Elvira as deviant, deceptive, dangerous, excessive, sexual, and predatory – as, in other words, the mulatta. Elvira may be "passionately pro-British, Anglo-Catholic, and Conservative" (29) as she claims, but it all amounts to naught as her body is a site of racial pollution and she can not, as Lucy can, protect the purity of the future generations of the white race.

The mulatta stereotypes that attend Elvira, the seductive temptress, are not revised by Bottome, though the objects of Elvira's charms slightly alter the portrait. Elvira's primary power is a sexual power, but her victims are young white girls rather than white men. Elvira is described as having "absolute power" (70) over her favourite and devoted students:

> She played on the awakening senses of young girls without any danger of losing control over her own. Girls had to wake up physically sooner or later, why should they not wake up to her? She made them aware of her as they had never been aware of anyone before. Her look, the curve

> of her crimson lips, the light touch of her narrow hands, electrified them.... Elvira sank down on the divan by Marjorie's side. She could feel the dangerous thrill that passed through the girl's body, as if a skilled hand had swept across the strings of a harp, forcing their silence into music.... [Marjorie] trembled a little more when Elvira lightly touched her hand. (70-2)

Elvira's racial degeneracy is signaled by her "unnatural" and predatory (homo)sexuality. Further, her erotic relationship with Marjorie is marked by another unnatural inversion. On a number of occasions Marjorie, "so long enslaved and corrupted" (262) by Elvira, is symbolically divested of her whiteness in her position as slave. Elvira, then, "passes" for white in her symbolic position as master in this racial reversal of the master/slave paradigm. Passing of course represents a transgression of boundaries, and is a form of trespassing. Elaine Ginsberg explains that "black" to "white" passing involves "escaping the subordination and oppression accompanying one identity and accessing the privilege and status of the other" (3) and that, from the perspective of the dominant race, passing is "deception, an attempt to claim status and privilege falsely" (8). Since passing destabilizes the grounds of privilege founded on racial identity, the individual who passes is a threat to racially dominant groups and is generally marked by that group as unnatural, subversive and inauthentic. Elvira is represented by Bottome throughout the novel in precisely these terms, as an inauthentic figure who performs whiteness but who is essentially non-white (recall Elvira's earlier performance of "tragic intensity" as she informs Lucy of her colour). This contradiction between appearance (white/master) and essence (black/slave) is what identifies Elvira as the villain of Bottome's novel. It is not merely that Elvira is after

Lucy's job or that she manipulates young girls to aid her in her goal, but that she "appears" not to be what she "is." In positioning herself as master over Marjorie, Elvira is involved in racial theft. She tries to take for herself the privilege that both Marjorie and Lucy are given as a birth right.

Elvira is one of three biracial characters in the novel, but she is the only one who is situated squarely within the territory of the mulatta stereotype constructed within white Anglo-Caribbean discourse. I have suggested that Elvira is marked as the sexual, social, racial degenerate because she wants to be white, feels herself to be white, rejects her "legal" status as black, and assumes for herself, without social sanction, a position of white privilege. Elvira's biracial double, Myra O'San , a student at Everslade, is in all meaningful ways Elvira's opposite (the binary terms Elvira/ Myra suggest a similar miscegenetic status but also an opposition of meaning): she has a "heavy, ugly face" (39) that initially frightens Lucy; she is quiet, thoughtful, and self-effacing; and she is critical of the attitudes and privileges of white people, whom she refers to as "beautiful fiends" (199). Myra is constructed as the authentic mulatta who accepts her double heritage and knows her place. She tells Lucy, with whom she has allied herself against Elvira and the chosen tribe of privileged white girls, that she, Myra, "never had a white friend before," and that she "had meant to be your servant, and look after you.... But what you speak of is different. It is much more." (195). Lucy invites Myra into a position of equality and friendship, which Myra begins to accept as she overcomes her fears of whiteness, whereas Elvira assumes as a right what is in fact a privilege of whites to grant to non-whites. Both Elvira's surface beauty, and Myra's ugliness (attributed to her particular racial mix of black and Chinese) are ironic: Myra is wisdom, goodness and loyalty on the inside, while Elvira's core is rotten. Given the title of the

novel – *Under the Skin* – Bottome's point is that it's what's inside that counts: both Lucy and Myra are "white" (honest, loyal, selfless, restrained, innocent) inside, partly because they both question the value of (though Lucy continues to exercise) white privilege. Elvira, who covets power and privilege, is a tainted and flawed figure whose outward whiteness is a lie that conceals her inward darkness.

Myra functions in the novel partly as a foil to Elvira and partly as race educator to Lucy, whose celebrated "innocence" includes naiveté on the subject of island race relations. Lucy's principal misunderstandings and failures of communication occur with Philip Calgary, the third biracial character in the novel. Philip is the product of "one of those old half-planter, half-freed-Negro families" (30), and is also the doctor on call for Everslade, as no white doctors practice in such a remote location. Lucy interprets Philip's distance and coolness toward her as unjustified snubbing rather than caution and self-preservation. For example, after Lucy has been injured in an "accident" orchestrated by Elvira, Philip recommends that a white doctor attend her during her recovery even though he is at hand and the white doctor is at some distance. Lucy objects, arguing that the plan is impractical and that as Philip is the better doctor she would prefer his attendance. She does not understand that Philip's recommendation is based on racial, not medical, qualifications. Later, Myra explains to Lucy that Lucy's individual qualities are not the issue, but that she is feared and hated by non-whites owing to "the feeling of your whiteness [which] may do something that cannot be stopped" (199). While Lucy daily enjoys white privilege and exercises white power, she cannot as yet see her whiteness and the threat it contains – what it could *do* – to characters like Philip.

As the novel progresses, Lucy and Philip are increasingly attracted to one

another. Lucy admits her feelings to herself, and later to Philip, but Philip suppresses his attraction and rejects the possibility of any intimate relationship with Lucy. When a friend asks him what he thinks of the new headmistress, he replies:

> "I make nothing of her. You know as well as I do what any coloured man thinks of a white woman when he sees her alone for the first time. He realizes that his manhood is a passive insult to her, and he behaves accordingly. If he has any pride, he ignores her.... A man is, after all, a man as well as a human being. If he is a busy man with a satisfied heart as I am, he will not have even the flicker of desire for such a woman, yet the knowledge of how she would repudiate such a desire makes him hate her at first sight." (105)

Philip aptly illustrates the gendered nature of racial identity and interracial contact. His comments allude to the long history of black-white relations in the colonies as they pertain to the specific case of black male and white female relations. Such relations are not discussed in the Anglo-Caribbean discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because, though an historical fact, they were practically unthinkable. One could conclude from reading Long, Schaw, Edwards, and Froude that no white woman had ever strayed from her role as preserver of the white race, and yet the fact is that marriages – never mind extra-marital relations – between white women and coloured men occurred in the colonies.[10] What Long et. al. indirectly affirm is that very few if any white women of the *upper classes* crossed the colour line. The proper Victorian "girl" who makes her way into Anglo-Caribbean discourse and into Bottome's novel is a girl of the upper-middle class, well-born and well-bred. Ray Baker wrote in 1908 that in the

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[10] See Brathwaite: 1971, 188.

"majority of [racial] intermarriages the white women belong to the lower walks of life," and are "German, Irish, or other foreign women, respectable but ignorant" (172). The "lower walks" of white women are hardly the ones on whom to depend for the perpetuation of the race anyway. As McClintock observes, the lower classes (including foreign white "ethnics") were considered in the nineteenth century as a source of "contagion" (47). The debased sentiments and immoral proclivities that could be contracted by whites from racially contaminated non-whites could also be passed on to the ruling class from the diseased lower classes. And these lower classes could not be counted on to preserve racial integrity in the colonies. Mrs. Carmichael refers to the "secondary class of whites" who were involved in miscegenation as "white Negroes" (I 59), thus illustrating that class and race memberships are sometimes interdependent.

Philip's comments above reflect a gender and class inflected awareness of black male/white female relations. Philip "makes nothing" of Lucy in part because black men have been historically punished for making anything of white women (even for looking, since looking at a white woman assumes a power over her and an equality with white men), but also because Lucy's class makes her even more inaccessible and potentially threatening to Philip's position as a respected doctor in the black community. For reasons of race and class, Philip views his "manhood" as an insult to Lucy, and Lucy as an insult to his manhood. Philip responds slowly to his attraction for Lucy because her colour challenges his masculinity. The power of whiteness to emasculate is suggested when Myra tells Lucy that her whiteness has a "terrible power" and that Philip "wants to give you the whole world – he does not want to take it from you" (198). Philip, as a black man, has no "world" to give Lucy; Bob

Anstruther, on the other hand, has the entire British Empire behind him, not to mention a great deal of wealth generated by extensive family holdings in the island. With Bob, Lucy would be in her proper feminine place – dependent and grateful – but with Philip Lucy would be ascendant, powerful in her whiteness and emasculating in her power.

Frantz Fanon explains that "the black [man] is not a man" (8) within colonialism, that instead of attaining subjecthood the black man in the face of white rule suffers "crushing objecthood" (109). Fanon's model of black objectification and emasculation under colonialism reflects to some degree Philip's crisis of masculinity in Bottome's text, but it is also a problematic paradigm. While Bhabha praises Fanon's "meditation on the experience of dispossession and dislocation... which speaks to the condition of the marginalized, the alienated" (63), other critics have censured Fanon for equating the colonial "subject" with "man." Gwen Bergner, for example, asserts that in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon's "account of normative raced masculinity depends on the production or exclusion of femininities" (77), and that Fanon situates both black and white women within the colonialist dynamic as passing back and forth "between black men and white men, enabling the differentiation of masculine subject positions according to race" (80). The circulation of women is for Fanon a determining factor of masculinity, and so, since the black man is not allowed to control the bodies of either black or white women, he is therefore symbolically castrated. My point in invoking Fanon is not to validate the trade in women but rather to illustrate an interesting development in Bottome's text, namely that white *femininity* has the power to symbolically castrate the black man because, as Bottome recognizes, racial hierarchies are more potent than gender hierarchies

within colonial politics. Fanon does not argue that white women have any such power; in fact, he describes the sexual union of the black man and the white woman as "an initiation into 'authentic' manhood" (72). Fanon believes, and tries to prove, that black men seek out white women because "by loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man" (63). For the black man, the pursuit of white women is the pursuit of white subjectivity, an antidote to crushing objecthood. In Bottome's text, white subjectivity even at the symbolic level is not available to the black man through interracial relations. Instead, the black man is stripped of his only source of social and cultural power – his "manhood." In Fanon's text, the black man is fractured under the gaze of the white man (110); in Bottome's text, the white woman's gaze has the power to destroy black male subjectivity.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the presence of an emasculating white woman, Bottome goes to some lengths to illustrate Philip's manliness. He is the tall, dark, handsome hero with a sculptured face, thick black brows, a clean-cut Grecian line between forehead and nose, and sensitive, firm lips. His body is straight, his shoulders are broad and his hips are slender. He is in part the stereotypical mulatto, with dark skin and "white" features, and a haughty, "arrogant" manner (67). But the difference between Philip and Elvira – that is, between Philip and the dominant mulatto/a stereotype within white Anglo-Caribbean discourse – is that Philip embraces his blackness. He considers himself a black man and does not "trade," as does Elvira, on white ancestry. Like Myra, the other "good" mulatto/a, Philip makes no claims of privilege or grabs for power. And Philip's refusal to identify himself as white or even part-white contributes to his "manly" identity, since within the politics of the novel racial

passing is presented as a sign of weakness, of failure, of degeneracy. Bottome further establishes Philip's masculine strength and beauty through contrast with Lucy's pink and white girlishness. Philip's mother addresses the relations of power between the two lovers when she acknowledges that Philip "does not care for adult women" (226). Philip's preference for the girlish Lucy (as opposed to the womanly Elvira) allows him some masculine authority within a patriarchal social world, even if that patriarchal order is disrupted by racial hierarchies. Because Philip is not just a handsome lover, but also a father figure and protector, he is situated firmly within the novel as a hypermasculine heroic figure. But most important for the preservation of Philip's masculinity is Lucy's great renunciation for the sake of their love: she gives up her whiteness so that they may be married. If, as George Hardy proclaimed in 1929, "a man remains a man as long as he stays under the watch of a woman of his race" (in Stoler 1991: 80), then Philip remains a man when Lucy accepts his marriage proposal and in so doing becomes a "coloured" woman.

In order for Lucy to be able even to conceive of relinquishing a white identity she must first understand that her whiteness represents a social, historical and cultural position of power that threatens and alienates non-whites. Myra helps Lucy to see the significance of her colour:

> "...I think you still do not know what we feel here on the island about – white people. Your hand lies here on mine, and it is white. Please do not take it away, but do not forget either that I must learn not to hate white hands."
>
> "Oh, Myra," Lucy cried, "do you really mean that Philip could *mind* my being white? Why, I never think for an instant about his color. He is so handsome – his color to me is no more than a sunburn.

> If what you say is true, I must get sunburned too."
>
> "Yes – but it is *not* sunburn," Myra said inexorably, "it is his skin, and yours is white. Lucy, how strong your heart must be if your love can conquer the hate in Philip. Here for two hundred years we have been your slaves.... No one can bear to be a slave to anyone else...."
>
> "You mean," Lucy said after a long pause, "that I must give up liking to be white? I must live in some other way?"
>
> "Yes," said Myra, "If you marry Philip there will be nothing more for you but Philip and the island...." (198)

Lucy knows what it is to live as a white – what she does not know is what that living means to non-whites. She knows, for example, that as much as she loves Philip she "belong[s] to Bob and the planters" (75). And yet throughout the novel Lucy has ambivalent responses to Bob and his "set." She objects to Bob's assertion that "the British *are* the island" by reminding him of "another island" (114), the island that her mainly coloured students inhabit, and she challenges Bob's implicit suggestion that the "test of possession" is cricket matches and regattas (114). At the same time, Lucy feels "safe" (159) with the Anstruthers and welcomes that feeling. She is, she knows, "Bob's cup of tea" (160). And yet, she notes that the Anstruthers and their kind "let acute poverty, the malnutrition of children, the fearful sufferings and angry bitterness of the population, slide off them like water off a duck's back" (161-62). But despite her criticisms, Lucy recognizes that the Anstruthers are her people, that they share her culture and a "common code" (278). The fact that she can *see* them as such, that she recognizes this code, speaks of Lucy's cultural education on the island. In one revealing passage, Lucy sees Bob's whiteness for the first time: "Lucy was so used to the men of her own race that not until Everslade had blotted them out of

her immediate existence had she really noticed them" (162). Whiteness and its attendant culture has, for Lucy, become visible.

Having begun to recognize that whiteness is a cultural and social, rather than biological, identity, Lucy begins the process of giving it all up. She tells Bob that she intends to marry Philip, and he responds with "incredulous, horrified anger" (280):

> "... [W]hatever you hoped about our staying friends, if you *did* hope it, has got to be washed out. I'd never willingly set eyes on you again – as Philip Calgary's wife. God! It's unthinkable!... You'll lose us, Judy and me and all the rest of us." (282-5)

Lucy proceeds to do what is almost, but not quite, "unthinkable" even to herself. She can barely imagine her new life, which would entail giving up "her rights and privileges as an Englishwoman," giving up her position as headmistress, having "an African mother-in-law," and becoming the "mother of a Negro's child" (286). Lucy's giving whiteness up is also represented in the novel as her giving whiteness away: "if she gave even this – gave her clear-skinned white body into the dark stream of the island's life – what good would come of it?" (207). Lucy's great sacrifice is giving up her white culture, becoming a citizen of the "other" island, the black island, and also giving her body over to blackness. Pouring her blood into the "dark stream" of the island means not being the Victorian girl of proper sensibilities who is crucial to the preservation of the white race. Lucy gives up a lot – not just the respect and companionship of the Anstruthers and their set, not just white privilege and power, not just a career, but her symbolic value as a racially pure white woman within colonial history and white Anglo-Caribbean discourse. Lucy contaminates her pink and white body by giving it to Philip and to the island, and in so doing symbolically

occupies the position of the mulatta. Neither white nor black, subject nor object, Lucy has become the abject. She is, as Bob says, the "unthinkable," the inbetween, the composite, that which cannot be assimilated. Earlier in the novel Bob had exclaimed, "how incredibly white you are, Lucy!" and then added, "I suppose you'll get beige and bronze like the rest of us soon" (120). Bob unwittingly anticipates Lucy's transmutation into a coloured woman.

Bottome's achievement in this novel is the recognition that whiteness is a social identity that is constructed and that can be gained or lost depending upon class-bound codes of behaviour. Whiteness in the novel is a set of social habits (restraint, duty) rather than a biological imprint, and therefore is an identity determined by collective agreement or cultural consensus rather than genetic programming. Even Lucy's "inside" whiteness is an expression of this idea. An inside whiteness is a set of mind and is not expressed within the novel as correlative of, for example, white blood. But one of the problems in the novel is the underlying humanist message that contradicts this positing of a social identity constructed by nationalist, historical, class and racial discourses. Throughout the novel Bottome takes pains to assert that "under the skin" everyone is really the same – that is, that skin colour really has no meaning. One character in the novel concludes that Lucy "is human *first*, before she is a white woman" (105). Lucy's defection to the "other" island is eventually offered as proof of this assertion, but the question remains as to what it means to be "human," what a "human" identity is. Bottome presumably means to suggest that compassion, kindness, and love are universal human values, but the problem is that these values cannot be divorced from their enculturated

practices. Lucy's idea of compassion, for example, is her bringing of enlightenment to the darker races, and this colonialist *practice* is vindicated by the text. (Even Philip, the spokesperson for the "other" island, supports Lucy's civilizing mission.) It would seem that under the skin, Lucy is a colonizer, but that is presumably not what is meant by the various assertions in the text that "we ought all of us on the island just to be human beings" (191). Lucy learns that all of us cannot just be human beings, that one has to choose sides, but the ideal is clearly articulated and one toward which the novel gestures in its culminating act of miscegenation.

It is this hope that humans can exist outside of history, that universal values exist (to be practiced universally), that an identity can be found under the skin, that connects Bottome's novel most strongly to Hyman's. The difference is that Hyman imagines that Lucea can escape history to fulfill her destiny as a poet, while Bottome argues that the escape is ideal but cannot (as yet) be achieved. Bottome and Hyman also share a colonialist mentality in different manifestations. Hyman's approach to racial identities and her indebtedness to Anglo-Caribbean discourses of blood contamination ally her with the scientific racism of the nineteenth century. Bottome's endorsement of Lucy's civilizing mission reflects that (and this) century's preoccupation with bringing European enlightenment to the dark regions of the world, and Bottome's condemnation of "passing" suggests that authentic and inauthentic racial identities exist, as determined by the racially dominant group. But in the end, Bottome's text is more fractured, more ambivalent, more contradictory than Hyman's. Bottome's conception of the mulatto/a is varied, as she both reproduces and repudiates colonialist conceptions of race identity. While she suggests that the "good" mulatto/a is the one who embraces a non-white identity, she also suggests that a

mulatto/a identity is fluid and determined by social custom rather than biological imprint. Bottome also, with Lucy's racial defection, gestures toward a creole identity, a sense of self not based on notions of racial purity or defilement, or on the need to transform the Caribbean island into a little England. The island is for Lucy a transitional space between colonial and creole identities, and miscegenation is in the novel the social act that both inaugurates and represents this transformation of identity.

CHAPTER THREE

Whiteness and Creole Identity: Eliot Bliss and Phyllis Shand Allfrey

> [Creoles] are generally considered a self-satisfied, ignorant and indolent class, for the most part sprung from low classed parents who have made money. They are overbearing toward those who depend on them. They have very little conversation. With the men one can talk about sugar and almost solely about sugar; but with those creole ladies it is perfectly useless to attempt to make them talk. They can answer yes or no and perhaps will venture to ask you if you like the country. They are also very shy or awkward.
>
> – Father Woollett, *circa* 1850 (in Moore, 30)

In the Caribbean context, the term "creole," from the Spanish *criollo* (which is from the Portuguese *crioulo*) meaning "native," generally refers to any plant, person, animal, habit, food, figure of speech – just about any object or idea – born in or native to the West Indies. Thomas Stephens suggests that the Portuguese *crioulo* amalgamates *cria*, meaning servant born in the master's house, and the diminutive ending *-oulo*, from the Latin *-olus*, which would lead to "little native born servant" as a general definition of the term (29-30). In early Portuguese, Spanish, and American use, the term *criollo*, *crioulo* or creole tended to refer to a white European born in the new world, while in the British Caribbean "creole" generally referred to anyone native born in the Caribbean.[1] Brathwaite asserts that in the Anglo-

[1] These are only the dominant meanings, however. Stephens has uncovered some variations in the uses of the term throughout the Americas, partly because different languages traveled with the user, and partly because of ambiguities in the term's etymology. But by

Caribbean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the term was used in relation to both whites and people of colour, slaves or free, and that it "presupposes a situation where the society concerned is caught up in some kind of colonial arrangement with a metropolitan European power, on the one hand, and a (tropical) plantation arrangement on the other, and where the society is multi-racial but organized for the benefit of a minority of European origin" (1974: 10). Judith Raiskin agrees that the term refers to "something or someone originating in a colonial territory" (1), but is less convinced of the stability of the term's definition. In a broader global context, the meaning of "creole" fluctuates over time and place. In the Caribbean use, birthplace is privileged over colour, ethnicity or language, hence the addition of qualifiers ("white creole" or "Spanish creole") to further define the subject, but in Europe and in the United States "creole" is frequently understood to mean either a person of mixed racial ancestry where one of the ancestors is white, or a person of "pure" white descent whose ancestors are French or Spanish (Raiskin 3). Virginia Domínguez traces the history of the term in Louisiana and finds that two dominant and divergent meanings are attached to it. Two types of Louisianians have historically identified, and continue to identify, themselves as creole: one is socially and legally white, and the other is socially and legally coloured. The white side, Domínguez explains, "by definition cannot accept the existence of the colored creoles; the colored side, by definition, cannot accept the white conception of creole" (149). The only subject upon which the two sides seem to agree is that a black person cannot be a creole, which suggests how the term in the American context is bound up with claims of white

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the eighteenth century, Stephens says, "creole" was used to describe things and persons native to the English Caribbean (33).

European ancestry and consequent social status.

But in the Caribbean, a creole identity is "independent of all complexional distinctions," as one anonymous British writer sojourning in Jamaica explains to his home audience in 1873 (*Letters* 21). The historical concerns surrounding the notion of a creole identity in Anglo-Caribbean discourse are less about questions of colour and more about the social, cultural and linguistic habits or performances identified as belonging to the native West Indian, whether black, white or coloured. Creole, as an identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is situated between the two great traditions of Europe and Africa, belonging fully to neither but maintaining ties to both. And, in the case of white creoles, that identity was viewed by European visitors to the Caribbean as so foreign as to require exact description for and explanation to European readers. The white or black creole, in many historical documents, is assigned a number of social, cultural and linguistic habits that construct the creole as a racial "type" distinct from the white European or black African. So, for example, while the white European is habitually described as industrious and energetic, the white creole is defined as indolent (as in Woollett above); or, while the African is said to be savage and unmanageable, the black creole (generally, a "seasoned" slave) is childlike and docile.

The indolence of the white creoles is widely noted by European writers and raises some interesting questions regarding the blurring of boundaries between cultural and racial identities. Throughout colonial history and within colonial discourse it is conventionally the racial other, the black native, who is habitually defined and dismissed as lazy, idle, indolent. Indolence, viewed by European colonizers as a racial trait, and frequently constructed as synonymous with blackness, both offends the sensibilities of

the energetic colonizer and justifies colonization. The indolence of the white Caribbean creoles also frequently offends the European visitor and betrays European anxieties regarding racial definitions and what is commonly referred to as "going native." I discuss below in greater detail the significance of indolence as an assigned creole trait, given that this term is tainted by association with the construction of the African native as indolent. Suffice it to say here that while the white creole is by definition of "pure" European descent (from the prefix "white," not the term "creole"), white creole identity has been defined in part by the discourse of contamination and degeneration associated with the notion of going native. As a consequence of failing to uphold class-bound social behaviours such as industry or energy, the white creole has been represented as insufficiently or inauthentically white or European. Woollett emphasizes this intersection between class and race identities when, in discussing how the creole identity differs from a colonizing European identity, he stresses the "low classed" origins of wealthy creoles.

"Creole" carries within it an implicit assault on discrete racial identities. If the creole is situated between Europe and Africa, s/he is also situated between whiteness and blackness, or as "below" whiteness and "above" blackness, as a kind of cultural mulatto/a. Like the mulatto/a, the creole represents a disruption of binary categories such as European/African, white/black, civilized/savage, and also the threat of boundary-crossing, of blurring distinctions between or asserting the fluidity of racial, cultural and national identities. And, like the mulatto/a identity, creoleness calls into question the criteria by which Europeanness or whiteness can be identified – certainly not only by colour, or by education, or by class, or by country of birth. If the colonial venture is predicated in part on being able to

distinguish the colonizer from the colonized, the creole can pose a problem. While the wealthy white creole on the plantation is clearly engaged in the colonial project, s/he is also frequently viewed by the metropole as a failed, fictional or inauthentic white European, contaminated by tropical living. Like the mulatto/a, the creole in Anglo-Caribbean discourse is often represented as a degenerate figure, mainly because those middle-class dispositions that traditionally identify the colonizing European are not, according to European visitors such as Woollett, rigorously upheld by the white creole. Reverend J. R. Moore, writing in 1874 in Guyana, identifies white middle-class colonial values as energy, persevering industry, moral courage, self-denial, frugality, prudence, carefulness, and avoidance of false pride (in Moore 18). The white creoles were frequently viewed by European or colonial whites as failing to meet these criteria, as passing for white rather than as being authentically white, and even of passing for middle class when "sprung from low classed parents." In short, creole whites fail to perform whiteness successfully as defined by the colonial power.

Stoler argues that it is a myth that whites in the colonies formed a "natural community of common class interests, racial attributes, political affinities, and superior culture," and that boundaries separating colonizer from colonized were not always self-evident and easily drawn (1991: 52). The fractious nature of the white community, even at the upper end of the economic scale, is evident in the writings of eighteenth and nineteenth century travelers and historians: there is generally, at some point, a recognition of the great divide between European and creole culture. Just as "Rochester" notes that Antoinette is "Creole of pure English descent" but also "not English or European" (Rhys 56), English writers of the last few centuries define white creoles in paradoxical terms, as (like the mulatto/a)

white but not quite, European yet alien, friendly yet hostile. As in the earlier discussion of the mulatto/a, in this chapter I preface my reading of two novels by white creole women by historicizing the notion of a gendered white creole identity. In historical accounts, the "white creole" tends to mean the male of species, while the female is treated in a separate category. So, for example, throughout his *History of Jamaica* when Long refers to "the creole" he means the white creole man; "creole ladies" and "creole children" are described in detail in distinct sections. Rather than follow this precedent, I privilege gender when discussing both masculine and feminine forms of creole identity. I begin with some general comments on the representation of creole masculinity and on so-called "racial" traits said to be shared by creole men and women alike, and I then proceed to isolate in more detail the representations of white creole women in particular, in both historical and fictional texts. Finally, I outline the significance of creoleness as a theoretical or conceptual category, as a hybrid identity, and as a cultural practice.

There is some consensus in the writings of colonial Europeans on the strengths and the failings of the white male creole character. Edward Long (1774), Janet Schaw (1776), John Stewart (1808), and Bryan Edwards (1819) agree that the creole man is a handsome, well-proportioned, civil, generous, soft and gentle creature. Long describes the men as "in general sensible, of quick apprehension, brave, good natured, affable, generous, temperate, and sober; unsuspicious, lovers of freedom, fond of social enjoyments, tender fathers, humane and indulgent masters..." (II 262). Schaw describes them as "soft and manly" and also notes their "gallantry" and "civility" (112). John Stewart, who, like Carmichael, aims to render "a picture of society and

manners" (x) in the Caribbean, begins his section on "creoles, or natives" (152) by describing the white male creole in wholly approving terms: he is tall and well-proportioned, lively and cheerful, open, generous and unsuspecting, hospitable even to excess, a kind and generous friend, an affectionate relative, and a lenient and indulgent master (152-3). In sum, says Stewart, white creoles "possess, in general, as much humanity as the Europeans" (153). Edwards agrees that the men are frank, sociable, benevolent, generous, hospitable, graceful and a "taller race ... than the Europeans" (II 9-11). Both Stewart's and Edwards' comments underscore the notion that while the definition of "creole" is not tied to conventional notions of race – a creole may be of any race – the white creole nonetheless tended to be viewed as belonging to a racial category separate from that of the white European, or of owning racial traits not generally found in the Anglo-European. While many writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries praised the white creole's amiable, open, affectionate and generous nature, those same writers criticized the creole for failing to meet European standards of behaviour.

Father Woollett's comments above are typical of the criticisms aimed at the creole character. Virtually every social commentator takes the creole, both male and female, to task for "a degree of supineness and indolence in their affairs" (Long II 265), or, as Edwards says, for their "lax fibre" and "languor and lassitude" in functioning (II 13). Writing 115 years after Long, Froude finds the creoles "deficient in energy" but "uniformly ladies and gentlemen" (48). Lady Nugent even turns the noun into a verb when she describes the male habit of sitting back in the chair with the feet propped up on a table or railing, or the tendency of either sex to pass the day lounging on the verandah, as "creolizing" (117). Nugent views these leisure activities

as vulgar and unproductive and therefore unEuropean, and prefers herself to remain industrious at all times by sewing, writing and visiting. To creolize, then, is not only to be physically lazy but also to lack intellectual industry and activity. For this reason, the vice of indolence is in Nugent's and other accounts linked to general accusations of creole luxury and excess, as well as to specific complaints regarding male sensuality and adultery, which together represent the antithesis of those valued European traits (frugality, self-denial, prudence) identified by Reverend Moore. Long states that all white creoles are "too much addicted to expensive living, costly entertainment, dress and equipage" (II 265). Schaw comments on the opulence of the creoles, and observes that it is considered among them "a sin not to be [luxurious]" (95). Stewart asserts that the West Indian is "too fond of pleasure" (167). Among the many pleasures of the male creole condemned by the European are drink and unregulated sexual activities. Schaw notes the "licentious" and "unnatural" amours of the creole men (112), as do Lady Nugent, who calls for a "reformation" in the sexual excesses of the men (87), and Eliza Fenwick, who summarizes the creole lifestyle as one of "sensual indulgences and luxury" (200). Edwards calls the habit of male concubinage "a violation of all decency and decorum" (II 26), and Phillippo censures adultery as a "gross and open violation of every social duty" (124).

According to the European, the white creole, like the mulatto/a, is a figure of bodily excess. The men, particularly, are said to have tremendous physical appetites for food, drink, and sex. The indulgence and gratification of the physical is represented as being at the cost of intellectual pursuits such as reading, writing, and the cultivation of conversation. Even the indolence or idleness of the creole, male or female, is a form of physical excess, in that

the body is not restrained by conventions in posture or clothing, or by a strict work ethic. The body is, in other words, fluid and expansive rather than rigid and contained, and its desires are privileged rather than effaced. Perhaps because indolence is viewed as a symptom of fleshly excess, it is also paradoxically equated with its apparent inverse: liveliness. John Stewart, in a single sentence, faults all creoles for being both "too lively" and "too indolent" (167), and Long, whose description of the creole as "lively" and "hearty" (II 280) follows his earlier critique of supineness and indolence, in essence agrees. Excessive indolence and excessive liveliness produce the same effect, namely a lack of sustained and controlled physical or intellectual labour, and even poor accounting (Long says that creoles are "bad economists" [II 265]). Both too lazy and too lively, the body of the white creole, especially of the male, is intemperate and wasteful. Masculine energy is either wanting or spent in worthless or immoral pursuits; in either case, fleshly appetites are privileged over physical labour or intellectual industry, and their preference marks the creole as a degenerate – and politically dangerous – creature. The white population of the colony is, after all, dominated by creoles. The unmanageable creole body challenges the strictures of the colonial power by establishing alternate models of white masculinity. Further, European anxieties regarding the nativized or creolized white body may be an extension or expression of fears regarding the creolization of – and loss of British control over – political, legal and economic bodies.

Representing European fears about "going native," about losing control over the colony when whiteness is reinvented in a tropical climate dominated in population by non-whites, the creole in historical accounts tends to resemble stereotypes of "the native" within colonial discourse.

J.M. Coetzee cites a number of eighteenth century European accounts of the Hottentot which resemble those of the white creole:

> They are, without doubt, both in body and mind, the laziest people under the sun.... Their whole earthly happiness seems to lie in indolence and supinity....
>
> The men ... are ... the laziest creatures that can be imagined, since their custom is to do nothing, or very little. If there is anything to be done, they let their women do it.
>
> [A] dull, inactive, and I had almost said, entirely listless disposition ... is the leading characteristic of their minds....
>
> Lazy, idle, improvident.... (17-18)

Of course, similar terms are used by Europeans to describe the free and enslaved black population in the Caribbean. Long describes slaves as "ignorant" (II 354) and asserts that they are "more inclined to a life of idleness and ease, than a life of labour" (II 404). Eliza Fenwick finds the slaves to be a "sluggish, inert, self-willed race of people" (163) addicted to "idleness" and "profligate in the extreme" (167). Carmichael says of the slaves that "idleness is their delight" (I 96) and "indolence" (I 247) their normal state, and Trollope describes the black man as "capable of the hardest bodily work" but "idle" and "sensual" (56). The creole, as a degenerate white, shares these character traits with the native. James Phillippo is explicit about the fall of the creole whites from high European standards:

> Though the white inhabitants of Jamaica retained in a considerable degree the national customs, as well as many of the domestic social habits of their European ancestors, yet, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances in which they were placed, they rapidly degenerated in their mental attainments and general accomplishments. (121)

Phillippo does not elaborate on what he means by "peculiar circumstances" – the system of slavery certainly, but also climate, isolation, cultural interaction, excessive wealth? He also does not explain what he means by mental attainments or general accomplishments, or how mental degeneration can be identified when "national customs" and "social habits" have been retained. I have argued, following Stoler, that it is the loss of middle-class dispositions, equated as they are with European membership, that links the creole both to the mulatto/a and to the "native," and that therefore primarily marks the creole as degenerate or not fully white. Phillippo's emphasis, however, is upon cultural production here when he suggests (as does Brathwaite well over a hundred years later) that white creoles have accomplished nothing of intellectual note during their tenure in the Caribbean. In other passages Phillippo seems to contradict his assertion that European social habits have been retained, such as when he criticizes the creole for what he calls an addiction to pleasure (121), or when he notes the proud, overbearing and cruel disposition that he claims is at the heart of the creole sensibility (121), or when he censures the men for their "shameless adultery" (124). Those educated abroad, says Phillippo, are in some ways "reformed" of these ugly habits (135). With these comments Phillippo implicitly argues that the white creole does indeed violate the national customs and domestic social habits of Europe as construed within Anglo-Caribbean discourse, and that their degeneracy is sign-posted by both the failure of cultural production and the decline of middle-class sensibilities.

Judith Raiskin, in her book on creole subjectivity, correctly asserts that "the creole position is highly ambivalent, situated as it is between national, racial, and linguistic identities" (11), but does not address the specificity of

that betweenness. The white creole as a situated identity does not exist on some level field between two poles (European and native) but rather within an elaborate hierarchy of racialized identities (*from* European *to* native) that depends upon class-bound codes of behaviour and values (such as those identified by Moore). And the discourse of degeneracy that allies the white creole with both the native and the mulatto/a – that, in effect, "blackens" the white creole – is a significant feature of the history of creole subjectivity. Just as the mulatto/a is contaminated by his/her black blood, the white creole is contaminated by sexual contact with blacks (largely in the case of white men) and simple proximity to black cultural practices such as cooking, dress, music, speech and posture. Further, Raiskin does not explore in her theoretical framing of creole writing the extent to which creoleness is a gendered identity. The discourse of creole femininity is a particularly anxious thread within Anglo-Caribbean writing. As noted in Chapter Two, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries white racial survival was repeatedly represented as being dependent upon the personal conduct of white women. Therefore, the maintenance of "proper" social customs among women was also viewed as necessary for the success of the civilizing mission in the tropics. Stoler explains that the civilizing offensive was directed not only at the colonized, but at "recalcitrant and ambiguous participants in imperial culture at home and abroad" (1995: 108-9). A temperate and abstemious white woman was frequently perceived as the only corrective to the problem of the recalcitrant white man. Education in proper schools for young creole girls, for example, was considered necessary for their development into "objects of love to the deserving youths, whether natives or Europeans," so that by their "pleasing attractions" these educated young women would have the power to draw men "from a loose

attachment to blacks and Mulattoes, into the more rational and happy commerce of nuptial union" (Long II 250).

At stake, therefore, in European accounts of the quality of the female creole temperament was not just some abstract notion of white womanhood but a more pervasive concern with national identity (is the colony "British" or "creole"?), common class interests, and political affinities. The good white creole woman was needed to civilize unruly white men and to foster community both within the colony and between colony and metropole. Long attributes the "present state of [social] reformation" in the colony to the influence of creole women in "re-uniting the sexes" – that is, encouraging white men to marry white women rather than to cohabit with black or coloured women (II 281). It is no wonder, then, that the appraisal of white creole womanhood constitutes a major concern within Anglo-Caribbean discourse.

Every writer finds much to be praised in the temperament and conduct of the "typical" white creole women. Long asserts that she is the "genuine English breed ... equally pure and delicate in Jamaica as the Mother Country" (II 274). Schaw describes the women as "modest, genteel, reserved, and temperate" (113), with skin as "pure as the lily" (114). Stewart praises creole women for their modest and decorous manner and "reputation for leading the most correct and virtuous lives" (157), and Edwards concurs that they live "sequestered, domestic and unobtrusive" lives (II 14). Trollope offers a humorous sketch of the creole women, equal parts gentle criticism and praise:

> That they occupy themselves well during the [day], charity feels convinced. Sarcasm, however, says that they do not sin from over energy. For my own part, I do not care a doit for sarcasm. When their

> lords reappear, they are always found smiling, well-dressed, and pretty.... (43)

Trollope resembles Froude in that while he asserts that creole women are "ladies," he finds nonetheless that they lack energy and industry. Despite their charms, women were accused of indolence and languor as much as were men. While Stewart describes their looks as "sweet and regular," he also notes that they generally have a "sickly and languid" appearance (156). Edwards similarly remarks upon the "spiritless" nature of their looks, concluding that they "want that glow of health in the countenance" (II 13). In fact, Edwards is critical of the creole complexion "in which the lily predominates rather than the rose" (13). It is suggested by these remarks that the consequence of indolence for "ladies" is ill-health. Excessively fair, excessively passive, excessively domestic, it is almost as if creole femininity exceeds Victorian models to the point where femininity becomes equated with sickliness. In this version of creole femininity, all that is good and virtuous in a white woman is found in such excessive quantities that admirable feminine qualities become their opposite: sickliness, lack of spirit, degeneration. Excessive feminine spirit results in the lack of spirit; the production of perfect femininity leads to the degeneration of the same trait. In Anglo-Caribbean discourse, the "good" creole woman is so feminine as to be a figure of decline and even corruption of that perfect ideal. In this instance, the creole woman's body may be viewed, as Bordo suggests in another context, "as a surface on which conventional constructions of femininity are exposed starkly to view, through their inscription in extreme or hyper literal form" (1989: 20). Similar to the way in which the bed-ridden hysteric is said merely to be performing her own femininity (helplessness, dependency, delicacy) to an extreme degree, the white creole woman

occupies a contradictory position between ideal femininity and the degeneration of that ideal.[2]

The "good" white creole woman in Anglo-Caribbean discourse is placed in opposition to her dark sister, the "bad" white creole woman who violates many or all standards of ideal womanhood and is in consequence explicitly allied with the lowly native black. These women tend to be posited as the exception to the rule and as the negative example of the value of a solid British education. Again deploying the language of disease, Long finds in "ladies raised in the remoter parts of the island" a lack of vigilance in preserving their language and manners from the "infection" of the "Negroes" (II 278). He cites the example of

> a very fine young woman, awkwardly dangling her arms with the air of a Negro-Servant, lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees, her head muffled up with two or three handkerchiefs, her dress loose, and without stays. At noon we find her employed in gobbling pepper-pot, seated on the floor, with her sable hand-maids around her. In the afternoon, she takes her *siesto* as usual.... When she rouses from slumber, her speech is whining, languid, and childish. (II 278-9)

Here the art of creolizing is explicitly linked to cultural corruption and its inevitable correlative, unrestrained sexuality. The markers of Afro-Caribbean culture are found in posture, elements of costume, cuisine, and language, all of which signify an absence of self-regulation or restraint. Again it is the creole body that is so disturbing, although the whining speech signifies a lack of intellectual development.

But the infection, if it enters in part via language, seems to reside (as

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[2] See, for example, Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* for a discussion of the ways in which madness and hysteria can be read as an articulation of "the essential feminine nature" (3) as constructed within dominant (Victorian) culture.

with the men) primarily in the unregulated body. The fear within Anglo-Caribbean discourse seems to be that unregulated female sexuality is the terminal point of "ungrammatical" creole speech, which is generally described as a "Guiney dialect" (Long II 426), or as "Negro gibberish" (Carmichael I 59). Nugent offers an anecdote to illustrate "the Creole language" in whites:

> Many of the ladies, who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English, with an indolent drawling out of their words, that is very tiresome if not disgusting. I stood next to a lady one night, near a window, and, by way of saying something, remarked that the air was much cooler than usual; to which she answered, "Yes, ma-am, *him rail-ly too fra-ish.*" (52)

Stewart also writes at length about the consequences of a domestic education for creole women:

> ... the very manners and barbarous dialect of the negroes are apt to produce, through the force of early habit, an involuntary imitation on the part of the natives of this country, educated and brought up at home; and ... there is often, in consequence, an awkward and ungraceful sort of affectation in their language and manner, which strongly indicates ignorance and untutored simplicity; or, to use an expression in common use, many of them ... exhibit much of the *Quashiba.* (159)

To suggest that the white woman's speech exhibits "much of the Quashiba," as do both Nugent and Stewart, is to hint at more than mere linguistic incompetence. As language is one of the primary forms of colonial control, its deterioration suggests a loss of control over both self and (subjected) other, and therefore a "corresponding degradation in the political and social order" (Spurr 104). To creolize Standard English is to "destabilize and

carnivalise the linguistic domination" of the language, by "disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning otherwise" (Mercer 57). In other words, creolization of Standard English disempowers that "pure" language through cultural appropriation/contamination (or counter-appropriation/contamination), and empowers the speaker whose hybrid, mongrelized or mulatto/a tongue gives expression to indigenous cultural forms. But in Nugent and Stewart's texts, creolized language or coarse speech in a white woman is viewed less as an example of indigenous or counter-hegemonic language practice, and more as an indicator of other coarse social habits more generally associated with the secondary class of whites that Carmichael calls "white negroes" (I 59). White negroes (also "white niggers" or "white cockroaches") are imitation whites, creoles who have been so far infected with black cultural values that they have lost their status as whites within the racial hierarchy of the plantation economy. White women who speak the same creolized language as their black slaves or servants have lost one of the primary identifying signs of their race/class and therefore represent a threat to the nature/culture binary that supports colonialism. Colonial discourse naturalizes the process of domination, finds a "natural justification for the conquest of nature and of ... 'children of nature'" (Spurr 156), through the discourse of cultural education and advancement. The Quashiba-creole woman who lolls about, refuses to wear a corset, and drawls like her servants, is a child of nature, not culture, and as such cannot effect the social reformation of the colony or offer correction to the unruly white males of the colony.

The portrait of the Quashiba-creole woman is prevalent in European men's writing about creole culture but absent from women's texts. While Nugent and Carmichael lament that the creole women have "no

conversation" (Nugent 14) and "uninformed minds" (Carmichael I 49), they do not offer illustrations of feminine immorality of the kind to be found in Long and Stewart.[3] It is only in men's texts that the white-woman-as-native-woman connection is explicitly made at the level of personal or sexual conduct. Is it possible that within the manifest repulsion expressed in the men's texts lies a latent attraction? Is the "loose" white creole woman, so destructive of colonial mores, also a seductive figure? The "looseness" of the creole women (in clothing and language) suggests the same kind of sexual looseness that white men saw in black women's similarly unregulated (loosely garmented) bodies and creolized (gibberish) speech, and the scene of eating (gobbling pepper-pot) is suggestive of a sexual appetite. Male colonizers have tended to read so-called native feminine excess and disorder as an invitation to sexual conquest, just as "uncultivated" land practically begs for the plow. Spurr reminds us that differences in power between the colonized and colonizer are reformulated as gender difference (native or landscape as "feminine") so that "colonization is naturalized as the relation between the sexes" (172), but here the difference that calls for intervention and regulation (reformation through proper education abroad) is cast as a racial difference. In a neat little binary that works to justify colonial patriarchal power, the native is cast as feminine and the female as native. In both cases – whether inferiority is constituted along gender or racial lines – the subject requires mastery and subduing. The "loose" white creole woman, cast in the role of the native, suggests a sexual availability that is both disturbing (detrimental to the future of the white race) and exciting in the flagrant display of sexual excess.

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[3] Only Schaw asserts that creole women are "amazingly intelligent and able to converse with you on any subject" (113).

The worthy (virtuous, abstemious) and the wicked (impure, hungry) creole woman are both situated within a discourse of degeneracy. The virtuous creole is so excessively "feminine" – temperate, docile, domestic, self-denying – that the language of ill-health is resorted to in describing her. In spite of the praise lavished upon her, she does not appear within the pages of Anglo-Caribbean discourse as the savior of the white race in the face of creole excess, though she is expressly positioned as such. The impure creole is an explicitly degenerate figure who is clearly unfit for the propagation of the race, though possibly suitable for sexual dalliance. Two apparently divergent models of creole femininity collapse into one another: the "success" cannot be depended upon to maintain, and the "failure" is certain to undermine, the purity of the white race and the advancement of the colonialist cause. Even when the white creole woman is not "going native," she does not seem to be staying European.

White creole women within twentieth century fiction share many characteristics of their nineteenth century non-fiction sisters, even when the fiction is written by white creole women. Undine, the eponymous heroine of Clarine Stephenson's 1911 novel, is described as a creole "child of wealth, reared in the midst of luxury and idleness" (13). Penniless as an adult, Undine is undone by her yearning for romance and initial refusal to make an economically advantageous marriage. Undine is represented as a young creole woman unrestrained by social codes, whose heart is broken when her lover abandons her, and who eventually dies within the confines of that advantageous marriage she had initially rejected. Stephenson is not sympathetic with Undine's plight. Undine is criticized, and eventually punished by death, for viewing her wedding ring as "the sign of my

bondage" (22). She is not a martyr to the feminist or nationalist cause; she is, rather, represented as "dangerous" in her "wild abandon" (23). The tragedy of the novel is not that an unconventional creole woman is crushed by a politics of nation or gender that insists upon submission and conformity (as depicted by the numerous scenes in which the creole Undine gratefully submits to the proprietary masculine gaze of her English lover); it is, rather, that Undine lacks both the good sense to choose the right partner and the emotional and intellectual commitment that that marriage both demands and deserves. She is too emotionally wild, too indolent/lively – too creole – to navigate the course of her life wisely.

The creole woman in Mary Gaunt's 1933 novel *Harmony: A Tale of the Old Slave Days in Jamaica* is, unlike Undine, entirely conventional and appropriately feminine. The story revolves around a wealthy white creole plantation owner, Thole, and his illegitimate slave son who passes for white (unaware of his own racial taint) until the eve of his marriage to a beautiful young white woman, at which time an enemy of the family exposes young Roger Thole as not only black but as still legally in a state of slavery. Roger hides in the hills with runaway slaves, successfully defends the plantations against a slave revolt when he hears of the plan from his black "comrades," and is granted his freedom as a result of siding with his white blood against his black. However, for his sin in almost marrying a white woman, he is banished forever from his island home. The novel is sympathetic to the son's plight and adopts a "liberal" attitude in asking the reader to empathize with his fiancée, who continues to love Roger and desire marriage even when she learns of his black blood. But the novel is not so liberal as to allow within its pages an interracial marriage, either by accident (without the son's knowledge of his racial contamination) or on

purpose (after his heroic rescue of the white community). The central irony of the story is that this heroic "black" son of a black slave woman has escaped the contamination of his father's legitimate *white* wife. Mrs. Thole is the embodiment of the "good" creole woman (abstemious, temperate, chaste) and is also a figure of degeneracy and disease. She is languid and indolent, always to be found lying on a sofa under the constant fanning of a series of black boys. Though twenty-five years of age at the beginning of the novel, she is a "faded beauty" with a complexion of "unwholesome yellow hidden by paint and powder" (27). She whines and simpers, is helpless and selfish, and produces a legitimate heir who is so fair (almost albino) and delicate that he dies as a child. At the age of thirty-five, Mrs. Thole has degenerated further: having been afflicted with measles, her skin is pock-marked and her nose has been eaten away. She is also balding, her teeth are falling out, and she has become fat (69). Gaunt is not subtle in her illustration of the irony that the ethical, morally upstanding, physically attractive son is the product of an interracial union, while the white mother can only produce a weak and diseased son. It is through this irony that the lukewarm liberal politics of the novel are expressed. It is apparently a tragedy that the coloured son cannot marry his white fiancée, though the father's sexual desire for a slave woman, and her gratitude at being the chosen one, are rendered as natural – he is after all married to a mentally and physically decayed individual, while the slave woman is a noble, proud, beautiful, and sexually accommodating mulatta. Slavery is condemned as an immoral institution because it insists that an octoroon is black (which denies young Roger his inheritance) and it thwarts the romantic desires of the good but illegitimate son, and yet the illicit union between slave holder and slave woman is sanctioned by its product (the superior son is clearly

"better" than the bigoted whites of the island), and the plot machinations required to prevent the interracial marriage of the young couple are onerous and laboured. And, in the end, the son's decision not to inflict his coloured blood on his betrothed is represented as a noble sacrifice when in fact it reinscribes the politics of race that the novel pretends to critique.

Esther Chapman's[4] 1953 novel *Too Much Summer* picks up on the convention of the creolized, degenerate white women found in the earlier novels and in the historical accounts. The difference in the portrait here is that Lloyd is a British woman whose moral and physical decline is traced by the novel. Lloyd is a colonial whose spirit falters under the "moral, mental, physical inertia" (1) of her adopted Caribbean home, where she feels "as though afflicted with a deadly sickness" (20). Lloyd's English identity as an industrious and committed worker and mother in England during the Second World War begins to deteriorate after her husband insists that she and the children migrate to Jamaica to wait out the rest of the war. Her deterioration in the tropics is signaled by her apathetic existence, her growing indifference toward her children, her excessive drinking, and her sexual involvement with men of questionable character, the last of whom is coloured. Though realizing that she is becoming "one of those women who spend their whole day in preparation for the evening" (53), Lloyd is unable to break the spell of "this slothful land" (47) and rouse herself to go back to England after the war. Eventually, her husband leaves her and takes custody of the children, she is rejected by her coloured lover, her alcoholism escalates, and she is no longer admitted into the company of "decent" whites. Chapman's story plays into many of the stereotypes of the creole or creolized white woman: idle, indolent, sexually unrestrained, morally and

[4] Esther Chapman and Esther Hyman are the same author.

racially degenerate. As a European who stays too long in the tropics, Lloyd abandons middle-class civilities and neglects the conventions of supremacy (such as a distancing and imperious posture in relation to native culture and inhabitants) required to maintain her European identity. The "remedies" available to Lloyd – regularity and regimentation of work, sexual moderation, an abstemious diet, and physical exercise (Stoler 1991 77) – are not pursued, and thus Lloyd is left at the end of the novel as a social and racial outcast.

I have been briefly discussing here some Anglo-Caribbean texts which in the main do not argue with, rewrite or revise those stereotypes of white creole femininity to be found in the historical accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Undine's lack of restraint, Mrs. Thole's pathological femininity, and Lloyd's creolization and loss of whiteness all mirror those earlier portraits of creole femininity, whether of the hyper literal (diseased) or Quashiba (culturally contaminated) kind. But this somewhat simple division of creole femininity into two converging types is not available in the works of the two authors whose novels are the focus of the remaining portion of this chapter. Neither Eliot Bliss nor Phyllis Shand Allfrey deploy the figure of the white creole women in these somewhat reductive terms, though both authors are indebted to and work within that Anglo-Caribbean tradition that I have thus far traced. They also, however, in altering and amending that tradition, work outside of it. Occupying an inside/outside position – the position of the creole – Bliss and Allfrey explore the various meanings of a white creole minority identity within a geographical, social and cultural space dominated by an Afro-Caribbean majority. They also, though working within the tradition of fiction, anticipate more recent theorizing of the significance of a creole identity.

The rise of colonial studies from the 1970s onward has led to increased interest in, and theories of, creolized cultural identities. Within the Anglo-Caribbean context, Brathwaite's works *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770 to 1820* (1971), and *Contradictory Omens* (1974), both explore the process of creolization within, and the resulting cultural diversity of, the Caribbean. In the latter text, Brathwaite describes the "cultural action" of creolization:

> The single most important factor in the development of Jamaican society was not the imported influence of the Mother Country or the local administrative activity of the white elite, but 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. The scope and quality of this response and interaction were dictated by the circumstances of the society's foundation and composition – a "new" construct, made up of newcomers to the landscape and cultural strangers to each other; one group dominant, the other legally and subordinately slave. (1974: 11)

Brathwaite's general aim is to argue that Jamaica is more properly a creole, rather than a slave, society (the latter designation was favoured before the 1970s), and also that, though the friction caused by the confrontation of two cultures of people was cruel, it was also creative (1974: 22). Theorists and historians following Brathwaite have adopted similar positions regarding the historical development and present-day meanings of a creole identity. Bernabé, Chamoiseau and Comfiant (1990) argue that expressing creoleness "is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a crossing or any other unicity," but rather it "is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality" (892).

Creoleness is, for Bernabé et al., "an annihilation of false universality, of monolinguilism, and of purity.... It opposes to Universality the great opportunity of a world diffracted but recomposed, the conscious harmonization of preserved diversities: DIVERSALITY" (892, 903). This expression of creoleness owes something to Brathwaite's desire to "try to see the fragments/whole" (1974: 7), as does Simon Gikandi's assertion (1992) that creolization "opposes the synchronic vision of colonial historiography with the diachronic narrative of a cross-cultural imagination" (17). Gikandi argues that the colonial vision is synchronic because "it insists on the fixation of the identity of the dominated," and that the narrative of creolization, on the other hand, "insists on the transmutation and transformation of the colonial subject – and its culture – toward a realm of freedom" (16).

Brathwaite's, Bernabé's and Gikandi's theorizing of a creole identity, with their emphasis on fragmented wholes or kaleidoscope totalities, enables the reader of Caribbean texts to explore the idea of creoleness beyond the limiting terms of earlier writers such as Long, Nugent, Stewart, and so on. Like Raiskin, these Caribbean critics eschew "an essentialist conception of a single 'creole identity,'" and instead examine "the various cultural uses of a term that ... complicates racial or national binarisms" (4). But there is within Brathwaite's, Bernabé's and Gikandi's work a lack of attention paid to the ways in which racial and gender discourses intersect with the notion of a creole identity. In Brathwaite's work, the colonial, the creole, and the slave are heterosexual masculine constructs passed off as generic identities. For example, Brathwaite, in a section on the socialization ("seasoning") of the "plantation slaves," suggests that some acceptance of the harsh conditions of slavery would come if "conditions of work were comfortable –

the acquisition of a house, a woman, a home, a plot of land" (1974: 13). Not only is the plantation slave by definition male here, but the female slave is posited as a domestic object of comfort to the male subject, thus erasing not only her lived reality as a labourer but also her status as a desiring subject within the plantation economy. Similarly, Bernabé does not address the ways in which the "cultural confrontation of peoples within the same space, resulting in a mixed culture called creole" (894) was also a confrontation of colonial masculine and feminine identities with more creolized models.

In contrast, Nunez-Harrell argues that the white creole woman "is an outcast, a sort of freak rejected by both Europe and England, whose blood she shares, and by the black West Indian people, whose culture and home have been hers for two generations or more" (281). Nunez-Harrell notes that she has never found instances where a white creole man has been called a white cockroach by either white or black West Indians, though the creole women (especially in lower economic conditions) are frequently referred to as such by both groups (282). Within the context of literary production, Herb Wyile notes that the white creole writer "is a somewhat marginal figure in West Indian writing, and if that writer happens to be a woman, the marginalization is doubled" (21). Evelyn O'Callaghan agrees that white West Indian women writers "give voice to the agony of the creole's double alienation from 'native' black and European white experience, and detail in a unique way the ambivalence of those just sufficiently colonized to call both England and the Caribbean 'home'" (28). White creole women negotiate not only conflicting national or cultural identities, but also "an engagement with European feminine ideals," all while attempting to create a narrative space from which to speak (O'Callaghan 19). Nunez-Harrell, Wyile and O'Callaghan view gender as a constituting element of the

cultural confrontation out of which a creole identity emerges.

Before the rise of colonial studies as a prevalent academic study in the 1970s (heralded by Brathwaite's Caribbean works and by Said's *Orientalism* in 1978),[5] white creole writers such as Eliot Bliss and Phyllis Shand Allfrey were rethinking and revising creole cultural identities, and the relationship between creole and colonial identities, within modernist (in the case of Bliss) and Caribbean nationalist (in the case of Allfrey) contexts. Further, the emphasis in these works is on feminine creole identities, or the creole as both a race and gender inflected identity, while a similar focus did not arrive in "creole studies" (if such a small field of writing can be named as such) until the mid-1980s.

Eliot Bliss

Eliot Bliss was born in Jamaica in 1903 to Captain John Plomer Bliss, an English army officer in the West India regiment, and Eva Lees, whose career as Mrs. Bliss was officer's wife.[6] At the age of nine, Bliss was sent to England for a convent education, where she stayed until 1923 when her father was made Commander of his regiment in Jamaica. The journey back to Jamaica in 1923 and her two-year stay there provides most of the material for the fictional/autobiographical *Luminous Isle*, which was originally published in 1934. Both *Luminous Isle* and Bliss's first novel, *Saraband* (1931), were influenced by the works of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf. Like

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[5] Sartre, Césaire, Fanon, Memmi and Glissant are just a few examples of writers and political activists who systematically addressed issues of colonialism and oppression before the 1970s. But with Brathwaite and Said in the 1970s, and Said, Bhabha, Spivak, JanMohammed, Brantlinger, Hulme, Ngugi and others in the 1980s, the academic study of colonialism took off.

[6] All biographical information is taken from Alexandra Pringle's Introduction to the 1984 Virago edition of *Luminous Isle*. There have been no other critical or biographical studies of Bliss's work or life.

Anna Wickham, Jean Rhys, and Vita Sackville-West, Richardson and Woolf were engaged in producing what Diane Gillespie calls an "outspokenly feminine version of modernism" (394), or what Richardson describes as "a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism" (430). In *Luminous Isle*, Bliss seems to have modeled her protagonist, Emmeline Hibbert, after Richardson's "womanly woman," who lives her life in the "deep current of eternity.... past, present, and future are together in her, unbroken" (413). Because Bliss records "the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall... however disconnected or incoherent in appearance" (Woolf 631), her narrative fluctuates in time and space, or flows across spatial and temporal boundaries. Bliss's novel explores a feminine consciousness, and her narrative is organized according to the "womanly" movement of Em's thoughts, memories, and experiences.

Emmeline Hibbert is an outsider in her West Indian "home," as Eliot Bliss seems to have been, though Em passionately yearns for and dreams about that home when she is away from it. Em is a character whom others are "not able to place" (55): an Englishman and fellow passenger aboard ship on the way to the Caribbean clearly mistakes Em for an Englishwoman when he informs her that the creole islanders "are a very different people to us" (71). Unable to find her identity in her native white community, Em feels like a "prisoner in a false world" (79) who learns "to become more unreal to herself as she becomes more like what that world thought a young girl ought to be" (59). Just after she arrives on the island, Em considers her immediate future:

> And she had three years in front of her to live through in this place, to fill her rôle as best as she might as her father's and mother's daughter, to do what was expected of her, to behave like an ordinary young woman

> out from England to rejoin her parents in a garrison town in a Crown colony. The kind of young woman who probably – if she had not been herself – would be entertaining secret and maidenly hopes of finding a possible husband among her parents' many acquaintances. (86-7)

Upon arrival, Em regards only the mountains and her maid Belle "as friends ... in this wilderness of people and things alien to her" (88). Her negotiation of this wilderness – having to "fill her rôle" or "play her part" (59) in the social rounds of the garrison life – is stifling to Em and undermines her efforts to "become a completely conscious human being" fully able to practice "the art of living" (51), which Em views as the prerequisite to her calling as a poet.

The novel is structured around the binary codes creole/colonial, black/white, authentic/counterfeit, nature/culture, and mind/body, with all of the terms on the left of the slash privileged over those on the right. Em is creole and her estranged English parents (clinically referred to as "the parents" throughout the novel, signaling the emotional distance within the family) are colonial. Em's family, its friends, and all of Em's acquaintances live in a garrison town, and Bliss suggests that Em is one of only a few white characters who have escaped the colonialist mentality that defines a military post. While many of Em's friends were born on the island, and are therefore creole in that they are native to the place, few are positioned as creoles in the sense of being a product of two cultures rather than a single (European) dominant culture. The setting of the military post allows Bliss to separate "real" and "unreal" creoles (more on this distinction later), and to position Em, the authentic creole who acknowledges and admires black culture, as an outsider even within a small group of indigenous or creole whites born in the West Indies but English none the less.

Unable to form any emotional bonds with the "prejudiced, kind, and quite unseeing" (57) English and "unreal" creole population, Em turns to two black women, her maid Belle and a mountain woman named Rebekkah, for friendship. These friendships, and indeed anything associated with black culture, are posited as authentic and natural, as opposed to the counterfeit and contrived culture of the garrison whites. Early in the novel, Em recognizes that she

> liked niggers; they fascinated her. There was something restful about black people, and nothing in the least indecent. (4)[7]

Em finds whites "indecent" (especially the sight of a white breast nursing a white baby [4]), because "white people's morality ... has made their bodies impure" (251), whereas in blacks "the current of life was flowing unconstrainedly ... and they had never thought of moral issues" (227). While the whites are tied to houses, clubs, tennis courts, cars, army barracks, and other "artificial" extensions of white colonial culture, the blacks of the

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[7] Em and all the other characters in the novel, black or white, move freely between the terms "nigger" and "black" when referring to the Afro-Caribbean population. There is no stigma attached to the term nigger within the politics of the novel – that is, its use is not reserved for the purpose of insulting or denigrating blacks. It is employed by the narrative voice in its most "objective" and descriptive moments. Examples: "A nigger in a red shirt, fishing from a small boat from the shore, looked up and stared at them as they passed" (71), or "They walked on up the wharf, passing niggers, Customs officials, and stray white people" (79). The term is also used frequently by Em when she asserts her kinship with black people in general (as above). However, Em never uses "nigger" in reference to her beloved black maid Belle or to other blacks with whom she has a close relationship. It would seem that the term is intended by Em and by Bliss as "neutral" but reserved for referring to the black masses or unknown individuals. It is not clear whether Bliss was attempting to cleanse the word of its abusive history or whether she was just ignoring that history. If the former, its use could be read as an effort to reclaim and redefine – creolize – oppressive language in order to disarm its destructive power; if the latter, its use signals a complicity with a brutal and dehumanizing political order that much of the novel is devoted to critiquing more or less successfully (Em believes, for example, that the "white race owed to the black race an apology" [214] for slavery). I cannot find in the novel the sufficiently self-conscious and overtly political (anti-colonial) use of the term that would support an interpretation in favour of the reclamation of language, and can only conclude that Bliss was either naïve in her attempts to disinfect the term or that she simply saw no problem with the word.

island are invariably associated with the natural landscape or with children, who are also allied with nature. So, for example, in Belle's face, Em finds "the smile of the mountains, benign but secret" (363); in her friend Hendrie she admires the "perfect rhythmical movement belonging to him naturally, because of the coloured blood in his veins" (339); and in the general black population Em appreciates the "less civilized, more real," and "naturally rhythmical" qualities of the people (132). Finding the culture of the whites to be both aesthetically and morally bankrupt, Em looks to the free, natural, instinctual, "child-like" (214) black and coloured population for affirmation, inspiration and consolation. She tries to convince her coloured friend Hendrie that

> the coloured people have certain natural gifts which should enable them to stand equal with any other race. But instead of knowing this and being proud of it, they imitate and assimilate habits and cultures of mind which are alien to them and in which they can never hope to be very successful.... When I touch you, you understand. Your apprehension is perfect. You understand things through your blood. (341-2)

Hendrie ascribes this understanding and perfect apprehension between himself and Em to a personal response, based on friendship, knowledge of one another, and a shared "sensitiveness" (342), while Em views it as a racial trait: "No, I have felt it before. It is something that I know the coloured people have" (342).

Viewing blacks as "children of nature" is a cliché of colonial discourse. As David Spurr explains, colonial discourse "identifies a colonized or primitive people as part of the natural world... [and] presents this identification as entirely 'natural,' as a simple state of what is, rather than as a theory based in interest" (157). Em does not differ in this respect from

most of the colonial writers whose works have prefaced this chapter, and who tend to view Afro-Caribbeans as savages or children lacking in civility, culture, morality, and social organization. Em's *interest* in the nature-theory, however, contrasts with those colonial writers who posit a natural justification for the conquest of both nature and "children of nature." Em does not seek to conquer others, but rather to overthrow the power that she feels the white community exerting upon her. There are two things that Em knows about herself: she is an artist, and she is an alien in her own white community. Unable to find herself in her own culture, Em looks for herself – for her identity as a poet – in the "spontaneous and uncorrupted" (219) black and coloured community. Em explains further to Hendrie what it means to apprehend through the blood:

> The gift of interpretation – understanding. Also it means that a people who have it move at the source of life. They are part of life and not outside it. They don't feel the need to struggle or wrestle with it or force it into artificial shapes. They accept, absorb, re-create. (342)

The paradox evident in Em's position is that she deploys the rhetoric of colonialism (the "children of nature" construction) in order to argue that blacks are natural artists superior to those inauthentic types within the sterile white community, and to establish a bond between authentic creoles "independent of complexional distinctions." Em sees more of herself in the black creole community than she does in the colonial white society, but what she sees is a narcissistic fantasy that expresses her desire to write without imitating "a masculine style" (60).

Bliss once said that Dorothy Richardson, who in *Pilgrimage* (1915-1938) was attempting to write in a specifically feminine modernist voice, was the "only person who's writing a real book" (Bliss xi). Em's desire to uncover

"the real" and to write in a feminine voice "that has no *sexual* significance as we understand it now" (60) is an extension of Bliss's project in *Luminous Isle* and Richardson's in *Pilgrimage.* When Em defines the coloured character as one that moves at the source of life, that is not alien to life, that does not force life into artificial shapes, that accepts and re-creates life, she is describing her fantasy of the artist who is not constrained by social identities or what Bliss calls "sexual significance." Like Lucea in *Study in Bronze,* Em believes she must "become sexless, creedless, classless, free" (371) in order to be a great writer. This belief is in response to the gender inequities that Em sees in her family and in her culture. When her brother Nap is born, for example, Em realizes that her parents "did not need her any more" (40), and that Nap, as the "real" child and natural heir, has made her unreal and unnatural. Later in the novel, Em is angered by the "appalling" manner in which women treat little girls, convinced that if the girl in question (who expresses her strong belief in duppies) "had been a boy they would have humoured him" rather than mocked him as they mocked the girl (217). Em summarizes her observations on gender politics a few pages later:

> One could see it all in the eyes – the wicked old woman sacrificing the girls so that the boys might blossom out in uniforms and director's desks.... [T]he preferential treatment of the males, the humouring of the little boys, the squashing of the little girls. That must be why so many women had, apart from clothes and conscious effects, so little personality; from an early age they had learned to adjust themselves to what the world believed they ought to be. Inside, of course, it was different: if men knew what was inside most of them, they would be deeply shocked and hurt. (224-25)

Em does not focus her criticism exclusively on women, observing that with

"most men one could never be a person because they never saw one as a person – even nice men, clever men – often the worst offenders; they saw women – conglomerate, aggregate, mass, women" (219). Em's desire to become "sexless" – liberated from stifling social conventions based on gender – is motivated by these offenses against women, as is her obsession with the distinction between the real and the false. Em divides the population of her circumscribed world into a small group of "real" people, who can escape "male and female self-consciousness strengthened by the mask of clothes" (59) or transcend the "mask of [the] body" (66), and the "unreal" general populace, who are "controlled and censored" (97) by the colonial culture that Em describes as the "senseless grouping of people, their sexual attitudes, their endless trivial gossip, and pursuits; their golf, their tennis, their bridge, their vocabulary, and lack of it, their social code with its hypocrisy and hidden indecencies" (119). Em makes special note of the "real" people in her life: her English cousin Clay, "who had been born *real* into the world" (57); her white creole friend Joy, whose charm is like that of "a tree or a flower – imperishable, sexless" (133); Hendrie, the coloured doctor in whom Em sees "the gift of his race" (339); Valentine Prender, a rare type of Englishman who forgets that Em is a woman, and thinks of her "only as a person" (238); and Rebekkah, a black creole mountain woman with a "rounded and complete personality" (205).

When Em describes in detail the rounded and complete personality that exists outside of constraining social identities, she does so more often than not in racial terms. Em uses the discourse of race – that colonialist discourse described above – to express both her desire to escape restrictive gender ("sex") codes and her idea of the function and role of the artist. Art, says Em, "controls and subordinates those parts of the personality which are not

entirely true," and therefore frees the self "from external, objective, imposed ideas and affections" (57). When a cherished close friend (one of the "real" people) tells Em that Em "see[s] things as if there had never been any conventions or preconceived ideas about them" (173), Em's status as an artist is affirmed. But while art as "a kind of discipline" (57) *forces* Em to be real and *mandates* that she discard masks, this freedom from affectation and imposed ideas comes *naturally* to black and coloured people; what Em has to cultivate, train, and exercise is found in the "blood" of blacks and coloureds. In the end, the discipline of art demands of Em that she abandon her white identity, which is figured in the text as either an unreal, hypocritical culture, or as a complete absence of culture (a blankness, a nothingness), and find her creole identity, which links her to the authentic black people whose blood transmits the gifts of interpretation and of creativity. The discourse of race is, as Spurr notes, an interested discourse. Em sees in the black and coloured population what she wants to see in herself: a spontaneous and uncorrupted child of nature rather than (corrupt white) culture, and the embodiment of a feminine rather than masculine artistic sensibility.

Em's "child of nature" discourse does not revise colonialist conceptions of the native as an extension of the landscape, nor does it undermine the related assertion that the white creole is a contaminated native-like figure, but the negative value of that assertion *is* undermined. Rather than represent the values of "instinct," "nature," and "spontaneity" as markers of inferiority, Em embraces and elevates these values as prerequisites for meaningful cultural production.[8] And while the colonialist opposition of

[8] Em's valorization of the instinctual, rhythmical nature of blackness resembles the theory of Négritude as conceived by Martinican Aimé Césaire and Senegalese Leopold Senghor in the 1920s and 30s. Négritude asserted and valued the attributes that Em describes as the

nature and culture is maintained – with the native representing nature and the European representing culture – a third term has been introduced. The authentic white creole is, in *Luminous Isle*, the figure who yokes together nature and culture and, as a result, produces art. I have said that Em views blacks and coloureds as "natural" artists endowed with the "gift of interpretation," but this romantic conception is destabilized within the narrative of the text. Em would have it that blacks are natural artists, and Bliss it seems would like to construct a cross-racial creole identity based on an affinity for authentic artistic production (which would then ally the white creole writer with the black "folk" against the metropolitan elite), but the fact remains that the artist figure within the text is the white creole. Em asserts that blacks and coloureds create, but what they seem to create within the text is Em as artist. It would be more accurate to assert that the coloured "folk," as the luminous landscape of the island, provide the raw materials or offer the occasion for artistic production, but are not themselves producers.

In Em, then, the reader finds the meeting of nature and culture. A white creole identity – and not a cross-racial creole identity – is posited as the requirement for artistic production. Em's fantasy is that this capacity for art bonds her with the coloured population, but this convent educated woman of letters is not the unsullied child of nature that she would like to be. This is not to suggest, however, that Em – and Bliss – are merely complicit with colonialist discourse. Bliss, in positing that cultural "contamination" is necessary for cultural production and renewal, questions and revises that discourse of purity that insists that cultural interaction or creolization

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distinctive qualities of black culture and identity, in so doing replacing, as Wole Soyinka notes, the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" with "I feel, therefore I am" (135).

results in degeneration. Instead, creolization is posited as a liberating cultural process which gestures toward the future, even though this movement toward the future is played out within the text as a movement away from the island and back to England. At the end of the novel, Em is on a ship bound for London:

> Other people .... were glad to be going back ... to England, to London, to cold and sober realities. There was a maddening ache in her heart – a gnawing, maddening ache. But far below it, somewhere in her being, she could not control another feeling – she too agreed with these other people who, unlike herself, were not leaving anything they cared for so greatly behind – a feeling of expectation and relief. She was going towards the future. She became aware with a new and sudden interest of the rubber edges of the stairs under her feet, as she descended against the slight swaying motion of the ship. (372)

It would be mistaken to read Em's return to England as the "failure" of the white creole to maintain a complete and distinct identity, for the identity of the white creole is not one of completeness or wholeness but rather a process of making the fragments/whole. It is no more or less valid for Em to find herself on the big European or the little Caribbean island; Em's kaleidoscope identity – her literal and figurative movement between, but not synthesis of, the "nature" of the native Caribbean home and the "culture" of the adopted English home – makes her an outsider wherever she lands. Em moves toward the future not because she is moving toward England, but by the sheer fact of movement itself. Stasis has, throughout the novel, been associated with the decaying white colonial culture locked into historical, economic and racial relations that have not significantly changed with the passing of the centuries. Em prefers "getting to a place so

much better than arriving there" (72), is interested in the process or the journey rather than the destination. The future, for Em, is not in arriving in England, it is in moving toward it and away from something else:

> One goes backwards and forwards. Ebb-tide; full-tide. But inevitably and imperceptibly one does travel towards somewhere – perhaps towards that place one had determined upon long ago. One is surprised when at last one arrives, not realizing immediately because in the travelling one had forgotten the once-wished-for destination. (49-50)

It is Em's radical sense of not belonging anywhere that defines her and that perhaps defines a white creole identity in the novel. Her alienation fuels her desire to become "sexless, creedless, classless, free" (371), to become a writer, and to be always leaving and arriving but never staying.

Bliss's portrait of a white creole woman questions the history of Anglo-Caribbean constructions of a female creole identity, mainly by reversing the binary terms that support that history of representation. In this novel, it is the creole who represents intellectual attainment and artistic creativity against a back-drop of a culturally bankrupt colonial white culture. Colonial culture is described as one of "perpetual activity either of work or games" (324), while Em's creole identity is defined by meditation, observation, and literary expression. Creole idleness and indolence are reinterpreted as contemplation and reflection; colonial energy and industry are represented as superficial and meaningless activities that compensate for a lack of change and growth in the social, economic and political leadership of the island, and also for an absence of intellectual activity. The creole is repositioned as the purveyor of culture and the colonial as a poor imitator. Em is particularly dismissive of her white acquaintances who consider themselves "'artistic,' arranging flowers in the house, wearing decorative

clothes, and all the time inside being utterly false and unreal" (125). Bliss even counters the stereotype of the excessive, disruptive, and unregulated creole body by virtually disembodying Em, who has no physical appetites (food, drink, sex) and is contemptuous of any man who views her as a "woman" rather than as a "person" (238). Em's body has very little presence in the novel, except as a receiver of sense impressions. Much of the novel is given over to the description of scents, sights, and sounds:

> The hot wooden smell of the verandah railings, the sweet hot grass from the garden and the green smell of the plants hanging in their wire baskets overhead, came to her... (13). The sheen of green and gold oranges, bread-fruit, mangoes, bananas piled high, taken out for inspection, praised and stroked by the sellers, put back, made faces at, smiled at, pointed at by the buyers, handled by black and brown hands, fascinated the gaze... (14). In the middle of all the glowing fruits and vegetables, the coloured dresses so stiffly starched, the hot body smells of the niggers and the strong smell of rich ripe fruit rose together, so that it seemed as if they must be part of one another. (15)

Like the blacks of the island, the physical objects of Em's surroundings inspire intellectual or artistic responses. In other words, Em does not become hungry in response to the scene of fruitful abundance, she does not crave the flavours of the fruits; instead, they fascinate the gaze and as a consequence produce prose rather than stimulate the appetite. Even Em's beloved star-apples, bestowed upon her by Rebekkah as a token of friendship, are never eaten. Em views the star-apple as "the magic fruit which had retained its glamour from days gone by" (205) – as an object of symbolic value and exchange, and a confirmation of the old-fashioned "glamour" of her friendship with Rebekkah – rather than as an edible

delight.

Em's rather intellectual relationship with her physical surroundings extends to her friends and "lovers" as well. The language used to describe Rebekkah suggests that of a paramour. In Rebekkah's eyes Em sees "an almost lover-like glow" (205) when making a date to meet again, which confirms for Em that their "tryst would be kept" (206). A year later, Em and Rebekkah meet again, and on parting Rebekkah bids good-bye with, "Missus keep happy till Ah come agen" (281). Em muses:

> Keep happy till I come again. What was that? That was what a lover would say – a real lover, somebody who came not to destroy but to recreate. (281)

Though there are also homoerotic undertones to Em's relationships with her girlhood friend Œnone and her intermittent creole companion Joy, when Em reflects upon the role of a lover/friend her thoughts remain strictly in the realm of intellectual compatibility, artistic sensibility, and "realness." There does not seem to be a physical, bodily dimension to Em's fondest feelings for the select few of the "real" who function or are figured as lovers. Em views her body as a mask, as unreal, to be transcended by and transformed through art.

It is perhaps Bliss's engagement with a modernist aesthetic that precipitates her rewriting or rejection of the female creole body as sexually excessive. Elaine Showalter comments on the disembodied quality of much modernist literature produced by women:

> Paradoxically, the more female this literature became in the formal and theoretical sense, the further it moved from exploring the physical experience of women. Sexuality hovers on the fringes of the aestheticists' novels and stories, disguised, veiled, and denied.

> Androgyny, the sexual ethic of Bloomsbury and an important concept of the period, provided an escape from the confrontation with the body. Erotically charged and drenched with sexual symbolism, female aestheticism is nonetheless oddly sexless in its content. (1977: 33-34)

Woolf frequently complained about a "materialist" approach to writing fiction, such as when, in "Modern Fiction" (1925), she expresses disappointment with Wells and Bennett "because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body" (629). Bliss's interest is in the spirit rather than the body, and this modernist impulse results in a challenge to Anglo-Caribbean discourse, wherein the "essential" or defining nature of the creole is located in the intemperate and immoderate body. In Bliss's text, the creole body is sexless and is subordinated to the spirit.

The series of reversals that Bliss performs within *Luminous Isle* alters that dominant Anglo-Caribbean discourse and questions its main tenets. Over thirty years before Brathwaite, Bliss makes a distinct contribution to the history of ideas associated with a creole identity in suggesting that the culturally contaminated creole represents renewal and the future, rather than decay and the threat of racial extinction, and also that a creole identity is a process of self marked by painful personal and cultural alienation, rather than a distinct and fixed product. But Bliss's text is also limited by its insistence upon a binary structure, reversed or not. Bliss continues to oppose nature to culture, white to black, creole to colonial, and mind to body, even while she suggests that the white creole can occupy a fluid space between some of those contrasting constructions. Further, the construction of creolization as cultural renewal is premised on a problematic colonialist racial politics that posits the native as an amoral, natural, instinctual being guided by racial principles encoded in the blood. In the end, the equation of

blackness with creativity and artistry is a cheat, given that blackness functions within the text as the symbolic landscape which provides Em with the experiences and sense data necessary for her to find her voice as a poet. Bliss's desire to posit a cross-racial creole unity (based on creativity, sensibility, artistry) leads to her embracing, elevating and ennobling the "black" qualities of instinct, spontaneity, and so on without being able to present black or coloured characters who can create the kind of art really valued by the text: written prose or verse. Bliss argues that blacks are "natural" artists, but she can only conceive of their cultural production in terms of aesthetic objects connected to the landscape – art product rather than producer. While Em constructs Hendrie as a natural artist, he is in fact the *objet d'art* or the cultural object produced by Em's racialist colonialist discourse. This is perhaps why Hendrie is skeptical of Em's assertion that his people have "natural gifts" that they are squandering in seeking to imitate white culture (342). Hendrie responds to this assertion with, "I'm afraid I don't altogether understand," which renders Em's reply of "Your apprehension is perfect" (342) more than ironic. Bliss's achievement is that she questions those debilitating Anglo-Caribbean stereotypes that delimit a white creole identity, but her limitation is that in freeing the white creole she keeps the black in symbolic bondage, representing racial discourses of blackness as a "natural" part of "the real," rather than seeing them as discursive constructions open to reinterpretation.

Phyllis Shand Allfrey

Like Bliss, Phyllis Shand Allfrey writes with what Evelyn O'Callaghan calls an outsider's voice, and raises "questions regarding the place and contribution of the white creole minority in the organization of West

Indian society" (1986: 79-80). Allfrey seems always to have been concerned about her own personal contribution to the economic and political development of Dominica, her island home. She was born in 1908 into a well-established Roseau family whose roots in the West Indies date back to the seventeenth century.[9] At the time of her birth, the English-descended white creole community in Roseau and the environs represented a tiny minority of about one hundred within a population of about seven thousand. Though her family had been wealthy (her great-grandfather owned a plantation, and her grandfather was a famous and successful physician), by the time of Allfrey's birth it had lost the great wealth it had once possessed, and grew progressively poorer as the years passed. Educated on the island rather than abroad, Allfrey nonetheless left Dominica in 1927: "I was adventurous and wanted to see the world," she later explained (Paravisini 29). By the 1930s she had settled in England and become involved in leftist grassroots politics. She adopted the tenets of Fabian Socialism, joined the Socialist League and the Labour Party, and worked with the Popular Front and the Aid-to-Spain Committee in support of the Spanish Republican army during the Spanish Civil War. In the 1940s, Allfrey began a collaboration with the Fabian Colonial Bureau by joining the West India Committee, which supported the liberation of British colonies and the establishment of self-government. She was also at this time working on a novel. *The Orchid House* was published in 1953, the same year that Allfrey returned to Dominica and began a career in West Indian politics.[10]

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[9] Unless noted otherwise, all biographical information is taken from Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's biography *Phyllis Shand Allfrey: A Caribbean Life* (1996).

[10] Allfrey's West Indian political career postdates the novel and therefore does not receive much attention in my reading of the text. Briefly to sum up her career, Allfrey founded the

The novel was not well received within the small white Dominican community. Based in large part on Allfrey's own family history, *The Orchid House* tells the story of a Dominican white family during the decline of colonialism but before independence. The family occupies an economically and socially marginal position on the island because of its poverty, because of the stigma attached to the Master's illness and opium addiction (acquired after his service in the First World War), and because the family is composed of English-speaking Anglicans in an island dominated by patois-speaking Catholics.[11] Lally, the black nursemaid and narrator of the story, is also an outsider figure, even within the black community, as she too is a native speaker of English, is originally from another island, is educated, and is a Methodist. The book is structured around the arrivals home of the three daughters, who had all moved away as adults, and who upon returning to the island collectively attempt to counter the decline of the family, offer assistance to their cousin Andrew, who is dying of tuberculosis, and improve the social and working conditions of the poor on the island. The story opens with Lally's account of the "Madam's" visit to her little house with the news that the grown-up daughters of the family will be returning shortly to visit. Madam makes inquiries as to old Lally's health, and Lally is immediately filled with joy when she understands what is being

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Dominica Labour Party in 1955, was elected as a federal MP for Dominica, and then in 1958 was sent to Trinidad as Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the West Indian Federal Government, remaining in Port of Spain until the Federation dissolved in 1962. Back in Dominica, Allfrey became the editor of the weekly *Dominica Herald*, and then, in 1965, founded her own newspaper, the *Dominica Star*, with her husband Robert. For a more detailed account of Allfrey's political life, see Paravisini-Gebert.

[11] From the seventeenth century on, Dominica was successively captured by the French and the English. By the early nineteenth century its English ownership was finally established, but the earliest planters had been French and the black and white populations remained largely French and Catholic. In the early twentieth century, the small white community, though "officially" English, remained French at heart, and the Catholic Church was a powerful force in the island.

asked of her: "I would nurse Madam's grandchildren before I died. I would see Miss Stella and Miss Joan and Miss Natalie again" (5). One by one the daughters return, each with their own ideas of how best to help the family, Andrew, and the island community as a whole. Allfrey made no friends in the white Dominican community by making it as clear as she does that both the white descendants of the colonial order and the disenfranchised black labourers *need* help: she is critical of the conservative white elite, the tyrannical and hypocritical Catholic Church, and the coloured merchant class who have largely supplanted the whites in the economic structure of the island. As Stella observes, "nothing changes here, except that the coloured merchants grow richer and the white people poorer" (80). The bulk of the black population, of course, remain "penniless" (152).

The little critical commentary that there is on Allfrey's book tends to focus on the complicated role of Lally as narrator. The choice of the white novelist to use the voice of a black character to tell the story is indeed intriguing, and potentially opens the novel to accusations of the continuing colonization of black culture, the appropriation of voice, and the propagation of the stereotype of the devoted black Mammy. Lally's excessive devotion to the white family, whom she calls "my sacred people" (54-5), is evident from the opening pages. Lally has had no family of her own, since "when you are working for white people whom you love, you can only think of those people and their wants, you hardly notice anything else" (8). What Lally has declined to notice is the growth of a tumour in her body, her symbolic child. When Joan arrives home and asks how her tumour is, Lally comments to herself that "it was like Miss Joan to speak of my complaint as if I carried a child" (130). Lally is connected to the white family not only by her devotion but by her disease, with the disease situated

as a by-product of the devotion. Allfrey has Lally make this connection clear:

> Disease, Father Toussaint said in his sermons many times, sprang from sin. I'd like to know what grave sin I have committed to inflict me with this tumour. Perhaps my sin has been loving Madam and the Master and the children too much. For that love grew in me through the years, and not a mortal soul, let alone a man of God, could dislodge it. (195)

As Stella says of the island, "beauty grows like a weed here, and so does disease" (127). Allfrey makes use of the discourse of disease that is common in colonial accounts of the Caribbean, such as Lady Nugent's repeated references to the "disease" and "death" (184) of Jamaica. But while Nugent attributes the prevalence of disease and consequent "malady of the spirits" (18) to the climate, Allfrey connects disease to the history of colonialism and "willingly informs us ... that much of the disease and ugliness was brought to the island from England" (Nunez-Harrell 286). That Lally has contracted her disease through the sin of her loving the white family reinforces the connection between colonialism and decay.

Lally's position within Allfrey's text as servant, confidante, and narrator has received some critical attention.[12] Little, however, has been written on Allfrey's interest in the position of the white creole in the Caribbean, and the ways in which class and gender inform a white creole identity within *The Orchid House*. The white family's insecure position within race and class hierarchies on the island is as a result of its language (English), its religion (Anglican), and its poverty, but also of its marked difference from the small white community as a result of its matriarchal organization. As the Master is an hysteric, destroyed by the war and sustained by opium, he

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[12] See Herb Wyile for an especially perceptive reading.

occupies no significant position of authority within the white community or the family. He is pale, thin, dependent, fearful, largely house-bound, trapped by the past, and terrified of change and technology, as signified by his excessive fear of airplanes, automobiles, and other machines. His feminized position as hysteric has led to the erosion of his pre-war masculine authority. As Lally repeatedly asserts, the house at L'Aromatique is one of "staunch and firm" (11) women, and the three daughters especially, "with or without men," are "sufficient unto themselves" (12). The Master's return from the war changes what had been "a house only of women for six years" (25), but while his presence alters the biological makeup it does not affect the power relations within the family. Power is changing hands, but only within the women of the family. So, as Madam becomes less assertive, Mademoiselle Bosquet, Madam's companion and confidante, fills her place as head of the family – until the daughters return home, and power then shifts from the older generation of women to the younger. The imagery of "beauty and disease, beauty and sickness, beauty and horror" (75) in the novel is associated as much with the decay of colonialism as it is with patriarchy. The white creole women, though isolated from the black masses and the white and coloured elite, are posited in the text as figures of change and regeneration, while the colonial and creole men (the Master and cousin Andrew), and the black creole who supports the colonial status quo (Lally), are diseased, decayed, and dying.

Allfrey's novel, then, does not chronicle the "decay of the white family in the dying days of a colonial society," as Herb Wyile suggests (22), since Allfrey does not equate the family with a patriarchal order. Like Bliss, Allfrey is interested in recasting the creole woman as a figure of regeneration rather than degeneracy, but unlike Bliss, Allfrey also suggests

that the individual is an insufficient tool for social rehabilitation and reconstruction. Allfrey indicates, through the various events of the novel, that the daughters individually lack the resources to effect significant social, economic and political change. To put it crudely, the three daughters each represent "heart" (Stella), "head" (Joan), and capital (Natalie), and in isolation none of those dominant characteristics can effect change. Stella is passionate, focuses on the individual, and misremembers and romanticizes the past:

> [Stella] was feeding little Hel as she loved to feed herself, like a bird of the air, settling to pluck something delicious now and then. "After all," she'd say to Lally, "I grew up that way, didn't I?"
>
> "No, Miss Stella, you had your regular sitting meals." (84)

Stella wants to forget her troubled relationship with her German-American husband Helmut, whom she has left in America, and so she returns to the island to "grab the past and feel how rough and real it is" (59). Her solution to the family's problems is to murder Mr. Lillipoulala, the Master's opium supplier. Stella does not understand that the Master's problem is not limited to opium addiction, but extends to an insular and protected colonial identity shattered by the war, or that the family's current problematic social and economic position is directly related to that idyllic colonial past to which she wishes to cling. Stella, the romantic, has her "wild and serious heart" (58) broken over "this business of changing people" (142), since the desired change (her father's recovery of his authoritative position) is not brought about by the death of the opium supplier. Allfrey here illustrates that systemic change cannot be achieved solely through a sentimental focus on "saving" the individual.

After Stella quietly leaves the island in the wake of Mr. Lillipoulala's

suspicious death, Joan arrives home and takes her place as agent of change. Joan's focus is not on the person, but "the people." A socialist and political activist, Joan wants to "wake people up and start them thinking about the misery of these penniless labourers" (187). Joan's socialist politics are contrasted with both Stella's romanticism and Lally's conservatism. Lally is opposed to racial mixing (4), the use of patois (14), and Joan's habit of loaning her books to Baptiste, a close friend, since encouraging a black man to read will "put him outside himself" (21). Lally believes that blacks are poor because they are lazy (141), supports conventional codes of femininity (leading one character to comment that she is "like an early-Victorian white spinster" [205]), and takes comfort in the thought that Joan and Baptiste will not get very far in their socialist schemes, since "every sensible property-owner would be against them, and the nuns and the priests, and the Government officials" (142).

But Lally's "old-fashioned" colonialist views are not expressed merely to be corrected by Joan's "modern" socialist political platform. There is doubt cast within the novel as to the efficaciousness of Joan's political ideas and her manner of implementing them. When Joan and Baptiste explain to Lally that they are working on behalf of "the people," Lally responds:

> "The people, the people. I don't understand the sacred way you say that word, Miss Joan. I don't understand it at all. You only know about a dozen of them anyhow." (141)

Lally's point is supported later when Baptiste, and not Joan, travels by foot to the remote parts of the island to advertise a meeting of the (as yet unformed) Unemployed Labourers Union. Joan does not volunteer to go to the people, but relies on Baptiste, a man of the people, to bring them to her. Lest we feel tempted to read a message here that the political future of the

island lies in the black hands of people like Baptiste rather than with creole whites like Joan, Allfrey constantly reminds us of the master/servant relationship that Joan and Baptiste are caught in. Baptiste addresses Joan as "Miss Joan" and walks three paces behind her. When she objects to this treatment, he responds,

> "I can't address you otherwise, but I'll try not to be too humble, Miss Joan," Baptiste said. "I can't forget that my mother is a servant in your house.... You wouldn't like me to become fast and familiar all of a sudden, the way they say we get when we're 'taken up'?"
>
> "Baptiste, you're an educated person, and my friend."
>
> "Yes, Miss Joan," said Baptiste obediently.... (143)

The class and racial hierarchies that Joan and Baptiste cannot shake are evident a few pages later, when Baptiste bathes Joan's hot and tired feet, and Joan immediately declares how "marvellous that feels" (146) before recalling that the service is a sign of her friend's subordinate status. While Lally's belief in maintaining race and class boundaries is clearly questioned in the novel, she at least recognizes that those boundaries exist. Joan cannot cross those boundaries by declaring them to be regressive or unnecessary – so long as Baptiste continues to function as the physical labour and Joan as the intellectual leader, those boundaries will be maintained.

Wyile agrees with Kenneth Ramchand that while Allfrey is "tough-minded enough to allow Lally to ridicule Joan for her abstract conception of the people.... it is obvious that Joan's stance is presented for approval" (11). Whatever Allfrey's intent, Lally's views are not fully dismissed within the novel, and Joan's are not fully endorsed. The fact that Lally's body is being consumed by a parasite picked up by too close a contact with her own sacred people suggests that her views belong to the past, but Joan's habit of

speaking on behalf of *her* sacred people rather than with them, and her continuing dependence upon Baptiste's physical labour, undermines the simplistic conclusion that Joan's activism is the answer to the island's problems. It is interesting that Joan's town meeting and her speeches are not relayed to the reader – there are no scenes of Joan speaking to "the people." Further, when she articulates her primary political aim by declaring that "if the only thing we do is to wake people up and start them thinking about the misery of these penniless labourers, we are doing right" (187), the "people" to whom Joan refers in the sentence are not the labourers themselves but their custodians – the white elite and the coloured merchants who exploit the labour. Here, the labourers are the content or objects, not the addressees or subjects, of the speech.

The question of whether her stance is presented for approval is complicated further when Joan makes a promise to the Catholic priests that she will remove herself from politics (in exchange for their promise not to look too closely into Stella's involvement in the death of Mr. Lillipoulala), and then cables her husband Edward to come and take her political place on the island. This conclusion to the political story is somewhat troubled, as Allfrey seems to be uncomfortable with the gender politics involved in having Joan bow out and the husband take over. But the transfer of responsibility from female to male is somewhat ameliorated by Allfrey's construction of Joan as a boyish character (short hair, compact angular body) and Edward as symbolically castrated (he has had four of his fingers blown off in the Spanish Civil War), so that as a pair the two are ambiguously gendered, or to some extent androgynous. The success of the socialist program is cast into the future and into the maimed hands of an emasculated male character who does not appear in the novel. Whatever

socialist convictions Allfrey may have personally held, and whether as author she approved of Joan's actions or not, the text itself remains ambivalent. The success of Joan's work on the island is questionable and no more viable political program is realized within the pages of the novel.

The third daughter, Natalie, offers in some ways a more successful and substantial solution to the family's complex problems: money. Natalie's focus is neither solely on the individual (the Master), nor on the wider community, but rather on the family as a social unit. Natalie has married money, and as a widow has complete control over her finances. She has been quietly supporting her parents for years, and returns to the island from her home in Trinidad to effect change through the investment of capital. As Natalie explains to her traveling companion, "it's essential to be rich.... All these drippings and dronings and reformations, they don't get you anywhere without good solid cash!" (226) Natalie has always been the passive, conservative, obedient daughter, and as a woman she lives for pleasure and has no interest in social reformation. She explains to Joan:

> "You upset me in Trinidad, gazing at me with those earnest eyes, asking: 'But for what do you live?' For what indeed? Just living, that's enough. Dancing, that's enough. You people, you and Stella, won't *allow* yourselves to be happy.... Such dreary world-changers! Leave things be, that's my motto." (202-3)

But Natalie, under pressure from other family members, is unable to leave things be. She provides the money and arranges transportation off the island for her father and cousin Andrew, so that each can be cured of their afflictions. The Master dies as a result of this abrupt and terrifying interruption of his routine, and Andrew disappears into a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients. Natalie's intervention results in death, but also frees

the family of women from the economic and emotional burden of the Master's ill-heath and addiction.

Natalie, the wealthy child who has not left the West Indies, who is "addicted to expensive living, costly entertainment, dress and equipage" (Long II 265), and who also is indifferent toward the social unrest of the majority population, is a version of the white creole of eighteenth and nineteenth century Anglo-Caribbean discourse. As Father Woollett would say, she is self-satisfied, ignorant and indolent, but she is also amiable, generous, hospitable and affectionate, passive and obedient: a "doll-beauty" (92) and model white creole woman. Stella and Joan have moved north to America and England, and have learned as a result that "everything has to be useful" (56) and "sensible" (60). Andrew informs Stella that she has "picked up strange ideas in the North about usefulness and purpose and that kind of stuff" (71), and Natalie criticizes Joan for bringing "the grey blight of your English theories all the way across the Atlantic Ocean" (202). Natalie, having remained in the Caribbean, has not embraced those celebrated traditional English (or American) values of industry, frugality, and self-denial, that have been thrust upon Stella as an American farmer's wife, and that Joan has embraced as a socialist activist. Natalie is an "old-world" creole in some ways, contaminated by tropical living and uninterested in upholding middle-class civilities and social habits. At the same time, her money is essential in the production of social change.

Allfrey resurrects cultural stereotypes but also refines and rewrites them. Natalie's irreverence and lack of seriousness are necessary to the social survival of the family, and are not represented as signs of cultural or intellectual degeneracy. Natalie is not held up against Joan, for example, as an example of social failure; instead, all three sisters are equal but different

members of a minority white creole culture that is multiple and varied, and that is not constructed out of the myth of a "natural" community of common class interests and political affinities. There is no utopian moment within the text when all three sisters successfully work together toward a common good, but Allfrey does suggest that this minority social group can play a part in the organization of West Indian culture. This is both the achievement and the limitation of *The Orchid House*, for while Allfrey, like Bliss, associates the white creole with cultural regeneration and renewal, there is no place fully imagined for the black and coloured creole population of the island. Lally, one of "the last of the slaves" (86), is not a figure of regeneration, nor is the educated but servile Baptiste, the most fully developed of the minor black creole characters in the novel. It is not my position that Allfrey ought to be responsible for developing a long-term plan for social change within the novel, or that maintaining a focus on the white creole minority is necessarily narrow and restrictive. The problem is that within the general socialist politics of the novel there is a notable failure to imagine a creole coalition across race and class boundaries. The future is a mirror image of the past: an English gentleman will act as political steward of the black majority who, within the novel, are unable to transgress the socio-racial boundaries established by colonial rule.

Allfrey's primary critique is of a corrupt, male-dominant, colonial order, and her insertion of the white creole women into the social and political scenes is her primary aim. While Allfrey works to define a space for the white creole woman in the future of Dominica, she recognizes that white creoles have a unique history within the Caribbean, and deploys in the text natural imagery to suggest this relationship. In one scene, the relationship between host and parasite, already introduced in relation to Lally and her

tumour, is suggestive of the relationship between white creoles, the history of colonialism, and present-day Dominica. Baptiste asks Joan if she believes in symbols, and then tells her of a recent experience:

> "What I saw was a tree that was not a tree ... something taller than a tree, but it was a parasite, a bromeliad Old Master called it. I saw it on the top slope of Morne Gauchin. A tree, old but still tender, had this great glossy spike towering above it, sapping it like a disease but growing to be even stronger and more beautiful than the tree itself." (178)

In this image, the parasite is stronger and more beautiful than that which inaugurates its very existence, the old tree. If this can be read as suggestive of the relationship between white creoles and their colonial past – creoles nurtured by but also slowly destroying that past, and producing something new, better, and stronger in its place – then Baptiste's explanation that the bromeliad "lives without its own roots in the earth" (178) also describes the position of the white creole in the West Indies. Indeed, Allfrey extends this notion of a parasitic and rootless creole existence into the central metaphor of her novel, the orchid house. The orchid house is a contradictory emblem of both frailty and endurance. The orchid is a delicate flower with a shallow root system which takes moisture and sustenance from the ground, the air, and from other plants upon which it grows and to which it is attached. Like the bromeliad, the orchid is sustained by other organic entities, and it also occupies an uncertain ground between connectedness (a root system) and disconnectedness (shallow roots). The orchid is a frail flower and the orchid house a frail building: both are easily destroyed by inclement weather (the orchid house is abandoned in the novel during storms), but both also are quickly and easily regrown or restored in the storm's aftermath. Allfrey suggests in her novel that the staunch and independent white creole

women, who are both West Indian and British, occupy an ambiguous place in the island as natives whose roots are as deeply in the politics of British colonialism as they are in Caribbean soil.

The cultural dilemma of the white creole is suggested in both Bliss's and Allfrey's texts by the wandering protagonists (Natalie excepted), who simultaneously experience a strong sense of home in the Caribbean and a need to explore other identities abroad. The white creole is not posited as an inauthentic or failed European, but rather as a culturally dispersed figure whose contingent identity implicitly questions those historical boundaries erected between so called discrete national, racial and cultural identities. Further, both authors revise and rewrite the feminine white creole identity that can be found within Anglo-Caribbean discourse by suggesting that the white creole woman, individually or collectively, is a figure of cultural and political regeneration rather than degeneration. However, while both Bliss and Allfrey interject the politics of a gendered identity into their studies of whiteness and creoleness, neither are able to imagine a creole identity that crosses racial barriers, that is creole in the radical sense of the "diversality" that Bernabé et. al. propose. The "correction" that Bliss and Allfrey offer to Bernabé et. al. (well in advance of current theories of creoleness) lies in their insertion of gender into the historical, literary and critical terrain of whiteness and creoleness, but neither Bliss nor Allfrey extend their reconfiguration of a creole identity beyond the racial border between black and white.

CHAPTER FOUR

White Creole Autobiography: Jean Rhys

> My relations with "real" little English boys and girls (real ones) were peculiar.... I nearly always disliked them. I soon discovered the peculiarly smug attitude which made them quite sure that I was in some way inferior. My accent! Did I have a bath every morning or did I have it in the evening. Very important. I'm glad to remember that I slapped one little English girl good and hard once. I also soon realized another thing. If I said I was *English* they at once contradicted me – or implied a contradiction – No a colonial – you're not English – inferior being.
>
> I was curious about black people. They stimulated me and I felt akin to them. It added to my sadness that I couldn't help but realize that they didn't really like or trust white people. White cockroaches they called us behind our backs. (Cockroach again.) One could hardly blame them.
>
> – Jean Rhys, unpublished "Black Exercise Books" (in O'Connor 19, 36)

Edward Said defines exile as "the unhealable rift between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home," and cautions that "to think of exile as beneficial, as a spur to humanism or to creativity, is to belittle its mutilations" (1984: 49, 50). Said suggests that writers in exile "reconstitute their broken lives in narrative form" (1984: 51), that narrative in some ways reassembles a discontinuous history or state of being. This is not to suggest that some mythical, whole, pre-exilic self is fully reconstituted through narrative or through the act of writing, but rather that the act of

narrative construction is a response to a need to create some sense of self out of the refractions and discontinuities of exile. Writing, suggests Said, is a compensatory act because it counteracts disorientating loss through the creation of a fictive world, and because it can in part restore a sense of identity and belonging in relation to that fiction, which functions as a kind of substitute for the lost world from which the writer has been expelled, or has expelled herself. Said further suggests that exile is a fundamentally dialogic or contrapuntal state, in that habits of life, expression, or activity "in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment," so that "both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally" (1984: 55). While Said does not directly address the question of temporal exile, he suggests here that exile in both time and place is more severely disorientating than that more common sense of separation from a self that belongs to another time, the self of the past (frequently explored in memoirs, autobiography, and the bildungsroman). Geographic exile, suggests Said, is more radically nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal, than the exile of self in time, because it is life led "outside habitual order" (1984: 55), even the order of chronology.

Michael Seidel agrees with Said that one striking motivation for the exiled writer is to "transform the figure of rupture back into a figure of connection" (x). But while Seidel acknowledges what he calls "exilic anxiety" – a lifelong scenario of estrangement – he views exile more as "an enabling fiction" from which the writer gains imaginative sustenance than as a form of psychic and perhaps even creative mutilation (5, xiii). Seidel's argument is that the narrative imagination supplements exilic anxiety, creating wholeness out of rupture, and that exile serves narrative "as an initiating and supplementing action" (13). Exile initiates narrative;

narrative supplements exile: each is in a sense constitutive of the other. While Said acknowledges that the canon of modern western culture is made up in large part of the work of exiles, émigrés and refugees, he writes against this notion of the exile as a romantic figure, nurtured by loss or enabled by separation or banishment. Said does not allow that writing offers an alternative space to the "perilous territory of not belonging" (1984: 51), only that the "belongingness" of narrative engages in a dialogue with the "unbelongingness" of lived experience. While writing may offer a form of compensation, it cannot restore a sense of belonging. Life, for the exile, remains contingent, provisional. Like the abject, the exile cannot be assimilated and remains the inbetween, the ambiguous, the composite.

Said and Seidel implicitly agree upon one point, however, namely that the exile is defined by a movement away from or break with the "native place," whether that break is voluntary or as a result of banishment. María-Inés Lagos-Pope also stresses the physical displacement or separation from "one's own culture, language and history" (10), as does Robert Edwards, who argues that the "displacement from native ground" represents a break "not simply with space or location but with the cultural and social continuities of place and with a collective history" (16). Like Said, Seidel, and Lagos-Pope, Edwards' interest is in the dual perspective afforded by the cultural shift that accompanies the physical displacement of exile. Bettina Knapp, however, expands upon this singular emphasis on the physical movement from one place to another by offering a distinction between exoteric and esoteric exile. Exoteric exile involves the permanent physical departure from a place, while esoteric exile refers to the withdrawal of the individual from the empirical realm to a private, inner world, exiled from "outside forces, events or relationships that one might find repugnant ... or difficult" (2).

But what if the individual does not actively withdraw, but feels, rather, driven to exile within a place? And what if that place *is* the "native ground"? David Bevan suggests not only that exile can occur on native ground, but that "exile within a place is often still more poignant than exile from a place or exile to a place" (3). Bevan allows that exile within the homeplace can occur as a result of a radical sense of difference or otherness. I would add to this that the difference between a pervasive sense of alienation and what I am calling exile within a place is a feeling of banishment and of active rejection of the self by the homeplace and its culture, history, and social life. Knapp's construction of esoteric exile as withdrawal does not adequately address the situation of the subject who does not choose exile but rather feels driven to occupy "the perilous territory of not belonging" while remaining at home.

Judith Kegan Gardiner argues that for figures like Jean Rhys – colonials in exile – "no place is home" (134). For Rhys, both Dominica (the native home) and England (the adopted home) are a dream – neither is familiar, both remain strange (Gardiner 148). Lucy Wilson calls Rhys "a woman without a country" whose dispossession, as a white creole, differs from that of black West Indian writers who, as George Lamming points out in *The Pleasures of Exile*, could never have felt the experience of being in a minority (68). Wilson concludes her exploration of what she calls Rhys's language of exile with a reading of the third stanza of Derek Walcott's poem "Jean Rhys." The lines are:

> And the sigh of that child
> is white as an orchid
> on a crusted log
> in the bush of Dominica,

a V of Chinese white
meant for the beat of a seagull
over a sepia souvenir of Cornwall,
as the white hush between two sentences. (428)

Wilson argues that the only space that Rhys fully occupies, or to which she belongs, is that of the "white hush between two sentences." It is a provocative suggestion, but Wilson does not fully explore its possibilities. Wilson calls this white hush a "linguistic space" (71), but surely the white hush is precisely the space that is bordered, but not occupied, by language. Presumably, using Walcott's imagery, it would be possible to argue that for Rhys language was as much a prison as a release, that the white spaces between the horizontal black lines of language signal an absence of language, of identity, even in the writing of an identity. Gail Pool, for example, argues that Rhys's autobiography is not a successful work because the vignettes of which it is composed "hide more than they reveal" (73). Pool finds Rhys to be absent from her own text, and criticizes the autobiography for not granting access to Rhys's "reality" (74). Wilson sees the whiteness on the page as a linguistic space, while Pool views the black marks on the page as a blankness, an empty page; in the first reading presence (language) is located in absence, and in the second absence is located in presence. While Walcott suggests that Rhys's racial identity as white has both material and metaphorical significance (the word "white" is used three times in eight lines), Wilson and Pool only indirectly make a connection between racial whiteness and textual blankness, or between whiteness and the erasure of the self from the project of self-life-writing (auto-bio-graphy). Neither critic explores the various ways in which absence and lack have been, and continue to be, associated with whiteness as a racial

identity – an association that Rhys explicitly makes on the numerous occasions in her autobiography when she interprets her own racial position or identity in the West Indies.

Rhys was born in Dominica in 1890 within a Welsh-descended creole family, which belonged to a tiny minority of approximately one hundred Anglican English-speaking whites separated by language and religion from a black and white Catholic, patois-speaking population of approximately 30,000 (Froude 143). Rhys was educated at a Catholic convent school in Dominica because there were no Anglican schools, but always as a white girl from an old slave-owning family she felt different from and rejected by the largely coloured student body. In her autobiography Rhys relates an episode in which she shyly tries to befriend a coloured girl at the convent, who at first simply ignores Rhys. Then,

> without speaking, she turned and looked at me. I knew irritation, bad temper, the "Oh, go away" look; this was different. This was hatred – impersonal, implacable hatred. I recognised it at once and if you think that a child cannot recognise hatred and remember it for life you are most damnably mistaken.
>
> I never tried to be friendly with any of the coloured girls again. I was polite and that was all.
>
> They hate us. We are hated.
>
> Not possible.
>
> Yes it is possible and it is so. (49)

Rejected by her peers, and fearful that the black domestics she loved did or could not reciprocate her feelings ("Did they like us at all?" [49]), Rhys looked for, but never found, a sense of belonging within her family. Her mother was cool, critical and distant; her father was largely absent on

business; her older sister was much older, and moved away when Rhys was young; and her younger siblings were much younger and not satisfying companions. With pale skin and blonde hair, Rhys was even physically different from her dark-haired immediate family and distant relations, and as a result of this difference Rhys learned to hate her appearance. She fervently desired to resemble either her great-grandmother Jean Lockhart (a Spanish woman, her old aunts said, but Rhys wondered if she may have been mulatta) or the blacks of the island.

Rhys had even been named after her own whiteness. She was born Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams – Ella after a family relation and Gwendolen because it means "white" in Welsh – and Rhys saw herself as the only "white" member of the family. Rhys renamed herself numerous times throughout her life, sometimes using Ella, eventually adopting Jean Rhys, but never, it seems, allowing herself to be called Gwen, as she often was in Dominica. A number of her critics and biographers assume that Rhys took the name "Jean" from her first husband, Jean Lenglet, and that it was a fictional mask designed to hide her status as a female writer. No-one seems to have noted that Rhys's great-grandmother was also called Jean, and that Rhys frequently pondered Jean Lockhart's ambiguous racial identity and wished for her dark, possibly mulatta, identity and looks. Further, her adoption of Rhys (from Rees) identifies her with her mother's family, so that Rhys's literary identity is tied to a history of black/white creole women, and not necessarily to a husband or a father. The rejection of "Gwendolen" and adoption of "Jean" has racial implications, suggesting the repudiation of a white self in favour of an "other" identity. Rhys writes often in her autobiography of her hatred of her whiteness, such as when, as a child, she caught a glimpse of her pale skin and fair hair in a mirror and was

overwhelmed by despair (more on this scene later), or when, after passionate appeals to God before bed, she woke up to discover that she was still white. Rhys associates her "whiteness" with her erasure within the family (her mother appears to Rhys to favour the other siblings), and also with her outcast position within the larger island community. As a result, growing up in Dominica was for Rhys a painful experience, for while she loved the island deeply she also felt violently rejected by it.

When an opportunity to attend school in England presented itself in 1907, Rhys left willingly, hoping to find acceptance in the "motherland" that she had been taught to worship from afar. Unfortunately, Rhys hated England upon arrival and never overcame the feeling. From about 1907 until 1920, Rhys lived a poverty-stricken, nomadic life in England as a "chorus girl" and model. Eventually she escaped to Vienna, and then Paris, where she met Ford Madox Ford, published in his *Transatlantic Review*, and then in 1927 published *The Left Bank*, a collection of short stories. Back in England Rhys wrote and had published the novels *Quartet* in 1928, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* in 1931, *Voyage in the Dark* in 1934, and *Good Morning, Midnight* in 1939, all of which were critically well received but not widely read. Between 1939 and 1966, Rhys wrote scattered pieces but published nothing and was, as far as anyone in publishing or literary circles knew, dead. With the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966, Rhys was reborn into the literary scene, and shortly thereafter all of her earlier works were reissued. She published two more collections of short stories – *Tigers are Better-Looking* in 1968 and *Sleep it off, Lady* in 1976 – and worked on her autobiography which, unfinished, was published in 1979, a few months after her death. Rhys died famous and, for the first time in her long life, with enough money on which to live comfortably.

Since the early 1970s Rhys's reputation within academic circles has been steadily growing. To date, there are over a dozen full-length critical and biographical studies, and countless articles, devoted to Rhys's novels and short stories. It is worthy of note that the earliest critical attention in the wake of *Wide Sargasso Sea* came from West Indian critics, namely Wally Look Lai (1968), Kenneth Ramchand (1970) and V. S. Naipaul (1972), who were quick to argue that Rhys was as much a Caribbean writer as an "English" modernist (in the case of the early texts) or post-modernist (in the case of *Wide Sargasso Sea*). Given the intense interest in Rhys in the last twenty years, it is surprising that very little critical attention has been afforded to her unfinished autobiography, *Smile Please*. The neglect of this text may be related to the peripheral position in the academic world that autobiography and its study has, until recently, occupied. That this text has been marginalized within the Jean Rhys critical industry is without doubt. While *Smile Please* is called upon in virtually every study of Rhys's novels and short studies, it tends to function simply as a fact source for biographical information rather than as a literary text worthy of critical scrutiny. It is mined for dates, places, and significant emotional and intellectual events, in order to serve the reading of other (more important, it is implicitly suggested) texts, or in order to flesh out the introductory biographical material that accompanies such readings.

The problem for Rhys scholars may be the "problem" of autobiography itself, a hybrid form that exists on the border between fiction and fact. James Olney argues that autobiography is "the most elusive of literary documents" and that the "subject of autobiography produces more questions than answers" (3, 5). Many of those questions are questions of boundaries – are diaries, letters, travel accounts, and even poetry and fictional prose, all

forms of autobiography? Is there a difference between saying that a text is autobiography and saying that it is autobiographical? Rhys critics frequently assert that Rhys's novels are autobiographical, but few argue that they are autobiography, which suggests that autobiography is a purer, more distilled, more direct form of life writing than is fiction. The lingering myth that autobiography is direct and factual – transparent rather than opaque – is perhaps responsible for the relegation of *Smile Please* to a secondary position within a literary hierarchy that places "purely" fictional forms above so-called factual writing, or that distinguishes higher art forms (poetry, novels, drama) from lower forms (biography, travel writing, memoirs). But the "problem" of autobiography as I see it is not that it is a direct or transparent recording of a life, and therefore of little literary interest; the problem is that autobiography represents such a complex meeting of writing and selfhood that the status of the "I" is elusive and troubling rather than concrete and transparent. Shari Benstock explains:

> If the autobiographical moment prepares for a meeting of "writing" and "selfhood," a coming together of method and subject matter, this destiny – like the retrospective glance that presumably initiates autobiography – is always deferred. Autobiography reveals gaps, and not only gaps in time and space or between the individual and the social, but also a widening divergence between the manner and the matter of its discourse. That is, autobiography reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins on the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers over the premises of its construction. (1988 11)

When the autobiographer is a woman, Benstock and other theorists argue, the relationship between writing and selfhood is even more problematic.

The female autobiographer lacks the sense of "radical individuality" (Brodzki and Schenck 1) that has historically been the prerogative of the masculine subject and the focus of the autobiographical project. Mary Mason argues that women's autobiographies do not follow the pattern of the two prototypical male autobiographers, Augustine and Rousseau, who either stress the role of the inviolable self in the dramatic structure of conversion (Augustine), or construct identity as an unfolding narrative of self-discovery "where characters and events are little more than aspects of the author's evolving consciousness" (Rousseau) (210). The disclosure of the female self, says Mason, is linked to the identification with some "other," so that identity is not singular but rather constructed within what Janice Morgan and Colette Hall call a "reciprocal dynamics of identity through alterity" (15), or what the Personal Narratives Group identify as the "interpersonal context" (20). The position of the "other" is occupied by both external relational figures (family members, for example) and by the writing self who, as female, does not belong to that masculine tradition of autobiography which has tended to exclude writing practices based on identification, interdependence and community (Neuman 2).

As outsiders working within a genre dominated by an "Enlightenment 'self,' ontologically identical to other 'I's, [which] sees its destiny in a teleological narrative enshrining the 'individual' and 'his' uniqueness" (Watson and Smith xvii), women have had to develop alternative and to some extent oppositional strategies of self-representation. Morgan and Hall argue that the by-now canonical features of contemporary self-representational writing – fragmentation, discontinuity, duality, and above all, a pervasive textual self-consciousness – have frequently been present in women's autobiography throughout history (7). The question remains,

however, as to whether these textual counter-strategies are "female" or whether they are shared by other socially and economically excluded groups. Shirley Neuman acknowledges that some men write fragmented autobiographies and some women linear autobiographies, and she sees a problem in generalizing gendered writing practices and in assigning women to one oppositional group, thus effacing differences between women (3). Neuman calls for the insertion of other social and cultural identities – such as race, sexuality, and class – into the discussion of autobiography, as do Watson and Smith, who argue that "privileging the oppression of gender over and above other oppressions effectively erases the complex and often contradictory positionings of the subject" (xiv). A number of feminist theorists of women's autobiography, such as Estelle Jelinek, Shari Benstock, Mary Mason, Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom, and the members of the Personal Narratives Group, do not sufficiently address the complexity of social and cultural identities, and instead focus exclusively upon "the fissures of female discontinuity" (Benstock 20), or place "central insistence upon gender as the lens through which autobiography" is to be scrutinized (Bell and Yalom 5). Other theorists, such as Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, Janice Morgan and Colette Hall, and Julie Watson and Sidonie Smith, rightly insist upon the importance of social categories such as race, sexuality and class as differentiating factors among female autobiographers. However, "race" is, in the studies produced by these authors, generally synonymous with "nonwhite, oppressed minority," and so is not understood to be, and explored as, a social identity that belongs to all women writers. The assumption is that "white" is a non-racial, homogenous social category defined by the normative position of power,

while "nonwhite" is a specific, marked, identifiable, and stereotyped, racial identity.

My reading of Rhys's autobiography has been informed and enriched by both groups of theorists, but unlike them I am primarily interested in pursuing the significance of race in the writing of a self when, as in this case, that self is English-speaking, white, and creole, and is born into a cultural climate dominated by patois-speaking Afro-Caribbeans. Is it possible to theorize white creole autobiography, and to add into this complex textual mix the fact of social and cultural exile that such an identity entailed for Rhys? White was (and is still) not the racial norm in Dominica, and while whites have had tremendous economic and cultural power on the island, that power was becoming seriously eroded by Rhys's time, especially as her own family became increasingly impoverished from generation to generation. On several occasions Rhys relates that she and her other family members were referred to as "white cockroaches" and "white niggers" by both poor blacks and affluent whites, and that she was considered by islanders as neither English (because creole), nor fully white (because poor), nor fully Caribbean (because white). Rhys's whiteness meant that she appeared to belong to an English culture which she had never seen or known, except in literature or in the creolized terms in which it presented itself in Dominica. Reading Rhys's autobiography entails considering her status as female, as creole, as poor (despite the retention of middle-class sensibilities), as exiled (at home and abroad), and as white.

Smile Please is divided by Rhys's editor, Diana Athill, into two sections. The first section, called "Smile Please," was considered by Rhys to be a finished work and is made up of fragmented vignettes or lexical snapshots

of her childhood in Dominica up until her departure for England at the age of sixteen. The second section, entitled "It Began to Grow Cold" after a line from its first segment, was named by Athill and "consists of material which does not claim to be finished" (Athill in Rhys 8). It is also somewhat fragmented, but the individual sections are overall longer and have a more conventionally narrative shape than do the earlier pieces. Athill admits to some apprehension in publishing unfinished work, as Rhys apparently allowed no piece of writing to leave her hands until it was complete except for the very smallest details. Athill tells this story to illustrate Rhys's perfectionism:

> .... some five years after the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* she said to me out of the blue: "There is one thing I've always wanted to ask you. Why did you let me publish that book?" Here a gloss is necessary. She was a writer addressing her editor – a writer hampered by unusually beautiful manners. For "let me publish" you must read "badger me into publishing" – an unfair accusation as it happens. I was indignant when I asked her what on earth she meant. "It was not finished," she said coldly. She then pointed out the existence in the book of two unnecessary words. One was "then," the other "quite." (Athill in Rhys 8)

Gail Pool assumes, as do other critical readers of Rhys's work, that the autobiography "was moving away from the vague sketches toward a narrative form, which might have proved more effective" (70), but as the second section represents a first draft it is difficult to know what final form it would have taken. It is possible that Rhys began with narrative and worked until she achieved a different, more diffuse or discontinuous form, but, as we can never know this, it is only possible to say that the completed

Dominican section is not structured by causality. Pool reproaches Rhys for the "formless" (69) and "listless" (71) nature of this section in particular, but also criticizes the entire autobiography as a (fragmented) whole. Pool asserts that Rhys is "neither reflective nor analytical" (69) and that she "did not have anything pressing she wanted to say about her West Indian childhood," so that, in the autobiography, Dominica "is simply there, a picturesque backdrop rather than a living part of the play" (70). These are interesting responses, given the history of critical marginalization of Rhys's identity as West Indian. Until Look Lai's, Ramchand's and Naipaul's insistence upon Rhys's "Caribbeanness" after the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea*, critics habitually assigned both the real lived experience of Rhys in Dominica and the Caribbean sensibility evident within Rhys's early fiction to the status of backdrop, as though they constitute a "colourful" but otherwise inconsequent matter within Rhys's life and work. This wilful forgetting of Rhys's West Indian identity calls to mind the colonialist paradigm which situates the West Indies (and other "colourful" colonies) as an adornment to Britain, a small jewel in the crown, rather than as a significant geographic, cultural and historical region inside/outside empire.

It is precisely the discontinuous, fragmented nature of *Smile Please* overall, and especially the Dominican section "Smile Please," that is suggestive of the significance that the West Indies held for Rhys. While Pool interprets a lack of linkage and causality as unreflective, unanalytical, apolitical, and as evidence that Rhys had on the subject of Dominica "no precise ideas about or attitudes toward its significance in her own life" (69-71), an alternative reading of the manner and matter of the autobiography allows for different conclusions. Rhys is highly conscious of her status as a white creole and of the ways in which that racial and social identity shape

her relations with both the dominant population within the island and the island itself as topographic or geographic homeplace. Rhys recognizes that race is not a special category applicable only to non-whites, and also that her own racialized subjectivity and place within colonialist hierarchies have profoundly affected her relations with her island homeplace. The fragmented form of the autobiography is suggestive of Rhys's sense of herself as a composite, ambiguous, contingent subject, divided among a number of identities, none of which provide even a temporary sense of wholeness or belonging. Rhys's form is in part her content – it speaks of her exile both from community and from a sense of radical individuality that could have replaced a failed community identity. Rhys's creole autobiography belongs to neither a masculine nor feminine writing tradition as defined by theorists of autobiography: she finds identity neither in relation (community) nor in opposition (individuality), because she simply does not find identity at all. Exiled from both English and Afro-Caribbean culture and society, Rhys's "self" is scattered across the fragments of her text. Gail Pool, in declaring that the autobiographical snapshots that make up *Smile Please* "hide more than they reveal" (73), speaks of a readerly desire for coherence and causality that limits the possibilities of reading Rhys's strained relation to her self, to her native homeplace, and to the autobiographical project.

Smile Please opens with a vignette of the same name, which begins in this manner:

> "Smile please," the man said. "Not quite so serious."
>
> He'd dodged out from behind the dark cloth. He had a yellow black face and pimples on his chin.

> I looked down at my white dress, the one I had got for my birthday, and my legs and the white socks coming half way up my legs, and my black shiny shoes with the strap over the instep.
>
> "Now," the man said.
>
> "Keep still," my mother said.
>
> I tried but my arm shot up of its own accord.
>
> "Oh what a pity, she moved."
>
> "You must keep still," my mother said, frowning. (19)

Helen Tiffin reads the photograph as a metaphor for "the imperial gaze and the imperial text, in its capture and control of Caribbean character from the outside," and the scene overall as an expression of "a life lived under the imperial gaze and under male domination" ("Rites" 32). Tiffin emphasizes the capture and containment of the subject on film by an outside eye which, though unseen in the photograph, has the power to fix the subject in place, delimit her, define her ("Rites" 32). However, Tiffin has not noticed that the imperial gaze is here the gaze of a coloured and presumably West Indian man, that the creole mother participates in producing fixity, and that Rhys's body, in "betraying" her without, as it were, her mind's permission, *resists* the conspiracy of containment. This is not to suggest that a coloured or a maternal gaze cannot be imperial, or that Rhys's rebellion is entirely successful (the photograph is taken, displayed in the sitting-room, and then for a while forgotten), but rather that Rhys resists casting political struggles in terms of simple oppositions. Rhys's somatic revolt counters both the photographer's and the mother's attempts to control by language, but their respective responses to that revolt reveal clear differences: the man expresses disappointment ("what a pity") while the mother issues another imperative command ("You must keep still"). It appears that Rhys has

resisted male, but not maternal, domination, and the question of the masculine and imperial gaze (equated in Tiffin's analysis) is complicated by this development. Further, Rhys is not merely the object of a hostile foreign gaze; she also looks at herself, and perhaps revolts against her own possession of her body by way of a "masterly" gaze down at herself. The scene is complex and anticipates within the autobiography a pattern of, and a series of revolts against, both external and internal surveillance and censure. While Rhys does not verbalize disapproval of a white, excessively girlish, Victorian self, her body speaks it for her. On the next page Rhys records how she became "one of the untidiest girls in the convent," taking a perverse pleasure in attempting to exceed another slovenly child in untidiness (20). Rhys writes, "I was really rather miserable but took a defiant pride in looking worse every day" (21). Rhys's defiance of feminine convention and assault upon gendered norms is also, however, an assault upon herself, as its consequence is misery. This alternating pattern of defiance and self-inflicted pain, assertion and erasure of the self, signaled in the opening scene can be found throughout *Smile Please.*

This opening passage also speaks of the textual strategy of the "Smile Please" section of Rhys's autobiography. The creole body, like the text, cannot be contained and thereby fulfill the so-called requirements of the form. Rhys's physical movement will produce a "bad" photograph according to the conventions of portraiture, just as her slovenliness produces a poor copy of femininity, and the pervasive instability of the text overall fails to meet the conventional criteria of autobiography, such as chronology, development, and the emergence of a sense of self out of the chaos of otherness. Rhys's various "failures" or resistance strategies recorded throughout, and in the form of, the text, are often figured as the

failure of the body to perform whiteness or femininity in an adequate fashion. The excess of Rhys's body marked in the opening sequence by the flailing, disobedient arm is catalogued throughout *Smile Please* both by the "perverse" performances of unfeminine untidiness I have mentioned and, paradoxically, by an overdetermined femininity. In one scene Rhys insists upon wearing make-up, despite

> books warning us of the dangers of make-up.... They described vividly your horrible and lingering death from lead-poisoning if you used face powder. And other sorts of deaths, equally horrible, if you rouged or painted your lips. Years afterwards, as I slap make-up on regardless, I think I am still defying those books" (37).

Both the unfeminine slovenliness and the brightly painted mask of femininity mark bodily excess and are each, within the history of white creole femininity, signs of degeneracy. Neither model that Rhys adopts represents a temperate and abstemious white femininity; both, in their excess, mark Rhys's body as immodest and defiant and, therefore, identified with the "native" of colonial discourse. Rhys writes about other "black" behaviours that were forbidden to her but sneakily indulged in, such as going about barefoot (banned on account of the jiggers), and eating with her fingers "out of a calabash as the negroes did," which had to be done "on the sly" (22). In the autobiography Rhys chronicles the constructed nature of whiteness and femininity and challenges those constructions by conducting herself in various unfeminine and unwhite – "Quashiba" creole – manners. And, the "disorder" of the work also offers a challenge to the notion of a "natural" or generically obedient autobiographical text/body.

The vignettes that comprise "Smile Please" have names but no numbers, lack chronology and cause-effect logic, and could be read in any

order. The text is not, however, entirely without structure or form. The opening passage, for example, can be read in relation to a series of moments in which Rhys scrutinizes some reflected form of herself and then violently rejects her own image. Three years (but only three sentences) after the photographic episode, Rhys gazes upon the picture and "realizes with dismay" that she is not "like it any longer" (19). She sees her general features as though they "belonged to somebody else," and her eyes as

> a stranger's eyes. The forefinger of her right hand was raised as if in warning. She had moved after all. Why I didn't know, she wasn't me any longer. It was the first time I was aware of time, change and the longing for the past. I was nine years of age. (20)

The extraordinary revelation in this scene is not just that Rhys acknowledges time and change, or that she sees herself as split in/over time, or that she can find no meaning in her earlier act of revolt, but that she cannot recognize herself *at present* either. The next paragraph begins:

> Catching sight of myself in the long looking-glass I felt despair. I had grown into a thin girl, tall for my age. My straight hair was pulled severely from my face and tied with a black ribbon. I was fair with a pale skin and huge staring eyes of no particular colour. My brothers and sisters all had brown eyes and hair, why was I singled out to be the only fair one, to be called Gwendolen which means "white" in Welsh I was told? I was wearing an ugly brown holland dress, the convent uniform, and from my head to my black stockings which fell untidily round my ankles, I hated myself. (20)

Rhys's various rebellions lead not to a sense of fulfilment – to radical individuality after rejection of the community – but rather to feelings of failure and self-loathing.

At the core of the self-loathing is the (for Rhys) inescapable fact of her whiteness. Whiteness signifies, within *Smile Please*, absence, lack, restraint, constraint, stiffness, orderliness, and even death, and Rhys repeatedly attempts, and fails, to produce (by way of, for example, an unregulated and fluid body, or the adoption of "black" cultural traits) a sense of identity in opposition to these hated characteristics. Another scene of self-recognition emphasizes Rhys's awareness of herself as white and therefore, in her eyes, inferior. Rhys's Irish Granny sends two dolls, one dark and one fair, to her Dominican granddaughters. As soon as she sees the dark doll, Rhys wants her "as I had never wanted anything in my life before" (39). Unfortunately, Rhys's little sister makes the first grab and takes the dark doll. Forced to accept the fair one, Rhys writes:

> I walked out of the sun, into the shadow of the big mango tree. I laid the fair doll down. Her eyes were shut. Then I searched for a big stone, brought it down with all my force on her face and heard the smashing sound with delight.
>
> There was a great fuss about this. Why? Why had I done such a naughty, a really wicked thing?... I was puzzled myself. Only I was sure that I must do it and for me it was right. (39-40)

Her father asks her, as she did not like the doll, why not give it away? Rhys ponders this and then realizes, "that wouldn't have been enough" (40). Rhys has before this scene rejected versions of herself ("I hated myself"); here she finds an opportunity to destroy physically that detested fairness, to commit a form of symbolic racial suicide. Only much later does Rhys weep for the doll/herself, bury her/self in the garden, and put flowers on the grave.

In another scene of racial self-loathing, Rhys prays ardently to be black, and then runs to the looking-glass in the morning to see if the miracle has happened. It never does, but she continues to pray, "Dear God, let me be black" (42). For Rhys, blackness represents everything that whiteness is not, namely plenitude, presence, liveliness, fluidity, sexuality and passion. In a section entitled "Carnival," Rhys sketches out a scene that conveys her sense of racial and cultural difference. The whites do not allow themselves to participate in carnival, but Rhys "would give anything, anything to be able to dance like that" (52). Instead of participating in the celebration that she finds both exciting and frightening, however, she sits "stiff and well-behaved, looking on" from inside the house (50). This episode exemplifies Rhys's sense of enforced exile from her homeplace while still within it. The house, a detached, colonialist space, holds Rhys separate from the desired place, the island, and from her desire "to be black and to dance, too, in the sun, to that music" (53). Her family's insistence upon correct middle-class racial behaviours, and the sense of alienation and exile that this insistence fosters, lead Rhys to develop a very complex relationship with the island as homeplace. Rhys writes often of her love of the place, and of the sadness that that love engenders – sadness because all love (of the mother, of the blacks, of carnival) leads inevitably to rejection:

> It's strange growing up in a very beautiful place and seeing that it is beautiful. It was alive, I was sure of it. Behind the bright colours the softness, the hills like clouds and the clouds like fantastic hills. There was something austere, sad, lost, all these things. I wanted to identify myself with it, to lose myself in it. (But it turned its head away, indifferent, and that broke my heart.) (81)

Rhys claims possession of the island – "mine, mine" (82) she exclaims while lying down, kissing it – and expresses a desire to "defend it from strangers" (82), and yet at the same time the island is the rejecting mother, the blacks who call Rhys a white cockroach, the coloured girls at the convent who hate her, and the wealthy whites who suggest through coolness and inattention that Rhys's increasingly impoverished family have let down the side.

It is this sense of active hostility of and rejection by the island that positions Rhys as an exile within the homeplace. Her love of the island is not enough – it cannot construct for her a place or an identity at "home." Shortly after this scene of indifference and rejection, Rhys leaves Dominica for "wonderful" England, where "life would become more glorious" (65). As Tiffin points out, however, Rhys in England is confronted by "the gap between the subjectified colonial's *idea* of the imperial centre and her subsequent experience of it" (35). The second, unfinished section of the autobiography deals with Rhys's life in England and Paris from about 1907 to 1924, a life characterized by poverty (her father dies in 1908, leaving Rhys without financial support), disillusionment, hateful and hated English landladies, an endless succession of identically drab and cold rooms, and disappointed love. At the end of her first love affair, when her lover leaves her and she is in the first shock of abandonment, Rhys writes a poem:

> I didn't know
> I didn't know
> I didn't know.[1] (114)

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[1] In an appendix to the autobiography, Diana Athill presents to the reader a section entitled "From a Diary: at the Ropemaker's Arms." In this fragment of diary writing, Rhys writes of her self upon her arrival in England: "No one told me. No one told me. I had to find out everything" (169), and, a few pages later, "I knew nothing, nothing. Nothing about myself or other people. Nothing" (172).

Rhys does not explain what precisely she did not know, but she does acquire a new strategy for coping in her adopted European "home." Years later, in France, she announces to a French friend, "I can abstract myself from my body" (118), and when the friend expresses shock at this alarming ability, Rhys thinks for a moment that his horrified response is to her bad French rather than to the substance of her communication. I say that Rhys adopts a new strategy, but it would be more precise to say that she relearns it, for in Dominica Rhys's body was always the hated, rejected object, that thing in the photograph, in the mirror, or miniaturized in the shape of the doll, that Rhys felt to be alien, other. Rhys's attempts to mutilate or obliterate her body in Dominica continue in England and France: she has a dangerous, illegal abortion; she drinks excessively and sleeps constantly (often fifteen hours a day); and she tries to commit suicide one Christmas, but is stopped when an acquaintance happens by and talks her out of it. Rejecting and punishing her body, Rhys has nothing – no "place" – to attach a stable identity. Changing names constantly, she feels that her sense of self is shifting, amorphous, "as unstable as water.... I haven't got what the English call 'guts'" (123). Without "guts" (a body) Rhys cannot find a place for herself. One day she imagines herself at a party "with a lot of people, laughing and talking and happy," but

> I knew in myself that it would never happen. I would never be part of anything. I would never really belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong, and failing. Always something would go wrong. I am a stranger and I always will be.... (124)

Rhys's exile is complete. She is exiled from Dominica, from England, and from herself.

Does narrative function for Rhys as a compensatory act, constructing a fictional space wherein some sense of self is created out of the discontinuities of exile? The answer is not a simple one. Rhys's eschewing of narrative form in favour of fragment or lyric prevents her from creating a narrative of selfhood in which a fictional persona (as a substitute for, or extension of, a real self) is sustained and developed within a teleological trajectory of growth, change, or self-realization. The "Rhys" identity within the autobiography remains elusive and diffuse, or, in Pool's terms, "formless." Rhys does not employ the rhetoric of epiphany – there are no sudden or eventual perceptions of meaning or revelations of self. In the place of illuminating discoveries leading to a situating of the self within or against community, Rhys presents a series of scenes or moments that rarely contain within them authorial markers of significance or meaning. And yet in a brief episode within the autobiography the act of writing, if not its product, is figured as empowering, as constitutive of a self able to "talk back" to figures of authority. One day in London, on a whim it seems, Rhys buys quill pens to put in a glass and "cheer up my table" (128). After supper on the night of the purchase of pens, ink, and exercise books, Rhys feels a tingling in her fingers and palms – a reconstitution of her abstracted body – and writes all night until exhaustion, and then begins again the next day. When the landlady asks that Rhys try to be quieter at night (she paces, shoes on, as she writes), Rhys responds, "All right, I'll leave at the end of the week. But now you must get out," and then takes the woman by the shoulders and pushes her through the door (129). The next morning, the landlady tells Rhys that she need not move out, only that she must be considerate of the other lodgers, and asks of the noisy pacing, "You won't do it again, will you, dear?" (130). Rhys's response is, "Don't call me 'dear',"

and, "you must get out now, I'm very busy" (130). This scene is entirely unlike those that describe her other entanglements with landladies, who Rhys collectively hated and feared and who, as a group, are represented as bullies – Rhys tends to run away from lodgings rather than confront or question the assumed authority and superiority of these women. When writing, however, Rhys manages for once to assert a sense of self and challenge authority, with the result that the landlady adopts a conciliatory rather than bullying tone. In this scene Rhys suggests that writing reassembles her abstracted and rejected body, and that in so doing she gains for a moment a sense of control and identity. The scene, however, is brief. After two days of writing, the three exercise books are filled and then put away for fourteen years. Rhys does not record, in the autobiography, any other scenes of writing and becomes, again, a fearful, persecuted, passive, and disembodied figure.

Beyond this one scene of embodied and empowered subjectivity, Rhys does not use her autobiography overall as an occasion to reconstitute a mutilated sense of self. She does, however, use it to restore or repair a mutilated textual history. The title and the opening sequence of *Smile Please* are taken from the original ending of Rhys's 1934 novel *Voyage in the Dark*, which was changed by Rhys after her editor objected to its gloominess. The original version of the last section of the novel begins:

> Smile please the man said not quite so serious
>
> He dodged out from behind the black cloth
>
> You tell her to madam
>
> He had a long black-yellow face with pimples on his chin he dodged in again under the black cloth

I looked down at my legs and the white socks coming half-way up my legs and the black shoes with a strap over the instep and the doll in my lap it could say Maman Papa and shut its eyes for Dodo.

Show her the picture-book Aunt Jane said

Now smile darling Mother said look at the pretty picture and smile

The trees in the picture were so tidy and the little girl so round and plump and the wall so high and you kept wondering what was beyond it and you couldn't imagine anything

Now the man said from behind the black cloth

No keep quite still Mother said

I tried but my hand shot up of its own accord

Oh what a pity she moved now it'll have to be done all over again

I began to cry

Now now now the man said

A big girl like you I'm ashamed of you Mother said (Scott 381-2)

In the original version of *Voyage in the Dark*, this scene introduces a ten page final section, in which the protagonist of the novel slowly dies of a botched abortion. In this first ending, past and present mingle and merge as Anna Morgan lies in bed bleeding to death. Anna's jumble of memories are recorded in the manner above (little punctuation and irregular capitalization), while present tense moments are rendered in conventional fictional style. In the later, published version, this last section is much shorter and ends with a doctor pronouncing that Anna will be all right, ready "to start all over again in no time" (159). Rhys was not satisfied with this ending, as she makes clear in a letter to a friend:

> I don't know what to do. I suppose I shall have to give in and cut the book and I'm afraid it will make it meaningless. The worst is that it is precisely that last part which I am most certain of that will have to be mutilated. (Rhys 1985: 25)

Rhys did not want to mutilate her work and thus mirror, at a textual level, Anna's mutilation at the hands of an amateur abortionist. She was forced to both cut and reduce, however, as the editors refused to publish the book in its original form. *Smile Please*, then, restores and repairs a portion of this mutilated textual fragment. The writing of the autobiography is a compensatory act, restoring in small part a textual identity, just as the act of writing within the autobiography produces a temporary sense of stability within the writing persona. The contrapuntal movement that Said identifies within the narrative of exile can be found within *Smile Please* as it constructs a textual environment wherein past and present textual fragments coexist or are suspended in dialogue. Rhys does not, however, create wholeness out of rupture: the autobiography cannot fully restore the novel, nor does the exiled novelistic fragment find a final resting place in the autobiography. It, like the other fragments of which the autobiography is composed, is provisional and contingent, shifting in meaning depending upon how it is read in relation to the other fragments, to the earlier novel that is inscribed in the opening, or to Rhys's entire oeuvre.

Nunez and Harrell suggest that the creole's quest for belonging and identity is precipitated by alienation and rejection (282), by unbelongingness, but in Rhys's case alienation and exile are both the origin and the terminal point of that quest. Rhys does not achieve a stable sense of self or place in her autobiography because she cannot reconcile the conflicts between a colonial identity that constructs England as the glorious homeplace and a

creole sense of self that insists upon an island identity (both places turn away, indifferent). Also irreconcilable for Rhys are a white racial identity, founded on self-loathing and rejected by both blacks and whites, and an unruly feminine identity that in its various guises fails to meet established gender and class norms. Rhys's double alienation from black folk and European white cultures situates her within a creole cultural landscape from which position she is able to interrogate whiteness and the manner in which this racial identity is inflected by gender and class. Rhys does not view her racial identity as invisible, unmarked, unnamed, but rather explicitly assigns meaning to it. The irony is that the range of meaning that Rhys locates is precisely that which this study has set out to question, namely the equation of whiteness with blankness, absence, lack. But Rhys, unlike many of the white writers in this study, *marks that absence.* She questions and probes how whiteness is performed on/by her body, in relation to other class and gender performances. Rhys rejects the notion that she is without colour or race, though she does assign the negative value of absence to her colour. In so doing, Rhys renders her absence present. She does not suggest that whiteness lacks meaning, but rather that its meaning is lack. The difference between those two positions is significant. Rather than allowing whiteness to function as the invisible norm in her text, Rhys demystifies and denaturalizes this racial category by rendering it highly visible and even, for Rhys, abnormal to the point of pathology. Though ostensibly a member of the dominant and dominating racial class that prefers to remain nameless and invisible, Rhys constructs a narrative space for herself as a visible outsider, visibly marked and coded by the colonial legacy which dictates that a white creole identity means *not*

European, *not* black, and *not* Caribbean. Defined by negativity, Rhys redefines herself *as* negativity.

In defining the terrain of whiteness as lack, absence, even annihilation, Rhys constructs (and resurrects) a discourse of blackness that is characterized by plenitude, presence, and, perhaps most important, the body. Rhys's absent white body and the representation of her "self" as a floating, disconnected, fragmented consciousness, is countered by the excessive physicality of black bodies. In a section discussed earlier, Rhys adopts black habits in an attempt to find an identity for herself within black culture: she walks barefoot, and eats with her fingers out of a calabash. Later, her desire to become immersed in black culture is expressed by her longing to join in Carnival – to dance rather than to sit stiffly, to wear a costume, to have the sun touch her body. In Rhys's text, blackness is defined by physical appetites or bodily practices, as in this passage:

> I decided that they had a better time than we did, they laughed a lot though they seldom smiled. They were stronger than we were, they could walk a long way without getting tired, carry heavy weights with ease.... Every night someone gave a dance, you could hear the drums. We had few dances. They were more alive, more a part of the place than we were. (50)

Rhys's envy of black culture is tied to the black body and its cultural practices, even though Rhys is responsive to other elements within Afro-Caribbean culture, such as story-telling. Her nurse Meta tells stories of zombies and werewolves that terrify Rhys and show her a world of fear and distrust ("and I am still in that world" [32]). Francine, a black girl Rhys knew briefly as a child, tells stories full of laughter and "good things" (31). But Rhys does not yearn for stories, or desire to become immersed in an oral

culture, or envy the blacks of the island this element of their cultural inheritance.

For Rhys, the plenitude of blackness is physical, and her representation of that plenitude is indebted to colonial stereotypes of the black body and black culture. Why does Rhys envy the ability of blacks to carry heavy loads or walk great distances? This admiration for the apparent ease and limitless capacity of black labour is to be found in the colonial accounts of Schaw, Long, et. al., in which the "native" body is physically abundant in its sexuality, its fertility, and its labour. Like Schaw, whose discourse of sensibility depoliticizes slave labour, Rhys in her autobiography constructs a picturesque or aesthetically / intellectually pleasing portrait of blackness as physical abundance, wherein the history of imperialism and slavery – the lens through which Rhys sees blackness – is invisible. Though Rhys feels herself to be alien, other, outcast, her idealization of black culture neutralizes the social and historical context that has in part produced the discourse of the black body as a superior labouring machine. Further, Rhys requires that the black body be seen in this manner, for her alien and disembodied white self is dependent upon her construction of blackness as the exotic and embodied other. As David Spurr explains, idealization of the "native" in colonial discourse

> always takes place *in relation* to Western culture itself: far from being a gesture which turns its back on the West in order to accept some alternative mode of being, it conceives an idea of the Other that is readily incorporated into the fabric of Western values. Like other representations of the savage, this one stops short of crossing the boundary from one culture to the other; rather, it makes use of the savage in order to expand the territory of the Western imagination,

> transforming the Other into yet one more term of Western culture's dialogue with itself. (128)

Rhys does not fear or debase the abundance she sees in the black body, as do colonial writers such as Long and Carmichael, but nor does she question this cultural construction of blackness that nonetheless is indebted to colonial history. Rhys remains firmly within the binary structures that support racial discourse – her envy of and desire for blackness do not reposition her within the binary (on the "other" side) or question its construction altogether. The work that Rhys does on whiteness as a social/racial identity, her recognition that for her that identity is both laden with meaning and meaningless, contributes in a significant manner to the deconstruction of a "natural" white identity, but that work still requires for its success an imaginative encounter with blackness that, in the end, only allows for the white writer to think about her white self.

The dependence upon black cultural stereotypes to define whiteness is a thread that runs through most of the works in this study. The black/white opposition that informs that dependence remains largely intact, for though the binarism is occasionally reworked, it is never relinquished. In a break away from much writing by whites, however, some of the writers discussed in this work see themselves as white, or they at least, within their texts, suggest that white is a racial and cultural category. Schaw and Carmichael do not explicitly position themselves as white writers or see themselves as "having" race, though they do indirectly construct their own identities as whites by speaking within and through discourses of colonialism, race, gender, and class. Hyman and Bottome examine race and isolate whiteness as a set of racial and cultural practices in opposition, for the most part, to

blackness, but they do not entirely denaturalize or adequately historicize racial categories, such as that of the mulatta. Bliss, Allfrey, and Rhys, as white creoles born and raised in the Caribbean, are more than the other authors in this study self-consciously white writers because they understand that their identity as whites has been constructed out of the binarisms of colonial and racial discourses, even if they are not willing or able to abandon those binarisms. These three writers call for, more or less loudly, an examination of the racialness of white experience, or of the ways in which the lived experience of whites is in part the product of racial hierarchies and colonial histories. Further, in maintaining, resisting, exploring and altering racial discourses, they also represent as visible not whiteness as a uniform identity or hegemony, but rather the variety of whiteness. To insist upon both the visibility and diversity of whiteness – to render its absence conspicuous – is to call attention to the "quintessentially unremarkable" as a remarkable phenomenon (Hill 3).

White creole writers such as Bliss, Allfrey, and Rhys do not merely construct white stereotypes to counter black stereotypes, but rather inspect (and sometimes reproduce) narrative positions assigned to whiteness and blackness, evaluate (and sometimes deploy) the figurative language of race that allies whiteness with enlightenment and blackness with debasement, and mark (and sometimes overlook) the ways in which perception and knowledge are coloured by colour. These authors (and to some extent Hyman and Bottome) study whiteness, in the sense that they consider it to be a subject or an identity worthy of contemplation or examination. And, as Richard Dyer argues, "studying whiteness matters," because it is only possible to counter the non-located and disembodied position of knowledge by "locating and embodying [whiteness] in a particular experience of being

white" (1997: 4). To take the example of Rhys, that particular experience is, paradoxically, one of non-location, absence, or disembodiedness, but Rhys's engagement in a critical dialogue on whiteness means that the absence of/in her whiteness has a cultural specificity and historical situatedness that is absent from Schaw's and Carmichael's texts, wherein whiteness is the unarticulated and invisible norm.

The aim of this study has been threefold: first, to mark whiteness as a racial and cultural category where it has presented itself as an invisible, normative identity; second, to comment on and critique those more self-conscious constructions of whiteness, wherein "race" is not seen merely as synonymous with "dark skinned other;" and third, to investigate the ways in which constructions of gender – and particularly femininity – intersect with those differing notions of a white identity. The impulse for this study has been my own questioning of the representation of race within the academy and within the greater community. I am disturbed by the continuing invisibility of whiteness within academic and popular cultures. As Richard Dyer says, the "assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colours are something else, is endemic to white culture" (1997: 2). My decision to work in the "field" of whiteness studies (I am not certain at what point a scattered collection of works become a field of study) came about in part because, like the editors of *Race Traitor*, a journal devoted to the abolition of "whiteness," I believe that despite gender and class differences, white people belong to a kind of club whose members "go through life accepting the privileges of membership but without reflecting on the costs" (Garvey and Ignatiev 346). The authors that I study reflect on the privileges of membership, or even argue, in the case of Rhys (a "race traitor" but also

producer of racial stereotypes), that membership leads only to alienation and self-annihilation. The Caribbean provides a fascinating context for this interrogation of race membership, for its present day inhabitants are almost all descended from imported peoples whose social, economic, and cultural relationships through history and today have been profoundly affected by the construction and maintenance of racial identities. My hope is that this work has contributed to the critical examination of whiteness that is emerging within feminist and postcolonial studies.

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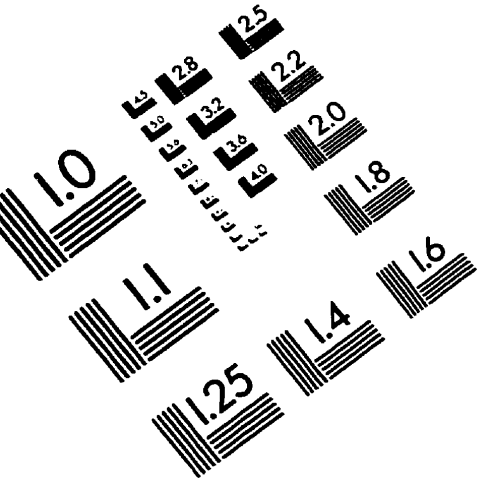

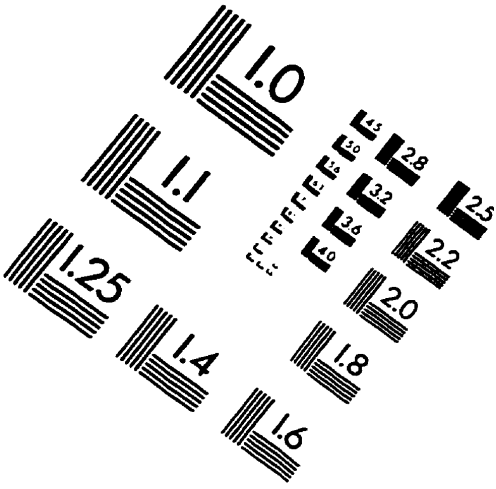

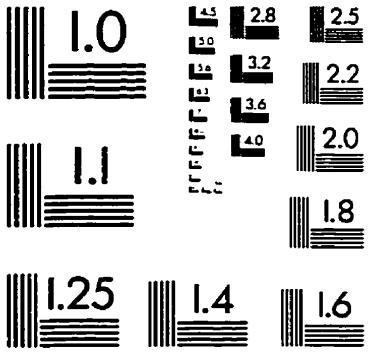

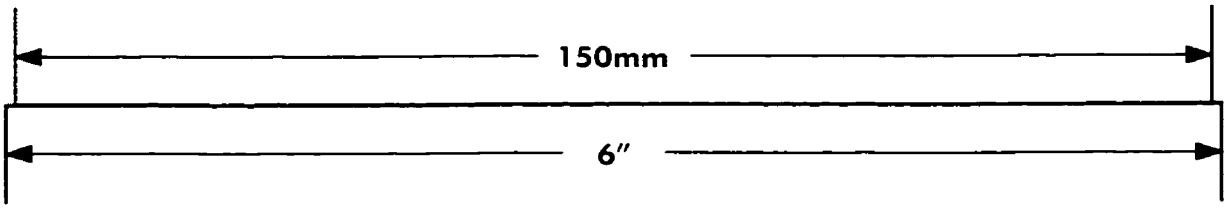

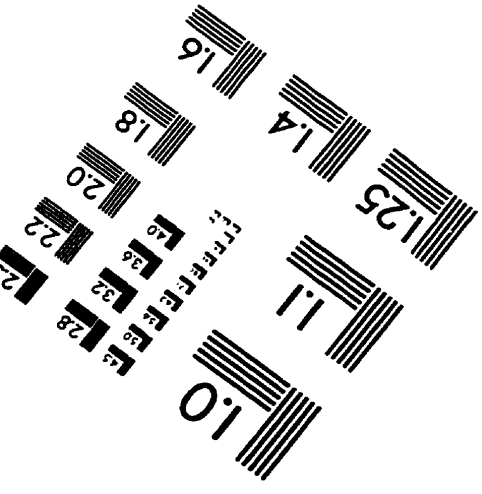

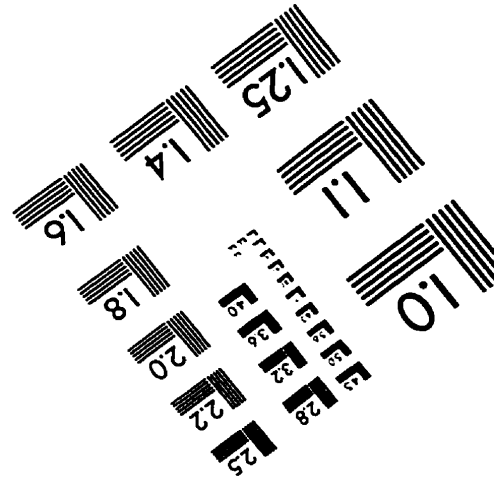

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