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Representations of Black Women in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Masculine British Press

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"Thesis" presented to the Graduate Faculty of The College of William & Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

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College of William & Mary
August, 2018

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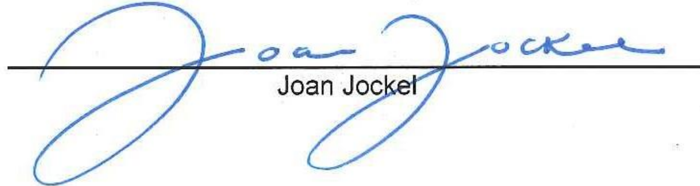
APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



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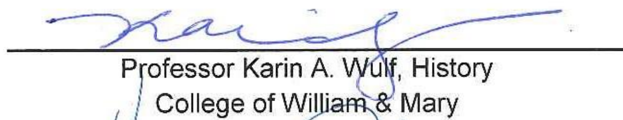

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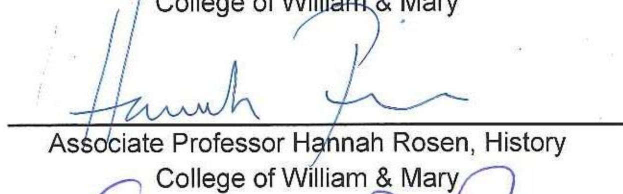

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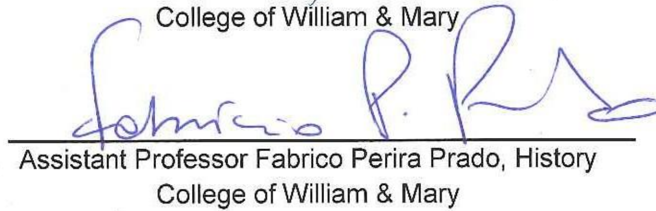

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ABSTRACT

The two papers that comprise this Master's portfolio each explore colonial representations of black women and the constructed nature of imperial British masculinity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Both papers interrogate strategic portrayals of black women's bodily experience, character, and personal relationships as they appeared in print material such as newspapers, books, trial accounts, and pamphlets in the British Atlantic. Additionally, they analyze how British men in Caribbean colonies and the metropole used these representations as rhetorical tools to debate class-based understandings of masculine power. The portfolio collectively explores these questions in a broad context, investigating the racial and imperial implications of gender violence in British print sources, interrogating how white British men used race, ethnicity, and gender to construct and legitimize their identities, obscuring women of color's actual lived experience in the process.

The first paper "'They Brutalize the Manners of Men': Black Female Bodies and the Construction of Colonial British Masculinity in the Abolition Debate for Jamaica (1772-1833)" looks at representations of enslaved Jamaican women in works written between the British Parliament's decision in Somerset v. Stewart (1771) and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, during which the debate over abolition was arguably at its most fervent. It argues that writers on both sides of the slavery debate saw the question of human-ownership as a question of masculine responsibility and right —and sought to express it in terms of racialized and gendered bodies. They formulated simplistic portrayals of enslaved women as contrastingly in need of paternal protection from physical brutality and the victimization of predatory interracial relationships – or as in need of harsh structure and white domination to protect them from the natural degradation of black culture. It further asserts that while pro and antislavery advocates used racial and gendered constructions differently, for seemingly opposite ends, both sets of writing ultimately furthered racial anxieties and stereotypes and obscured lived realities through the symbolic high-jacking of enslaved female bodies.

The second paper, " 'Delightful Horror' and 'Guilty Fascination': British Masculinity and Strategic Race and Gender Portrayals in The Torture Trial of Louisa Calderon (1806)" focuses specially on the prominent case of the former British colonial governor of Trinidad, Brigadier-General Thomas Picton and his trial for the torture of the young, free woman of color Louisa Calderon. It argues that the case allowed Britons to link issues of imperial regime and colonial subjects to the masculine treatment of colonial women of color. Colonial elites and metropolitan reformers strategically employed visual and written portrayals of Louisa Calderon and Thomas Picton's free, mixed-race mistress, Rosetta Smith, to debate control over the colonial periphery and its subjects (strategies of militant control and sexual dominance vs. imperial reform and sexual restraint). This resulted in a debate over the character of black women and white men, a debate that posited a set of opposed fictional icons: the pure, vulnerable, black woman in need of protection from depraved and overly powerful corrupt white men or the evil temptresses from whom

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Intellectual Biography

The two papers that comprise my research portfolio each explore colonial representations of black women and the constructed nature of imperial British masculinity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Both papers interrogate strategic portrayals of black women's bodily experience, character, and personal relationships as they appeared in print material such as newspapers, books, trial accounts, and pamphlets in the British Atlantic. Additionally, they analyze how British men in Caribbean colonies and the metropole used these representations as rhetorical tools to debate class-based understandings of masculine power. At my previous institution I wrote a masters portfolio paper on the politicization of the 1768 trial of Lord Baltimore for the rape of poor Methodist, milliner Sarah Woodcock. This inspired an interest in how women were written out of their own violent experiences to facilitate masculine discourses on the social and sexual hierarchy. In my masters portfolio for the College of William and Mary I have been able to explore these questions in a broader context, investigating the racial and imperial implications of gender violence in British print sources, interrogating how white British men used race, ethnicity, and gender to construct and legitimize their identities, obscuring women of color's actual lived experience in the process.

In my first research paper "'They Brutalize the Manners of Men': Black Female Bodies and the Construction of Colonial British Masculinity in the Abolition Debate for Jamaica (1772-1833)" I looked at representations of enslaved Jamaican women in works written between the British Parliament's

decision in Somerset v. Stewart (1771) and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, during which the debate over abolition was arguably at its most fervent. I argue that writers on both sides of the slavery debate saw the question of human-ownership as a question of masculine responsibility and right —and sought to express it in terms of racialized and gendered bodies. They formulated simplistic portrayals of enslaved women as contrastingly in need of paternal protection from physical brutality and the victimization of predatory interracial relationships – or as in need of harsh structure and white domination to protect them from the natural degradation of black culture. I further argue that while pro and antislavery advocates used racial and gendered constructions differently, for seemingly opposite ends, both sets of writing ultimately furthered racial anxieties and stereotypes and obscured lived realities through the symbolic high-jacking of enslaved female bodies.

The main strength of this paper lies in its analysis of how abolitionist and slavery advocates used print representations of enslaved women's bodies to assert their own personal identity and promote their own political ends. In exposing the motivations and power constructions behind these sources, I recognize these writers as unreliable narrators who had little interest in authentically portraying enslaved women. The paper demonstrates that the abolition debate obscured enslaved Jamaican women's narratives in favor of masculine class discourse. Yet to actually provide a deeper exploration of *what* lived experiences these politicized print sources obscured, the paper needs to engage more critically with sources that illuminate enslaved Jamaican women's

reality. To form a more thorough picture of these women's lives on the ground Professor Prado suggested including a study of their demographic and legal environment. To this end, I plan to undertake and include relevant primary research from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database and the collection of *Slave Law of Jamaica* is digitally available via the National Library of Jamaica.

In my second research paper, " 'Delightful Horror' and 'Guilty Fascination': British Masculinity and Strategic Race and Gender Portrayals in The Torture Trial of Louisa Calderon (1806)" I focused specially on the prominent case of the former British colonial governor of Trinidad, Brigadier-General Thomas Picton, and his trial for the torture of the young, free woman of color Louisa Calderon. I argue that the case allowed Britons to link issues of imperial regime and colonial subjects to the masculine treatment of colonial women of color. Colonial elites and metropolitan reformers strategically employed visual and written portrayals of Louisa Calderon and Thomas Picton's free, mixed-race mistress, Rosetta Smith, to debate control over the colonial periphery and its subjects (strategies of militant control and sexual dominance vs. imperial reform and sexual restraint). This resulted in a debate over the character of black women and white men, a debate that posited a set of opposed fictional icons: the pure, vulnerable, black woman in need of protection from depraved and overly powerful corrupt white men or the evil temptresses from whom white society/white men needed protection.

I had originally intended to focus much more extensively on the lives of Louisa Calderon and Rosetta Smith in Trinidad. Due to time constraints, I had to

leave off this portion of my research. However, I feel that this case could be a valuable lens for viewing the constraints within which free women of color lived and operated in British Caribbean slave societies. Conducting more primary research on the lives of these two women will help demonstrate how the fictions created and circulated in the case ignored the complexity of actual free women of color's lives, women who had to make choices under enormous constraint, and when struggling within such limited options may well have chosen extramarital, cross-racial sexual relationships, prostitution, theft, or all of the above, in desperate effort to secure some autonomy and subsistence, all the while being vulnerable to abuse by the state and individual white men.

Though both papers could use additional historical contextualization in the Caribbean, overall I have found the process of producing them extremely valuable. My secondary reading has exposed me to a collection of scholars who have pioneered work on the politicization of violence and who have interrogated the archives to explore the disparity between the rhetorical representations and lived realities of subaltern women in colonial and slave societies. I now see myself as contributing to this work and emulating the framework and methodologies of scholars such as Sharon Block, Saidiya Hartman, Marisa J. Fuentes, and Ann Stoler. With edits, I believe that both of these papers could potentially be combined into a cohesive chapter for my dissertation. I am beginning to envision this project as a larger study on the rise of middling masculinity and constructions of marginalized women. I foresee myself exploring how men in the British Atlantic's rising bourgeoisie leveraged related discourses

of violence against enslaved women, poor white women, and female sex workers to define their own identity and legitimize their own power, and how these discourses in turn created new and reinforced old racial and gender stereotypes about those marginalized groups. In this I hope to demonstrate the way in which early-modern Britain encompassed competing and highly constructed ideologies of masculinities, to helpfully challenge the idea of static, hegemonic white masculinity.

“They Brutalize the Manners of Men”: Black Female Bodies and the Construction of Colonial British Masculinity in the Abolition Debate for Jamaica (1772-1833)

“He beat me again and again, until he was quite wearied… I scarcely cared whether I lived or died… I was in a dreadful state- my body all blood and bruises.”

- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831)

“White men created a black woman who essentially reflected their needs, economic or sexual.”

- Barbara Bush, *‘Sable venus’, ‘she devil’ or ‘drudge’? British slavery and the ‘fabulous fiction’ of black women's identities, c. 1650–1838*

In 1831 the Anti-Slavery Society (known more formally as the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions) published *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* in London. As the first account of a black woman ever published in Britain, *The History of Mary Prince* was unique. Yet the manipulation of Mary’s image in the British press illuminates the common usage of black female bodies in the discourse surrounding human bondage and colonial masculinity. For while the account presented Mary’s authentic experiences, it did so selectively. Her transcriber and publisher chose to primarily form this abolitionist narrative around the repetitive bodily degradation of female slaves at the hands of white men. Facts in inconsistent with this narrative were disregarded.

In the book Mary recalled how her master on Grand Turk “often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes.” Yet she noted “there was nothing very

remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island." Examples of such "usage" filled her account, including two particularly graphic recollections of the beatings to death of her pregnant friend Hetty and an elderly slave named Sarah. The book also detailed Mary's personal experience with sexual abuse, which she considered "worse to me than all the licks." She revealed to readers that one of her masters "had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I could not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me."[1]

The History highlighted Mary's victimization and the brutalization of her body by white men, but ignored any mention of the personal friendship and the seemingly consensual romantic relationship she had with the one Captain A- or Abbott, a white man with whom she lived for seven years. It was in the interest of the Anti-Slavery Society to portray Mary Prince solely as the object of her masters' wrath and lust rather than the sexually active person which, by her own account she was.[2] So while Mary was one of few former enslaved peoples, and even fewer women, who had the opportunity to "relate" any of her lived experiences to a British audience, these experiences were ultimately filtered in a highly gendered and racialized manner to suit the abolitionist cause. Mary

[1] Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. Sarah Salih (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 24.
[2] Sarah Salih details how this was revealed during an 1883 libel case. In this case involving *The History*'s editor, Anti-Slavery Society secretary Thomas Pringle, and Mary's final owner, John Wood, revealed that Mary had related all the details of her relationship with Abbott to her transcriber Susana Strickland. Strickland did not record any of these details and no information about the relationship appeared in any of the three, widely distributed editions of *The History* published in its first year, iii.

became a symbol of her own sexual vulnerability and the sexual brutality of her masters.

This paper examines how writers in the abolitionist debate appropriated the experiences of enslaved women to discuss their own personal and political agendas. It explores the way in which black women's bodies were seen as a particularly potent rhetorical tool for addressing differing ideals of British masculinity and commenting on the role of masculinity in the morality and necessity of slavery. Advocates for and activists against slavery often fell along defaulting economic, social, and religious lines. As the eighteenth century progressed opposing groups increasingly defined and criticized their competing objectives in terms of masculinity. Historian G.J. Barker-Benefield explains that gender emerged in the period as the most powerful way to challenge conflicting agendas, "one that could still cut deeper than class."[3] When it came to public discourse, groups were linked and criticized based on their style of manhood above all else.

One's association to slavery became such a distinction. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, plantation owning gentry and mercantile elites inherently promoted slavery. On one end this group found support from the politicians and economists who believed in the necessity of chattel slavery for the survival of the British economy and Empire.[4] On the other, they had support from those in the lower strata of society who served as plantation employees, sailors,

[3] G. J. Barker-Benefield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66.
[4] See David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-2.

and military personnel operating in the Caribbean region. The rising middling sector of society, centered in the metropole, stood in contrast. Motivated by anti-aristocratic sentiment, the morality of dissenting religion, and the triumph of free trade via industrial capitalism, they came to staunchly oppose slavery and all it stood for.[5] Members of the British middle class saw the unchecked masculinity of the colonial frontier as particularly uncouth. Relationships between masters and slaves especially threatened metropolitan social and sexual norms and needed reform.[6]

Writers on both sides of the slavery debate saw the question of human-ownership as a question of masculine responsibility and right —and sought to express it in terms of racialized and gendered bodies. Both parties argued for the masculine obligation to protect black women. Where as abolitionists', motivated by a sense of paternalistic obligation, sought to save the fairer sex from harsh physical labor and the lick of the whip, slavery advocates hoped to provide female slaves with much needed structure and protect them from the natural

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[5] Keith McClelland sees the rise of the middle class and the transformation of the capitalist economy as an essential element in the success of abolition: "What resulted in Britain was the triumph of the bourgeoisie under the banner of free trade, the consolidation of modern capitalism and the defeat of atavistic 'mercantilist' factions. Industrial capitalism 'turned round and destroyed the power of commercial capitalism, slavery, and all its works." McClelland, "Redefining the West India interest: politics and the legacies of slave-ownership" in Hall et al. (eds.), *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 127. For the makeup of slavery advocates versus abolitionist groups see Ryden, *West Indian Slavery.* For general information on the rising of the British "middle class," their political, religious, and economic positioning, and their unique fashioning of masculinity see: Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (Methuen: London, 1989); Lenore Davidhoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850 rev. ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2002); John Brewer, "'Clubs, commercialization and politics' "in John Brewer, Neil McKendrick and John Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982), 231-262.

[6] Anne M. Windholz, "An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away" *Victorian Studies* 42, no. 4 (Summer 1999) 631-658.

degradation of black culture. On sexual access to enslaved black women's bodies, perspectives further differed. While both abolitionists and slavery-advocates often wrote about black women as corrupting temptresses, abolitionist saw the ultimate mark of masculinity in restraint. Colonial conditions and gratuitous access to marginalized women perverted proper masculinity and should be avoided. From a proslavery perspective, such contact was generally viewed as a privilege.[7]

This paper focuses exclusively on representations of enslaved women and masculinity in works written between the British Parliament's decision in Somerset v. Stewart (1771) and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, during which the debate over abolition was arguably at its most fervent.[8] It will concentrate on works pertaining to Jamaica.[9] As the largest of the British islands in the West Indies, Jamaica became central to abolition argument. The island's unique

[7] For a direct comparison of the positioning of black women in abolitionist writing and writing defending slavery see Henrice Altink, *Representations of Slave Women in Discourses on Slavery and Abolition 1780-1838*, (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[8] Somerset v. Stewart officially held that chattel slavery was not supported under common law in England and Wales, but left the position of human bondage elsewhere in the British Empire ambiguous. For works on the case, its impact, and its importance to periodization of the abolition movement see: Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 97; William R. Cotter, "The Somerset Case and the Abolition of Slavery in England," *History* 79, no. 225 (February 1994): 31-56; Daniel J. Hulsebosch, "Nothing but Liberty: 'Somerset's Case' and the British Empire," *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 647-657; William M. Wiecek, "Somerset: Lord Mansfield and the Legitimacy of Slavery in the Anglo-American World," *University of Chicago Law Review* 42(1974-75): 86- 146; The Slavery Abolition Act was passed in the Parliament of the United Kingdom in 1833 and commenced on August 1, 1834. For works on the passage of the act and the nature of the abolition debate in this period see Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (eds.), *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2007); and Donald A. Yerxa (ed), *British Abolitionism and the Question of Moral Progress in History* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press).

[9] All the contemporary pro and antislavery writers cited lived in or visited Jamaica (or a neighboring island and commented on Jamaica) and offered accounts based on their own experiences. Some abolitionist made the journey to Jamaica with the express purpose of recording the conditions of enslaved peoples. Thomas Cooper, for example, visited the island and published his account in order to neutralize attacks from slaveholders who claimed he acted "as the mere tool of the party, instead of giving his own report."

economic and social conditions also created a distinct culture of white masculinity and gendered colonial relations.

The sugar boom of the 1750s, during which Jamaican sugar production began to pull away decisively and enter a period of substantial expansion, created an increased need for the labor of both enslaved blacks and white supervisors.[10] During the eighteenth century the slave population, in particular, grew dramatically. Data suggests that in 1673 there were roughly 9,500 enslaved peoples in Jamaica. By 1808 that number had reached about 354,000.[11] To control the dominant population (slaves accounted for 84 percent of the population by the time of emancipation), white men of varying social statuses bound together in what Trevor Burnard describes as "egalitarian tyranny."[12] Much work has been done on the use of violence as a tool to control enslaved peoples. Scholars such as Christer Petley, Trevor Burnard, and James A. Delle have specifically examined how British colonists deployed such terror tactics in Jamaica. With a lack of legal constraints labor was often exploited via gruesome physical domination.[13]

Jamaica was colony built on white male solidarity where men were doubly advantaged by their gender and color. Petely explains that white men in Jamaica enjoyed "full access to the privileges of freedom" and were willing to defend that

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[10] Barbara L. Solow situates the date of Jamaica's "sugar boom" in the 1750s in *The Economic Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014): 125.
[11] Statistics from Christer Petley's *Slaveholders in Jamaica: Colonial Society and Culture during the Era of Abolition* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 6.
[12] Trevor, Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 75.
[13] Petley, *Slaveholder in Jamaica*, 7; Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*; James A. Delle, *The Colonial Caribbean: Landscapes of Power in Jamaica's Plantation System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 77.

freedom at any cost.[14] Sexual opportunism was an essential part of the coercive power and social hierarchy that enabled and protected such freedom. Jamaica's colonial society defined sexuality, race, and family differently than in the metropole.[15] Slaveholding and white privilege, upheld by legal and social expectations, allowed men access to black women's bodies for physical labor, fertility, and sexual pleasure. It also allowed them to strike up informal long term liaisons with women of color in a way that challenged metropolitan Britain's ideas of appropriate relationships between a master and his "dependents": between a white man and a woman of color. When the sugar market began to decline in 1820, abolitionist cries grew louder.[16]

Petley has expressed the exceptional masculine construction of Jamaica and its tension with British metropolitan ideals. Other scholars such as Diana Paton, Henrice Altink*,* and Marisa J. Fuentes have examined stereotypical depictions of enslaved Jamaican women within abolition writing.[17] Their scholarship has generally posited these representations mostly painted slave women as either scenes of deviation or subjugation, both of which wrote women out of their own lived experiences. Fuentes' framework is particularly useful as she outlines a form of critical analysis to contextualize popular portrayals of

[14] Peteley, Slaveholders in Jamaica, 35.
[15] Ibid, 35-52**.**
[16] Petley, Slaveholders in Jamaica, 7 and 45-46.
[17] Diana Paton, *No Bound But the Law: Punishment: Punishment, Race, and Gender in the Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004); Altink, *Representations of Slave Women*; and Marisa J. Fuentes*, Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

enslaved women's victimization and rescue them from fading "into the violent circumstances of their lives."[18]

However, it is difficult to fully understand how and why these representations were used without putting them in conversation with contemporary conceptions of masculinity Altink states "the centering of slave women within the campaigns was based on the assumption that women were the 'gentler sex' and that the position of women in a society indicated the level of civilization in had achieved."[19] Yet, this social barometer was based on white male standards that presupposed certain masculine rights and responsibilities. To understand this, this paper applies gender analysis to contemporary writings on the slave abolition debate: examining those writings for slavery in section I and those against in section II. Using frameworks suggested by scholars such as Ann Stoler and Marisa Fuentes to demonstrate and dissect the filtration of marginalized women's narratives through the mediums of white men, each section examines the ways authors purposefully positioned black female bodies against white male ideals.[20] It places such constructions within the historical

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[18] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives* ,128

[19] Altink, *Representations of Slave Women,* 2.

[20] This paper borrows methodologies described in both Anne Laura Stoler (ed.), *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006) Marisa J. Fuentes' " 'Venus': Abolition Discourse, Gendered Violence, and the Archive," in *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) 124-143. In her introduction to *Haunted by Empire* Stoler suggests the examining both "the requisition of bodies—those of both colonials and colonized—and a second that molds new ''structures of feeling''—new habits of heart and mind that enable those categories of difference and subject formation" to form understandings of privilege, opportunity, and power in the macrodynamics and microenvironments of colonialism in postcolonial studies (2). More specifically, Fuentes presents the analysis of written constructions of black female bodies and their consumption as a way to deal with "the impossibility of recovering enslaved women without reproducing the violent circumstances from which they emerge in the archives," (128-129).

context of the developing consciousness of appropriate masculinity and colonial relations.

Contextualizing both the use of enslaved female bodies and the assertion of British colonial masculinity in the abolition debate, promotes three key objectives: 1) Looking at ideologies in the British abolition discourse provides for a broader understanding on transatlantic formations of and communications on gender and race. 2) Examining competing ideas of white masculinities challenges the idea of hegemonic European masculinity and allows for an examination of how white masculinities were subverted by “colonized” actors 3) Reconsidering the use of black bodies and their consumption via text can (as Fuentes suggests) help make such women less ”unreachable” and combat their disappearance into “into the violent circumstances of their lives.”[21]

Abolitionist and proslavery writers chose to describe the bodies of Jamaican female slaves because of their perceived fungibility. Black women’s bodies and their experiences could be strategically ignored or evoked in discussion without worry that they would interfere in the narration. In the discourse on colonial masculinity and slavery, these bodies became a contradiction. As Fuentes articulates it, they became both invisible in their subjectivity and hyper-visible in their brutalization.[22] While pro and antislavery advocates used racial and gendered constructions differently, for seemingly opposite ends, writers on each side of the abolition debate ultimately furthered

[21] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 128
[22] Ibid.

racial anxieties and stereotypes and obscured lived realities through the symbolic high-jacking of enslaved female bodies.

I. Black Female Bodies in Proslavery Writing

Thomas Thistlewood's thirty-seven diaries reveal that the eighteenth-century overseer engaged in a shocking level of sexual exploitation of slaves. It is estimated that during the time Thistlewood recorded his life, he participated in 3,852 acts of sexual intercourse with 138 women (almost all slaves).[23] Historian Trevor Burnard labels Thistlewood as a "quintessential sexual predator and rapist," noting that many of these occurrences were non-consensual and all were coercive, given the drastic power differential between Thistewood himself, a plantation overseer, and the enslaved women he subjected to his sexual desires.[24]But in his own time, within his own community, Thistlewood's actions would have been accepted as a natural part of plantation life and an expected feature of colonial power dynamics.

Scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler, Andrea Smith, and Antonia I. Castañeda have produced work on the idea of indigenous bodies as spaces of conquest and sexual violence as a tool of colonial control.[25] In slave societies like

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[23] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire,* 156.
[24] Ibid,31.
[25] See Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2002); Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA : South End Press, 2005); Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2015); and Antonia I. Castañeda, "Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California" in

Jamaica, slave-owners and their employees used sexual domination to show that they were “strong, violent, virile men,” thoroughly capable of maintaining their demographically perilous, white autocracy.[26] Feminist historian Angela Davis argues that white men strategically positioned themselves as adversaries in sexual contest against enslaved women. As the center of domestic life, and often slave society as a whole, enslaved women could play a crucial role in inciting defiance. Planters therefor sought to quash any potential resistance from women by “subjecting her to the most elemental form of terrorism distinctively suited for the female: rape.” In employing various forms of sexual assault, slaveholding whites emotionally, mentally, and physically terrorized enslaved women and men, disempowering them in able to ensure controllable, productive and fractured workforces.[27]

These brutal strategies emerged in conjunction with conceptions of the highly-sexed black female body. Edward Said famously articulated the way white elites eroticized foreign women’s bodies, viewing the “Orient” as "a place where one could look for sexual experiences unobtainable in Europe."[28] This was also true of enslaved bodies in the Caribbean, where literature and other masculinist popular culture often portrayed black women as equal parts wild, dangerous and

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Elizabeth D. Heineman (ed.), *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 39-55.

[26] Burnard, 160. For more on sexual violence in slave society see: Deborah Grey White, *Ar’nt I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1999); Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” *The Black Scholar* 3, no.4, (1971): 2-15; and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (eds.) *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement.* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 357-383.

[27] Barbara Bush, “'Sable Venus’, ‘She Devil’ or ‘Drudge’?: British Slavery and the ‘Fabulous Fiction’ of Black Women's Identities, c. 1650-1838,” *Women's History Review* 9, (2000), 767.

[28] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 190.

enticing.[29] Historian Barbara Bush explains how the widely proliferated image of the “Sable Venus,” “represented male erotic fantasies, but also the widespread practice of concubinage and sexual exploitation of black women.”[30]

In *Race and the Education of Desire* Ann Stoler notes that literary studies and history have documented a wide range of such examples, where feminized colonies, and the women in them “were to be penetrated, raped, silenced and (dis)possessed.”[31] However Stoler also notes that, “colonial discourses of sexuality were productive of class and racial power, not mere reflections of them.”[32] This was not a case of simply transferring existing ideas to new space. The colonial process actively reshaped constructions of masculinity and race. Nor were these constructions a “benign cultural act.” Gendered and racial positioning constituted an essential element of political imperialism. Stoler argues that the gender and racial specific management of sexual arrangements and intimate relations were “critical to the making of colonial categories and… the distinctions between ruler and ruled.”[33]

The assertion of white masculinity in terms of ability to control the sexual relationships of black female bodies is a common theme in proslavery literature. This manifested in three main ways: declaring a sexual right over such bodies, pointing to the privilege of black women in such relationships with whites, or down playing sexual contact between white men and black women and focusing

[29] Bush, “Sable Venus”, 773.
[30] Ibid, 762.
[31] Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire, 174.
[32] Ibid, 176.
[33] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 8.

instead on the need responsibility of white men regulate the hyper-sexual bodies of enslaved women (prevent interracial relations from black aggressors).

In *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793), author Bryan Edwards, a wealthy Jamaican merchant and colonial assembly member, expressed a prevailing colonial view that enslaved women were naturally sexually promiscuous. According to Edwards, "Consider it as the greatest exertion of tyranny, and the most cruel of all hardships to be compelled to confine themselves to a single connection with the other sex."[34] Other proslavery writers such as Edward Long, author of *The History of Jamaica* (1774), claimed that "the lovelier sex" among blacks were subject to lapses in chastity, giving into the climate's natural ability to "rouze the passions."[35] John Stewart wrote in his *Account of Jamaica* (1808) that even missionary instruction could not correct the nonconformist sexual behavior of black women.[36]

Altink explains that white men generally associated a slave's wantonness (and their own sexual entitlement to her) with her skin color. Enslaved women with lighter skin occupied the top of the sexual hierarchy and garnered more respect, while women with darker skin occupied the bottom position.[37] These representations of women's sexuality based on their essential identity to whiteness, lead to further racialization of sexuality. They affirmed white sexuality as the norm and black sexuality as dangerous and deviant. This furthered

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[34] Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies,* vol 1. (London, 1793). *The Making of the Modern World*. Web. 30 Oct. 2017. 80.
[35] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island,* vol 2. (London, 1793). *The Making of the Modern World*. Web. 20 Nov. 2017. 296.
[36] J. Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica and its Inhabitants By a Gentleman* (London, 1808; reprint, Freeport, N.Y., Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 267.
[37] Altink, *Representations of Slave Women*, 88.

allowed white men to assert their prerogative to use sexual domination in quelling unruly black bodies. Colonists exploited blackness for their own needs.

In *West India Customs and Manners* (1793), colonial Jamaican resident and plantation lawyer J.B. Morton echoed Edwards' and claimed that people from warmer climates were naturally "more amorous and lascivious" than those in the colder regions.[38] He also stated that time spent in such regions excited the desires of white men. Morton related that to satisfy these increased appetites plantation mangers would often procure the "finest young wenches" for plantation-owners and their gentlemen friends' evening entertainment.[39] He remarked that such a practice would be condemned in the metropole, and condescendingly comments on Europe's restrained conceptions of sexuality and morality:

"In Europe, Great Britain and Ireland, I should say, it would render a gentleman of fortune odious in the community to take half a dozen ladies of early virtue into keeping at once; in those counties frigid lovers trifle away half their time on stiff formalities and religious ceremonies…"[40]

Morton and others recognized the pervasiveness of interracial sexual contact between white men and enslaved women in Jamaica and the seemingly transgressive nature of such affairs. But notwithstanding their departure from metropolitan norms (or perhaps because of it), these relationships were a central part of colonial male life and authors sought to emphasize that. Twenty years earlier, Edward Long went so far as to remark that only a "blockhead" would try

[38] J.B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners.* (London, 1793). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* 30 Oct. 2017. 28.
[39] Ibid, 77.
[40] Ibid, 78.

to convince white male colonists against fornicating with black women, “since not one in twenty can be persuaded that there is either sin; or shame in cohabitating with a slave.”[41]

Morton, however, did try and caution his readers about the potential risks of sampling the “exotic” sexual offerings of the tropics. He held that, as more sexually prolific, people from warm environments (especially women) were particularly apt vessels for venereal disease. He therefore warned that English men could not expect “to have connections with lewd women, and escape disease.”[42] Morton, however, recognized that colonial men “as frail flesh and blood” would have relations with the “tender sex” despite the societal and supposed medical objections.[43] He even dedicated a large section of his work to the treatment and remedy of venereal disease so that white men may enjoy sex in Jamaica more comfortably. His work not only makes allowances for such liaisons, it seems to actively encourage them. According to Morton it was essential for a young man to sample the charms of non-white and foreign women so that he might learn to resist the allurements of “tempered harlots” and so “he might make a prudent loving husband, a good father, and a good master; he would know the value of a truly virtuous woman better than a bashful youth who never went astray.”[44] He wrote that the white men’s desire for “Mongrel” (his term for people of mixed race) and black women was an “infatuation bordering on

[41] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 328.
[42] Ibid, 28.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, 121.

phrenzy."[45] Yet he clearly styled such interactions as an important, masculine right of passage and mark of status in colonial society.

Morton's work reveals another way that proslavery writing used black bodies to comment of the masculine role of colonist. Morton and other writers asserted that slave women were happy to serve white men in exchange for the security and status they provided. Morton said that mixed race women "use every art to set themselves off to the best advantage, to make themselves engaging and pleasing companions for white men."[46] He spoke to the considerable position and power of "favourite black or mulatta girls" installed in estate households as companions. He claimed that once chosen as the object of their master's desire, they could order subordinate whites to "pamper and indulge" them like a "goddess." Morton used blatantly pejorative terms to address such arrangements. His comments also ultimately stand as an iteration of white male strength, reflecting on white male colonists' ability to provide material wealth and comfort for enslaved women. But in reality these relationships could be an avenue for black women to subvert plantation structure.[47]

As the owner of some of Jamaica's largest eighteenth-century plantations (including one of the that spanned over 22,000 acres and enslaved over 3,000 people) and the head of a London proslavery lobby for absentee planters, William Beckford shared Morton's proslavery agenda. In *Remarks Upon the*

[45] Ibid, 132.
[46] Ibid, 125.
[47] In "Sable Venus" Barbara Bush argues that these relationships existed also existed in less affluent houses. Bush explains that slave women who were mistresses of poorer white men could use their relationship with these men to advance the well being of themselves, their family, and their extended community of fellow salves. 770-72.

Situation of Negroes In Jamaica (1788) Beckford comments on the role of slave women in the houses, saying it was "the most honorable" position.[48] However, he largely ignored any interracial relationships between white men and black women. He instead concentrated on the superior treatment and care planters provided their slaves.

Beckford belonged to a tradition of proslavery authors who used the amelioration in the conditions of slavery to justify its maintenance. These writers argued that slavery was an essential component to maintaining societal order, but that when benevolently applied, white control could actually be used to reorient slaves' "shocking" and "indelicate" natural state and create for them a better life.[49] Beckford wrote that to see the "negro" being unloaded from Africa was to see them as "poor wenches" and "outcasts of humanity."[50] He further remarked that any white man "not entirely dead of sensibility" would see the need to take responsibility for such "creatures."[51] He claimed that white men abandoning their paternal oversight of slaves would "break down the bonds of justice and obedience, [and] introduce anarchy confusion, licentiousness, and death" to society.[52]

The notion that bondage could actually improve slaves lives and save them from their otherwise purposeless, corrupt existence was particularly oriented around concern for slave women and their bodies. To care for these

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[48] William Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes In Jamaica (*London, 1788). *Eighteenth Century Collections Online.* 30 Oct. 2017. 13.
[49] Ibid, 7.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid,
[52] Ibid, 76.

"outcasts of humanity" defenders of slavery strongly advocated for the regulation of sexual practices and reproduction of slaves. Beckford declared that planters and overseers should not allow any, "promiscuous intercourse between men and women."[53] To increase fecundity on plantations (something he claimed would enrich female slaves lives as well as planters profits), he particularly recommended purchasing slave women whose physical appearance suggested they were "in a fair way to become mothers."[54] He also instructed slave-owners and overseers to incentivize births by rewarding new slave mothers with extensive time away from the fields.[55]

Colonial doctor James Makittrick Adair communicated similar sentiments. Adair wrote on the various means of improving slave conditions but did not believe in emancipation. His work stood in defense of slavery in the British sugar colonies and aimed to show how abolition could and should be avoided. In *Unanswerable Arguments Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade* Adair specifically commented on slave women's general neglect for their children. He observed that slave mothers' "natural affection for her offspring does not seem in general to be so ardent as that of white women," and speculated that this inattention contributed to high infant mortality rates. He maintained that by providing proper facilities for birthing and instruction on motherhood, slave women could be taught to take childrearing seriously. Amelioration writing expressed the need for colonial men to controlling black women's bodies as part

[53] Ibid, 4.
[54] Ibid, 23. For a comprehensive study of slave birth rates and reproduction in the Caribbean see Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
[55] Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of the Negro,* 24.

of their proper paternalistic role. It argued that through such control slave-owners could provide for the less competent, increase production, and maintain societal accord.

Anne Stoler has articulated the way in which colonial relations blurred the space “between care and coercion, respect and neglect, and in the muffled silence between consent and rape.”[56] Proslavery sources from the abolition debate reflect this distortion in their portrayal of enslaved women as sexual property, companions, and dependents. In their efforts to argue for the continuation of slave society and their own form of colonial masculinity, authors objectified women’s bodies, molding them into their own devices. Writers’ use of the black female body obscured the lived reality of women. While proslavery sources sometimes recognized that enslaved women could use interracial relationships to transform their status, they failed to recognize the complex motivations behind such relations and the coercive oppression they operated within. Also, in their assertion that slave women were naturally deviant sexual beings who must be controlled (either through sexual domination or ameliorate paternal care), proslavery authors ignored (or purposely failed to acknowledge) the deep violence that slavery perpetuated. At the same time, these presentations strongly asserted white men’s prerogative to maintain complete masculine authority in their own privileged domain.

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[56] Stoler, *Haunted By Empire,* xiii.

II. Black Female Bodies in Antislavery Writing

For all slavery advocates' assurances that women were well treated under the yoke of bondage (or at least well suited for the treatment they received), abolitionists insisted on making enslaved women's exploitation at the hands of white men a focal point of their counter narrative. Abolitionist writing directly attacked the style of manhood employed in and fostered by slave society. Antislavery writers portrayed all interracial relationships as non-consensual and predatory to black women. They also relied heavily on graphic depictions of physical violence against enslaved women's bodies to underline the aggressive nature of colonial masculinity. They contrasted this lecherous and tyrannical behavior with the metropole's developing sexual sensibilities of chaste and protective "middle class" masculinity. [57] But while abolitionist writers largely painted black women as the perpetual victims of wicked planters, they also held that access to black female bodies could be a powerfully corrupting force, capable of perverting even the most restrained and moral man. They thus evoked contradicting, and ultimately damaging whore-virgin constructions of enslaved women's bodies to promote their commendable cause.

As the middling sector of society grew in economic power, social status, and political influence throughout the Georgian period, they used discussions of

[57] Though "class" is generally held to be an advent of the nineteenth century, scholars such as Peter Earle, Lenore Davidhoff, Catherine Hall, Graham J. Barker-Benefield, and Gillian Williamson have helpfully used the term "middle class" to refer to the rising middle sector of society in the Georgian period. Also see E.P. Thompson's definition of class based around the idea of emerging class-consciousness in the late eighteenth century. Thompson argues that class is formed by a group's common experiences and the articulation of shared identity and interests against others whose interests differ in *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

moral masculinity to form a cohesive ideology. This rising middle class condemned the extravagance of the nobility, challenging aristocratic libertine ideology, political authority, and economic indulgence. The middling sort called instead for a society based in evangelical Protestantism, governed by corresponding values of piety, self-discipline, and soberness.[58] Scholars have suggested that the rising bourgeoisie felt particularly compelled to establish rigid social and ethical standards since they were not yet as confident in their politeness and position as the old establishment.[59] They sought to style themselves as genteel, presenting a new conception of a gentleman who was devout, economically industrious, self-controlled, and the dominant head of household who exercised benevolent control over women.[60] This new gentleman did not stand for slavery.

The reforms of this middling sector had deep ties to dissenting religion, namely Methodism, which helped give the movement its voice and its soul. Scholars have explained how Methodism and its middle class followers proved "deeply disruptive, particularly to the domination by traditional males of agricultural areas and old municipalities," threatening "the patriarchal authority of gentry and clergy alike." Leading Methodist preaching John Wesley spoke out against prevailing notions of conventional manhood, calling for "male chastity"

[58] Barker-Benefield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 76.
[59] Ibid. Also, for more on the conscious self-fashioning of the "middle class" in print see Gillian Williamson, *British Masculinity in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731 to 1815* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[60] Ibid, 3.

and “light to the age of brutal masculinity”[61] While originally viewed as radical, Methodism experience a process of normalization during the Georgian period, gaining supporters in the government and Church. By the 1790s, British society at large generally accepted Wesley’s terms.[62] As a hallmark institution of traditional male “agricultural areas and old municipalities,” slavery became one of the primary targets of Methodist-backed, middling masculinity. No longer necessary to the economic viability of the middle class, slavery was ripe for the attack. Abolitionists employed gendered discourse, asserting their need to protect but also resist black female body.

Abolitionists portrayed interracial relationships as inherently aberrant and cruel to enslaved women. James Ramsay was one of the first mainstream Anglican writers to document the suffering of slaves in *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784). In this work Ramsay condemned colonial white men’s irresponsibility for their allowance of and involvement in “promiscuous [interracial] intercourse of the sexes.”[63] Thomas Cooper, a reformist politician and supporter of the Dissenters, specifically iterated how this depraved environment impacted enslaved women. In *Facts Illustrative Of The Condition Of The Negro Slaves In Jamaica* (1824) he made the sweeping declaration that “With scarcely any exceptions, all the whites, residing on all plantations, live in a open and avowed concubinage with black or

[61] Quoted in Roy Porter, “Mixed Feelings: The Enlightenment and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” in Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain *The Works of John Wesley,* ed. Albert C. Coulter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1: 106.
[62] Barker-Benefield, *The Culture of Sensibility,* 75.
[63] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1784). *The Making Of The Modern World*. Web. 21 Nov. 2017. 284.

“coloured” women. He stressed that one particularly harmful effect was that young women, “instead of becoming mothers of children, are at an early age made the mere instruments of licentious gratification.”[64] In this Cooper saw women as doubly victimized as white men violated them sexually and deprived them of their natural role as mothers. He went on to write that this abominable treatment sunk female slaves “beneath the condition of women” and that any man who prided himself on “the superiority of their natures, their liberty, their power, their education, ought to blush for the mean and unmanly advantage which they never fail to take of the helpless and miserable beings whom despotism has thrown into their power.”[65]

Such “unmanly advantage” flew in the face of the new gentleman who was meant to show restraint in all things and protect female virtues such as motherhood and chastity above all else. Abolitionists frequently criticized the shamelessness of Caribbean slave-owners and their corrupt manhood. However, these condemnations also reveal the middling class Briton’s overall distaste for interracial relationships. British sensibilities were not only offended by the coercive nature of relationships in slavery and their potential for violence, but also the idea of sexual contact between colonial men and non-whites women.[66] While a respectable Englishman should protect these “miserable beings” he should not bed them. Abolitionists such as Ramsay and Cooper argued that marriage produced the “seeds of every social virtue” and advocated for the

[64] Thomas Cooper, *Illustrative Of The Condition Of The Negro Slaves In Jamaica*. (London, 1824). *Sabin Americana*. Web. 30 Oct. 2017. 8.
[65] Ibid, 41.
[66] See Petley, *Slave Holders in Jamaica,* 45-46.

spread of Christian matrimony as a stabilizing force after emancipation.[67] Yet only marriage between two people of the same race was culturally and legally acceptable in the perspective of the metropole.

Though antislavery writers often referenced the sexual degradation of enslaved women they were even more likely to employ graphic depictions of physical violence against black female bodies in their arguments for full emancipation. Abolitionists saw this strategy as particularly effective as it played into metropolitan sensibilities about the fragile nature of the female body and its need for modesty.[68] Historian Diana Paton argues that the image of the naked female slave exposed to the brutality of her master's whip was the most powerful image generated by the abolition campaign. It was evoked even to the exclusion of other forms and instances of violence. Paton contends "When abolitionists wanted to convey a sense of slavery's horror, they told stories about women. They emphasized the violations of women's bodies that accompanied enslavement."[69] This is observable throughout antislavery writing, but it became increasingly frequent and explicit in the years directly leading up to full emancipation in 1834.[70]

Cooper offered an in-depth account of floggings in his *Facts,* noting that the same punishment was given "whether the offender be male or female."[71] He explained how thirty to forty lashes were applied to bare posteriors "leaving them

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[67] Ramsay, *Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves,* 284.
[68] Diana Paton, "Decency, Dependence, and the Lash: Gender and the British Debate over Slave Emancipation, 1830-34," *Slavery and Abolition* 17, no. 3 (December, 1996): 163-184.
[69] Paton, "Decency, Dependence, and the Lash," 163.
[70] Altink, "'An Outrage to all Decency': Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780-1834," Slavery & Abolition 23, no. 2 (Sep 2010): 108.
[71] Cooper, *Illustrative,* 18.

in a lacerated bleeding state." According to Cooper, even the strongest person could not avoid the pain "of this terrible instrument, when applied by skilful hand, but become also raw and bloody."[72] Methodist minister Thomas Jackson portrayed similar terrors in *Britain's Burden: Or, the Intolerable Evils of Colonial Slavery Exposed* (1832) where he recounted slave experiences with thirty-nine strokes from the cat-o-nine-tails, "a few strokes of which may penetrate to the bone."[73] After he remarked on how the men endured such brutality, he beseeched his readers to "Think of a *female* slave, under any circumstances, receiving the same punishment."[74] Jackson also illustrated female suffering in the stocks. He detailed the way in which bodies were suspended in mid-air with their entire weight wresting on their wrists and toes. He then noted, "Pregnant women are not exempt from it."[75] The image of the suffering expecting mother was an even more potent, and often engaged. Some abolitionists such as Baptist minister William Knibb used personal stories to persuade readers. In his writing and speeches Knibb retold the story of enslaved Jamaican woman Catherine Williams, whose master imprisoned and excessively beat her for refusing to become his mistress. He referenced Williams, who "preferred a dungeon to the surrender of her honour," and rhetorically called upon her and her "blood streaming back" as witness to the injustices of slavery and the need for abolition.[76]

[72] Ibid.
[73] Thomas Jackson, *Britain's Burden: Or, the Intolerable Evils of Colonial Slavery Exposed* (Cambridge, 1832). *The Making Of The Modern World*. Web. 21 Nov. 2017, 9.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid, 11.
[76] William Knibb and John Howard Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb: Missionary of Jamaica* (London, 1749), 149.

In focusing on the sexual and physical abuse exercised against enslaved women by colonial white men, abolitionists of course called to light very real issues that existed within slavery society. Yet these rhetorical techniques, portraying female slaves as completely helpless, perpetual victims, actually stripped enslaved women of agency just as they helped make a case for their freedom. In rendering black bodies as nothing more than objects of lust and torture, abolitionists ignored black women's survival strategies and methods of resistance. Antislavery accounts almost never included women's personal recollections of their trauma, but focused instead on secondary reproductions of the corporeal. Removed from any authentic voice and based only on fleshly representations, these portrayals often took on a voyeuristic, fetishized element that furthered the sexualization of black women.[77] In their helpless exposure these imagined women (and the real women they represented) were very much subject to the white male gaze, whatever its ends.

The belief in the hyper-sexaulizaton of black female body held powerful sway. Abolitionists generally contended that the institution of slavery had forced enslaved women into overly sexual lifestyles from a young age. Nonetheless, they conceded that the allure of the colonial space and the temptation of accessible black female bodies remained a highly corruptive force.[78] This was, they argued, one of the strongest arguments for abolition. There was a pressing

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[77] For elaboration on the voyeuristic nature of abolition "propaganda" see Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), and Wood, *Slavery Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Mary A. Favret, "Flogging: The Anti-Slavery Movement Writes Pornography," in *Romanticism and Gender*, ed. Anne Janowitz (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1998).
[78] For abolitionists' ideas about enslaved women's hypersexualization see Altink, 114-125.

need to dismantle the current colonial structure and reestablish the sexual and social regulations of the metropole. Evangelical politician and philanthropist William Wilberforce, generally credited as the most influential English abolition leader, commented on this matter in his own book *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in Behalf of Its Negro Slaves in the West Indies* (1823). He quoted Lord Henry Brougham's essay "Dissolute Morals in the West Indies.- Female Society" and wrote that deprived of all the "virtuous pleasures of domestic life" and removed from "modest female society, the general case on the plantations remote from the towns, while it brutalizes the mind and manners of men… frees them from those restraints which the presence of a family always imposes on the conduct of the most profligate men." Plantation life, and time away from the moral guidance of white women, perverted indefinitely. No polite female society was to be found in Jamaica, or the Caribbean in general, just dangerous enticement. In *Address to the Public on the Present State of the Question Relative to Negro Slavery in the British Colonies* (1828) William Alexander expressly pointed to the source of this inducement, and claimed that the "licentiousness" of the slaves spread to whites and caused them to develop a "moral darkness… paralizing every feeling of morality, and permitting practices abhorrent to humanity, and unknown in civilized society."[79] This was reiterated by Cooper and Jackson who professed that all men, "even good men" were quickly and easily corrupted in the unchecked colonial environment: "White men are ruined before they have been a

[79] William Alexander, *Address to the Public on the Present State of the Question Relative to Negro Slavery in the British Colonies* (London, 1828). *The Making Of The Modern World*. Web. 21 Nov. 2017. 284.

month in the island. They get into habits of debauchery, and every idea of religion vanishes."[80] One could not live up to the ideals of the metropolitan masculinity and the new British gentlemen in the midst of colonial slavery.

Gender was a powerful tool for abolitionists, serving the reciprocal process of attacking the immorality of slavery on the basis of women's treatment, while also reasserting the moral and cultural superiority of middle class masculinity. Abolitionists positioned themselves as the protective antithesis of the exploitive slave advocates. But while the abolitionist humanitarian mission stands as on of the most important historical movements, the campaign engaged in the significant objectification of black bodies to achieve its goals. It is important to recognize that the highly contradictory and deeply sexualized portrayals of enslaved women used in abolitionist writing obscured the lived realities of enslaved women and perpetuated racial and gender stereotypes in much the same way as anti-abolitionist writing. These constructions reflected the British bourgeoisie's increasingly restrictive ideas about sex, gender, and race.

III. Conclusion

British prime minster, William Pitt launched an inquiry of the "privy council committee for trade and plantations into the slave trade" in February 1788.[81] During the first round of testimony, the committee heard from those who directly

[80] Jackson , *Britain's Burden,* 19; and Cooper*, Illustrative*, 9.
[81] Seymour Drescher, "Public Opinion and Parliament in the Abolition of the British Slave Trade," in *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, ed. Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh university Press, 2007), 50.

benefited from the salve trade, such as colonial agents, governors, and council members, all of whom staunchly defended the institution.[82] Yet as the hearings progressed over the next three years the Privy Council also interviewed significant numbers of "middle-class white men who made their living on the sea or in the West Indies."[83] These witnesses included soldiers, ship workers, clergymen, and abolitionists.[84] Like abolitionist authors, many of these men offered graphic portrayals of violence towards enslaved women in their courtroom statements.[85] The change in the demographic makeup of witnesses and the nature their testimony highlights the shift in whose voice and whose masculinity mattered in the abolition debate and British society at large.

Legal accounts of physical brutality inflicted on black female bodies coincided with the increasing popularity of such depictions in abolitionist texts. This trend lasted until the passage of full emancipation.[86] As these narratives spread and garnered more public response, promoters of slavery found themselves forced into an increasingly defensive position. Those who wrote in favor of the institution responded with amelioration texts that styled slave-owners as paternal protectors who provided slaves with "every possible kindness, care, and attention."[87] The supporters and beneficiaries of slavery increasingly framed

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[82] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives* ,132.
[83] Ibid, 133.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, 124-126, 133, 135-39, 142-143.
[86] Altink, "An Outrage to All Decency," 108.
[87] "Testimony of Governor David Perry Esquire, Governor of Barbados," in *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century*, Sheila Lambert ed. (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1975), 171. For the trend toward amelioration defense in testimony see Fuentes, "'Venus:' Abolition Discourse, Gendered Violence, and the Archive," in *Dispossessed Lives* and in literature see Altink, *Representations of Slave Women.*

their own masculine interactions with black bodies around middle class standards and sensibilities of antislavery advocates.

But while the humanitarian mission of abolition ultimately triumphed, the use of black women's bodies as a space of discourse to promote the disparate agendas of elite dependents of slavery and members of the burgeoning middle class held lasting implications. Black women's bodies were chosen as a symbol or the abolitionist debate in part because they could be strategically ignored or invoked in discussion (without worry that they would infer in narration). This allowed pro and antislavery writers to produce their own representations of enslaved women's dealings with interracial relationships, sexual coercion, reproduction, and corporal punishment. Realities were ultimately obscured to reinforce British colonial and metropolitan men's own masculine ideas about hierarchy, economic, and sexual authority. Ultimately the use of black female bodies as a symbol of power indicative of public power struggles displaced enslaved women from their own narratives and further marginalized a category of people whose actual voices British society already viewed as expendable. In the discourse on colonial masculinity and slavery, these bodies became contradicting, both invisible in their subjectivity and hyper-visible in their brutalization and extreme sexaulization. Such problematic portrayals of non-white, non-male bodies would continue to characterize colonial ideology long after the formal emancipation of African slavery, and have left and enduring legacy.

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"Delightful Horror" and "Guilty Fascination:" British Masculinity and Strategic Race and Gender Portrayals in The Torture Trial of Louisa Calderon (1806)

In 1806 the former British colonial governor of Trinidad, Brigadier-General Thomas Picton, stood trial at the King's Bench for the torture of the young, free woman of color Louisa Calderon. After his highly anticipated court case resulted in a guilty verdict, Picton's fellow officer Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Alured Draper issued an address to the British public on Picton's behalf. Draper expressed particular indignation over the way in which the press's "unseemly" coverage of the crime had poisoned general opinion against the former war hero. Draper explained that written and illustrated representations of Calderon's trauma were "exported in wagon loads … all at reduced prices to wholesale and retail dealers" throughout the country even before the trial began.[88] Such publications featured drawings and descriptions of the young woman subjected to an antiquated method of military corporal punishment known as "the picket."[89] She was shown tied up by her wrist, with one heel resting on a sharpened stump. Draper condemned these depictions as shamelessly appealing to the emotions of the masses via "delightful horror" and referred to their public circulation as "vulgar," "dishonorable," and "unparalleled."[90]

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[88] Edward Alured Draper, An Address to the British Public, on the Case of Brigadier-General Picton . . . (London, 1806), ix.
[89] The picket had been a popular style of punishment among cavalry and artillery units in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By the 1800s Francis Grose noted that the practice had largely fallen out of favor as the pain it created "soon became intolerable" and it "lamed and ruptured many soldiers." Military Antiquities Respecting a History of the English Army from the Conquest to the Present, 2 vols. (London: S. Hooper, 1801), 2: 107.
[90] Draper, An Address, ix.

Draper, of course, had little regard for Calderon. His own pamphlet sought to demonize her as the deceitful pawn of Picton's primary accuser William Fullarton and dismiss her ordeal as a sensationalistic rallying cry for radical democratic reformers. But Draper's concern over the power of Calderon's image, the fear over whom these shocking portrayals were being used to motivate and whom they were being used to attack, is significant.[91] It highlights the way in which competing factions utilized various representations of Louisa Calderon's bodily experience, individual character, and personal relationships to promote their own agendas. This paper examines how representations of free women of color were employed in this prominent case, strategically constructed to facilitate masculine discourses on social and political objectives in the British Atlantic. Structured around the symbol of black women's subjecthood and subjection, the trial itself came to represent a series of wider class-conscious debates on masculinity, colonialism, and interracial relationships.

It was this case's ability to expose these distinct fault lines that led to its pronounced presence in colonial office letters, London streets, heated courtroom exchanges, trial narratives, news paper reports, journals, books and pamphlets. The torture of Louisa Calderon was only one of many charges against Picton. He had been a deeply unpopular governor. When the British seized control of Trinidad from the Spanish in 1797, he quickly established a brutal leadership style. Within five years, London officials, afraid of a popular uprising, appointed a commission to oversee the governor and investigate his controversial

[91] James Epstein makes note of the political significance of Draper's concern in *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 30-31.

administration. Upon his arrival to the island in 1802, the appointed colonial administrator William Fullarton began inquiries into the many allegations against Picton.[92] Fullarton compiled a condemnatory report of the governor's transgressions, accusing Picton of a variety of abuses including land speculation, illegal slave trading, excess cruelty, the wrongful execution of prisoners without due process, and the illegal torture of Calderon. He presented this account to the Privy Council, greatly blemishing Picton's reputation, and prompting Picton's resignation as governor in 1803. Yet of all the crimes for which Picton stood accused, only the Calderon incident resulted in a formal trial.[93]

Though not the most legally damning charge leveled against the governor, the unique circumstances of the Calderon incident made it a suitable platform for discourse on race, gender, and control. Calderon had been picketed in an attempt to gain information about her connection to the home robbery of the wealthy businessman and colonial agent Pedro Ruiz.[94] Calderon lived in the Port of Spain with Ruiz as his mistress, and colonial authorities suspected that she had aided her male acquaintance, and rumored lover, small-time trader and mixed-raced Grenadian immigrant Carlos Gonzalez, in stealing over 500 pounds

[92] In 1802 Prime Minister Henry Addington stripped Picton of sole authority, appointing a commission headed by Colonel William Fullarrton with secondary commissioner Commodore Samuel Hood to co-govern the island. Picton was further instructed to compile a report on Picton for the Privy Council.

[93] For the history of Thomas Picton's governance of Trinidad and the investigation into his crimes see Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*; Epstein, "Politics of Colonial Sensation: The Trial of Thomas Picton and the Cause of Louisa Calderon," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 2007): 712-741; and Kit Candlin, *The Last Caribbean Frontier, 179- 1815* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), esp. 118-137.

[94] Later rumors would emerge that Ruiz had even served as a spy for Picton. For more on Ruiz's business, status in the community, and his relationship with Picton see Candlin, *The Last Caribbean Frontier*, 118-119.

from Ruiz's residence.[95] The legality and morality of her subsequent torture addressed questions of authority over colonial subjects and violence against women of color.

By the time the case officially came to trial in 1806, one year before the English abolished the slave trade, these questions held particular relevance.[96] As the British Empire expanded, perspectives of imperialism had become polarized between the growing metropolitan middle class and colonial elites. Britons at home became more aware of the disparity between their national self-image as champions of Protestant liberty and the brutal realities of colonial rule on the ground. Historian James Epstein argues that as British control overseas became increasingly authoritarian, hierarchical and militarized, metropolitan unease about abuses of power and the rights of colonial subjects grew.[97] The increasingly powerful middle sector of society viewed the colonial frontiers as particularly uncouth.[98] This rising middle class saw the relationships between master and

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[95] For more of Ruiz's background see Candlin, *Last Caribbean Frontier*, 125-29.

[96] The trial first appeared at the King's Bench in 1804 but was sent on a writ of mandamus to gather further information in Port of Spain.

[97] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, description.

[98] Keith McClelland sees the rise of the middle class and the transformation of the capitalist economy as an essential element in the success of abolition: "What resulted in Britain was the triumph of the bourgeoisie under the banner of free trade, the consolidation of modern capitalism and the defeat of atavistic 'mercantilist' factions. Industrial capitalism 'turned round and destroyed the power of commercial capitalism, slavery, and all its works." McClelland, "Redefining the West India interest: politics and the legacies of slave-ownership" in Hall et al. (eds.), *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 127. For the makeup of slavery advocates versus abolitionist groups see David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For general information on the rising of the British "middle class," their political, religious, and economic positioning, and their unique fashioning of masculinity see: Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, society and family life in London, 1660-1730* (Methuen: London, 1989); Lenore Davidhoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850 rev. ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2002); John Brewer, "'Clubs, commercialization and politics' "in John Brewer, Neil McKendrick and John Plumb (eds), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1982), 231-262.

slave, colonizer and colonized as threatening to metropolitan norms and aligned themselves with colonial reform and abolition movements.[99] On the other hand, plantation owning gentry, mercantile elites, and military officials active in the Caribbean inherently supported the maintenance of status quo and current power system in the region.[100]

Throughout the Georgian period, opposing factions increasingly expressed these contrasting views of imperial rule in terms of gender politics. Historian G.J. Barker-Benefield explains that, beginning in the eighteenth century, gender emerged as the most powerful way to challenge conflicting agendas, “one that could still cut deeper than class.”[101] When it came to public discourse, groups were defined and criticized based on their style of manhood and their treatment of women above all else. In this vein, interactions with women of color became key to assessing proper masculinity- and by extension proper rule- in the Caribbean. Inspired by evangelical Protestantism tenets of piety, self-discipline, and soberness, the rising middle class specifically promoted the idea that gentleman who exercised self-control and the benevolent protection of women should govern society. In this way, they constructed a new “moral masculinity” that provided a cohesive identity for newly enfranchised white men and justified the condemnation of the aristocratic.[102] They particularly attacked aristocrats’ lecherousness as a sign of their overall corruption and the injustice of their rule.

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[99] Anne M. Windholz, “An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That Got Away” *Victorian Studies* 42, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 631-658.
[100] See Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, 1-2.
[101] G. J. Barker-Benefield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66.
[102] Ibid, 76.

The case of Louisa Calderon and Thomas Picton allowed Britons to link issues of imperial regime and colonial subjects to the masculine treatment of colonial women of color. As Draper suggests, the "the middling and lower classes" in Britain aligned themselves with the sympathetic subject of Louisa Calderon.[103] The case became even closer to home for metropolitan Britons when Fullarton brought Calderon to Britain to await the trial and testify against Picton. Picton, however, a long time supporter of the plantation system, and a major planter himself, found support from colonial elites and proslavery forces.[104] Those on both sides relied heavily on strategic representations of Louisa Calderon, while middling reformers also employed contradictory representations of Thomas Picton's mixed-race mistress, Rosetta Smith.

In directly comparing the way these two women were used to promote differing class-based masculine approaches to empire, this project adds to a significant body of research on the Picton and Calderon trial. Most extensively, James Epstein's *Scandal of Colonial Rule* offers an in depth examination on the cases' impact on British colonial policy and empire in the nineteenth century. He argues that this particular political scandal highlighted the shifting standards of colonial violence, subjecthood, and imperial careering in the abolition era. Caribbean intellectual historian Selwyn R. Cudjoe's work examines this history from a literary perspective, evaluating Calderon's narrative voice and

[103] Draper, *An Address*, ix. Daniel Livesay also states that the majority of the metropole sympathized with Louisa Calderon in *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733-1833* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 334.
[104] Epstein, "Politics of Colonial Sensation," 717. For Picton's role as a planter and his support for slavery see Candlin, *The Last Caribbean Frontier*, 75-95, esp. 93.

subjecthood, and suggests how the texts surrounding the case reveal colonial policies of abuse but also a tradition of resistance among the colonized.[105] Finally, Kit Candlin has used the case as way to better access the history of Trinidad and the southern Caribbean, placing the case and its players into the culture context of the colonial frontier.[106]

This paper attempts to build on these works by offering a deeper analysis of the strategic use of gendered and raced representations in this case. It seeks to demonstrate how British men appropriated portrayals of free black women, using them as rhetorical devices to discuss the political and personal agendas, and to clarify how these constructions ultimately obscured these women's true lived experience. In this it seeks to emulate the work of scholars such as Verene Shepherd and Kamala Kempadoo who have reconstructed the sexual, legal, and economic existence of women in the Caribbean.[107]More broadly, this study is indebted to the work of scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, Marisa J. Fuentes, and Ann Stoler who have interrogated the archives to explore the disparity between the rhetorical representations and lived realities of subaltern women in colonial and slave societies. Using these frameworks, this paper seeks to demonstrate and dissect the filtration of marginalized women's narratives through the mediums of white men.[108] It places such constructions within the historical

[105] Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003)
[106] Kit Candlin, *The Last Caribbean Frontier*.
[107] Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 53.
[108] This paper borrows methodologies described in the work of Ann Stoler and Marisa Fuentes. Stoler attempts to reunderstand the consequences of colonization for the colonized (particularly women). She examines "concubinage" in the West Indies as a dual process that "reinforced prevailing hierarchies and of gender and race, while simultaneously threatening to disrupt or

context of the developing consciousness of appropriate masculinity and colonial relations.

I. Free Women of Color and Colonial Masculinity

In analyzing the colonial politics surrounding the Thomas Picton and Louisa Calderon case, James Epstein asserts that Picton's brutal rule in Trinidad reflected a larger "aristocratic reaction" to global revolutionary upheaval. Epstein suggests that as domestic conflict emerged between liberal governance and the authoritarianism of European aristocratic states, colonial leaders sought to secure imperial 'peripheries' through more severe repressive measures.[109] Picton operated as though he was the sole source of government for the island, unconfined in "forms and modes of prosecution."[110] In addition to British violence against enslaved rebel populations in the Caribbean, Epstein points to the use of increased military power against people in India and the Irish peasantry. Epstein explains that such measures constituted elites' attempts to justify and legitimize

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compromise these distinctions" in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. More specifically, Fuentes presents the analysis of written constructions of black female bodies and their consumption as a way to deal with "the impossibility of recovering enslaved women without reproducing the violent circumstances from which they emerge in the archives," in " 'Venus': Abolition Discourse, Gendered Violence, and the Archive," in *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016) 124-143, esp. 128-129. See also Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no.2 (June 2008): 1-14.

[109] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 91.

[110] In Picton's memoirs H. B. Robinson writes that the prominent colonial planter Christóbal de Robles advised Picton that Britain's conquest had "virtually combined in you the whole power of the government," leaving him unbound "by forms or modes of prosecution." According to Robinson this instruction strongly resonated with Picton, who later used it in defense of his behavior as colonial governor. *Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton,* vol. 1 (London,1835), 54-57.

their rule to themselves and a wider domestic public.[111] Epstein does not largely address how gender facilitated these performative and structural displays of colonial control. Yet in reviewing the sources surrounding the Picton and Calderon trial, it seems clear that Britain's ruling elites strategically employed specific portrayals of women of color to show such dominance. In constructing written representations of women of color as unruly, corrupt, and sexually promiscuous, the colonial elites found a powerful strategy to not only exhibit their ability to exert control over perceived chaos, but also to justify the ruthless means to achieve such ends.

Ann Laura Stoler's work has crucially identified such gendered and racialized positioning as an essential element of European political imperialism, one "critical to the making of colonial categories and… the distinctions between ruler and ruled**."**[112] She argues that the perceived management of intimate matters (relationships with and dominance over colonized women) was crucial for the consolidation of power in empire driven states. Women of color became particular targets, as the project of colonialism played upon supposedly visible markers of distinction and marginalization. Stoler further asserts that, once embraced, these pervasive discourses on colonial sexuality became "productive of class and racial power, not mere reflections of them."[113] European's imagination of what they could control created specific power structures and social capital of its own. Stoler notes that literary studies and history have documented a wide range of such examples, where feminized colonies, and the

[111] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 91.
[112] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge*, 8.
[113] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 176.

women in them "were to be penetrated, raped, silenced and (dis)possessed."[114] Yet, she also suggests, these dialogs underlay actual everyday practices and real system of power that supported and cemented hierarchies maintained by acts of emotional, mental, and physical violence.

This is evidenced in Caribbean slave societies like Trinidad, where white colonial elites and their employees used sexual and physical domination to show that they were "strong, violent, virile men," thoroughly capable of maintaining their demographically perilous, white autocracy.[115] Feminist historian Angela Davis argues that in slave societies, white men strategically positioned themselves as adversaries in sexual contest against black women – taking them by coercion or force. According to Davis, whites targeted enslaved women with emotional, mental, and physical terror to disrupt social cohesion, family stability, and resistance efforts, thus ensuring more controllable, productive and fractured workforces.[116] The laws of the island afforded some additional protections to free people of color in Trinidad. Yet the comparatively improved legal, social, and financial mobility of free people, coupled with their demographic advantage made them a unique threat to colonial whites.

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[114] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 174.
[115] Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 160. For more on sexual violence in slave society see: Deborah Grey White, *Ar'nt I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1999); Angela Davis, "Reflections on the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar* 3, no.4, (1971): 2-15; and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (eds.) *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement.* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 357-383.
[116] Barbara Bush, "'Sable Venus', 'She Devil' or 'Drudge'?: British Slavery and the 'Fabulous Fiction' of Black Women's Identities, c. 1650-1838," *Women's History Review* 9, (2000), 767.

When Picton assumed control of the island in 1797, the population of free blacks was more than double that of whites, at 4,476 to 2,151. The sex ratios of white and free black populations were also drastically different. In 1808, white men outnumbered white women by 80 percent, and free women of color outnumbered free men of color by 30 percent.[117] This uneven demography meant that many white men came to Trinidad without wives or the prospects of becoming married on the island and instead formed "transient" alliances with free women of color or slaves. [118] Many contemporary sources remark that free "mulatto" women were preferred partners.[119] British print media used the interracial, non-martial relationships to further demonize black sexuality and objectify black women.[120]

By the late eighteenth century, images of sexualized free women of color were ubiquitous in popular British songs, novels, and poetry. Masculinist culture often portrayed women of African descent as equal parts wild, dangerous, and enticing.[121] Constructions of dominance over this unrestrained sexuality emerged as a tool in the social imagination of elites. Yet it is difficult to know how these relationships transpired on the ground and to assess whether they equated to

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[117] Although sex ratios leveled out in the decade before abolition, population disparity continued to grow. By 1822 white men outnumber white women by only 50 percent and free black women outnumbered free black men by only 22 percent. In 1825 the ratio was 15,003 free people of color to 3,214 whites. In 1822 the sex ratio leveled off slightly with white men A. Meredith John, *The Plantation Slaves of Trinidad, 1783-1816: A mathematical and Demographic Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988) 40.

[118] Rhoda E. Reddock notes that the European men often "depended on more transient alliances with free colouredGo or slave women." *Women, Labour & Politics in Trinidad and Tobago: A History* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 21.

[119] Henrice Altink, *Representations of Slave Women in Discourses on Slavery and Abolition 1780-1838*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 88.

[120] Reddock notes that the European men often "depended on more transient alliances with free colouredGo or slave women." *Women, Labour & Politics*, 21.

[121] Bush, "Sable Venus", 773.

actual control and violence. However, historians seem to suggest that these discursive calls for sexual dominance were both reflective and constitutive of real violence. Marisa Fuentes suggests that although sexual relationships could provide women of color with opportunities for economic and social advancement, it must be reminded that these relationships operated in space where white men held overwhelming legal, economic, and social control. As such, it is necessary to problemetize "what 'freedom actually meant for many black women" and to examine "the cost of [women of color's] survival in this society."[122] She suggests that the prevalent constructions, of women of color as "sexually available, consenting, consumable, and disposable" constituted their own form of violence defining these women, as non-human, sexual objects. Historian Barbara Bush explains that the widely proliferated image of the "Sable Venus," not only "represented male erotic fantasies, but also the widespread practice of concubinage and sexual exploitation of black women."[123] Similarly Doris Garraway asserts that both "the role of desire" and "sexuality alongside violence" were crucial elements in shaping Creole Caribbean society.[124]

This strategic positioning of women of color is clearly visible in the rhetoric of Picton's supporters. In the courtroom and in print, Picton's defenders spoke to Calderon's precarious, unrestrained, black sexuality as a way to justify her treatment in prison, discredit her narrative, and tarnish the reputation and aims of those associated with her. In commenting on Calderon's presence in Britain,

[122] Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 54.
[123]Ibid, 762.
[124] Doris L. Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2005), 1-2.

Draper scathingly described her as, “brought from another world, and a hypocritical mulata prostitute, a self-convicted robber, introduced into Westminster Hall…”[125] His objections to Calderon’s foreignness, deceit, and immorality, characterized much of her opposition’s rhetoric. The idea that such a woman could challenge a man of Picton’s office and status in Britain’s highest court was an unwarrantable assault on the hierarchical order of stable society.

Picton’s defense attorney Sir Robert Dallas stated early in his opening statements that prior to her arrest, Louisa Calderon led a depraved life, serving as “a domestic in [Pedro Ruiz’s] house, living in a state of prostitution with him.”[126] Dallas wished for the jury to know that Calderon had willingly disgraced herself years before, giving her body and virtue to Ruiz. According to Dallas, she was not, as her sympathizers suggested, forced into child prostitution, nor did her torture signify the objectification and corruption of a sexually chaste young girl. She was, in the defense’s portrayal, a temptress who had used her sexuality to secure a position of protection under Ruiz and then employed the same cunning to facilitate the robbery of his home.

In the original trial, Picton’s close confidant, and appointed council member Saint Hillaire Begorrat testified for the defense.[127] As the municipal magistrate, or *alcalde*, Begorrat was present for Calderon’s imprisonment and was responsible for requesting her torture. In his testimony, he explained that

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[125] Draper, *An Address*, 58.

[126] *The Trial of Governor T. Picton, for Inflicting the Torture on Louisa Calderón,* published by B. Crosby (London, 1806), 35.

[127] Saint Hillaire Begorrat was a creole merchant born to a French merchant family in Martinique. As an established sugar plantation-owner he served as a member of the *cabildo* and Governor Picton’s appointed council. As an *alcalde* (Spanish municipal magistrate) he was present for Louisa Calderon’s torture and was considered the central instigator. Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, xii.

Calderon's alleged sexual connection with suspect Carlos Gonzales linked her to the robbery and assured him of her guilt, despite her refusal to confess. After two days in jail, Calderon admitted to having had, "some time past a love intrigue with Carlos Gonzales."[128] Begorrat claimed that she further revealed that on the day of the robbery, Gonzales "had solicited a meeting with her, and that he came into the chamber of Pedro Ruiz by the back door… and having gratified his wishes, he went away."[129] Begorrat noted that Gonzales also disclosed having a "carnal connexion" with Calderon.[130] He specifically stated that he believed Gonzales confessed "from shame, because he was a married man" thereby alerting the court that Calderon was not only involved in an affair outside of her relationship with her "keeper," but an adulterous one at that.[131]

Though both parties admitted to their affair, Begorrat claimed that neither would confess to breaking into the burgled trunk nor directly implicate the other. Begorrat stated that Calderon, "observed that for her part she had not stolen any money."[132] Ultimately it was this resistance in the face of what he deemed such suspicious relations that served as Begorrat's "motive [for] official communication to the superior tribunal, respecting the picketing of Louisa Calderon."[133] Though the idea of inflicting white female bodies to such procedures would be unthinkable, Begorrat referred to the procedure as "slight torture" and maintained

[128] "Declaration of the Honorable Hilariot Begorrat to the Commissioners and Council, on Wednesday 6th April 1803, relating to the Insinuations thrown out by Colonel. Fullarton, on 24th March 1803, respecting the use of the Torture" as presented in Draper, *An Address*, 65.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid, 71.
[131] Ibid, 72.
[132] Ibid, 65.
[133] Ibid, 73.

that, although undesirable, it was necessary and effective under some circumstance.[134]

All of Begorrat's assertions about Calderon's sexual life were taken as fact and repeated by Dallas during the 1806 trial, during which he simply stated that Calderon "was indulging herself in carnal intercourse [with Carlos Gonzales] at the time she was mistress to Ruiz."[135] His assertions on her sexual behavior were also used to challenge Louisa Calderon's age. As Picton had been instructed to adhere to local customs and legal practices, thus his supporters contended his actions were only illegal if it could be shown that he had violated Spanish law prohibiting the torture of a child less than fourteen years of age. Picton's defenders argued that "guilty or not guilty would depend entirely on proof of her age" and insisted that it should be all the jury should be allowed to consider, rather than emotional appeals to consider the circumstances that Calderon experienced.[136] The defense used various techniques to cast doubt on Calderon's age such as denouncing her baptismal record as forged and calling witnesses to swear they had known Calderon for more than fourteen years.[137] Yet the most direct assertion came from Begorrat, who in addition to stating that Calderon had never pleaded to being underage in jail, avowed that Calderon's own testimony on living as Pedro Ruiz's "concubine" for three years prior to the investigation, "left no doubt with me as to her age."[138]

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[134] Ibid.
[135] Draper, *An Address*, 35.
[136] Ibid, 156.
[137] Ibid, 164-173.
[138] Ibid, 141.

Colonial elites' defenses of Picton played upon the idea that if improperly managed, and not kept in submissive check, black female sexuality could be a powerfully corrupting force.[139] As such, Picton's defenders sought to represent all those connected with her as equally tainted. The popular conservative publication, the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, published by staunch Tory politician and future Prime Minister of England George Canning, launched particularly vicious attacks on the Fullartons. The paper chided the way the Colonel William Fullarton and his wife Marianne had taken Calderon about Britain in their carriage while she awaited the trial. The paper's contributors asserted that such presumptions were particularly unfitting for "a Mulatto prostitute and a convicted felon."[140] The paper also attempted to suggest that Calderon's sexual immorality extended to her relationship with Colonel Fullarton. In one issue, the paper told the public that Calderon became pregnant while staying with the Fullartons. The story sarcastically remarked, "Let it not be supposed however, for a moment, that we meant to insinuate, that the Laird of Fullarton is the father of this bairne."[141] Other publications specifically targeted Marianne Fullarton. In his pamphlet *Respecting Affairs in Trinidad in 1803, and in answer to William Fullarton, Esq*, prominent planter and former colonial attorney general in Trinidad, Archibald Gloster wrote denouncing Mrs. Fullarton for having "very much degraded yourself by associating with "a mulatto prostitute." He further insinuated that she was aware

[139] For the way that both abolitionist reformers and colonial elites viewed corrupt black female sexuality see Altink, *Representations of Slave Women.*
[140] *Anti-Jacobin Review; or Monthly Political and Literary Censor,* no. 30 (July 1808): 273.
[141] *Anti-Jacobin Review; or Monthly Political and Literary Censor*, no.45*,* (May 1806), 57.

of the affair between her husband and Calderon.[142] In suggesting that Marianne Fullarton associated with disreputable company and condoned sexually elicit behavior, Gloster attacked the core of her white feminine virtue, suggesting that even this pure bastion of British purity could be corrupted by black female depravity.

Picton's treatment of Calderon fell well within the expected norms of aristocratic masculinity and colonial control. Thus his supporters, such as Draper, found its stark condemnation and the up swell of popular common support for Calderon in Britain, deeply unsettling. Draper contextualized this struggle for class and colonial control in terms of gender, accusing the rising middle class of effeminate rhetoric and a lack of rational. He explicitly described the "prejudice" inducing campaign against Picton and his cause as a collection of "many base, ungenerous, and *unmanly* ways."[143] He accused colonial reformers such as Fullarton as drumming up charges that played to metropolitan sympathies. He wrote that Fullarton in particular "knew well the feelings of the people of England" and used it to create a narrative that suggesting that Calderon's treatment was a matter of "so much honor or so much disgrace on the national character."[144] Such "melancholy scenes" he said were "purposely calculated and used to produce hatred and disgust" among the "class of community."[145] He referenced the French Revolution to speak to the dangers of frenzied mob, without the

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[142] Archibald Gloster, *A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Buckinghamshire . . . respecting Affairs in Trinidad in 1803, and in answer to William Fullarton, Esq.* (London, 1807), 100-102.
[143] Draper, *An Address*, ix.
[144] Ibid, 57.
[145] Ibid 67 and v.

rational thinking so strongly associated with masculinity and ultimately lamented that a man of “reputation and fortune” whom “the highest and most honored branch of the legislature at length pronounced innocent and guiltless” could be dragged down by the power of a “mulatto prostitute” and an emotional mob mentality.[146]

II. Free Women of Color and Metropolitan Moral Masculinity

Louisa Calderon’s allies presented her in a way that fundamentally juxtaposed imperial elites’ constructions of the young Trinidadian as sexually promiscuous and deliberately manipulative. They contrastingly focused on her youth and vulnerability, asserting that she was forced into sexual submission, to serve as the mistress of Pedro Ruiz. According to their narrative, Governor Picton’s sanctioned torture had further exploited a dejected child, a clear sign of the colonial administration’s mismanagement and malice. Yet this portrayal of Calderon concentrated heavily on images of her broken body and largely limited her actual voice. Though she had been brought across the ocean, Calderon gave only a brief testimony in court, mostly responding in one sentences answers to confirm or deny the nature of physical torment she had endured. In reality, Calderon was not offered a platform to discuss the entirely of her experience in Trinidad. British middle class reformers saw Calderon as most valuable to their reformist mission when her life could be molded into neat dimensions. She was most usefully presented to the public as a sexually vulnerable and chaste child.

[146] Ibid, 57.

In this reductive and fictional form, Calderon's pain became fetishized and made into something unreal. This simplistic construction of her life simultaneously obscured the very real possibility that extramarital cross-racial sexual relationships and perhaps even thievery played a key role in her survival in Trinidadian society.

During the trial, the prosecution, led by famed barrister and progressive reformist Whig politician Sir William Garrow, painted Ruiz as the sexual aggressor in relationship between him and Calderon.[147] Garrow, who was already renowned for his courtroom skills, told the jury that Ruiz had "seduced" Calderon and that she was merely, "the age of ten or eleven years, when she was induced to live with a person of the name of Pedro Ruiz in the character of mistress."[148] Garrow also condemned local custom, stating that "in that hot climate where the puberty of females is much accelerated, it is common for them to become mothers frequently at the age of twelve; at that early period they either marry, or enter into a state of concubinage." Despite its prevalence, Garrow expressed distaste that such convention could be normalized in a British colony, and that a girl "should be in this situation at this tender period of her life."[149]

In appealing to Calderon's "tender age" and her vulnerability, the prosecution sought to present her chaste character and establish that she was under the legal age of torture. Yet highlighting her innocence also allowed

[147] Garrow made his name as a criminal defense barrister at the Old Bailey and became known for his indirect reform of the advocacy system. However, later in his political career in his role of Solicitor General he took on a far more conservative stance against reformers. For more on Garrow see John Hostettler, *Sir William Garrow: His Life, His Times and Fight for Justice* (London: Waterside Press, 2010).
[148] *The Trial of Governor T. Picton*, 7.
[149] Ibid.

Calderon's supporters to assert that Picton had neglected his responsibility to protect the powerless. As the notion of middle class moral masculinity gained social capital in Britain, a man's creditworthiness, character, and success were increasingly determined by his probity in private and public life. Scholar Gillian Williams claims that by the mid-eighteenth century this probity was defined in terms of "benevolent treatment, guided by sensibility of the weak, whether women, servants, children, 'savages', or even dumb animals."[150] Depending on the perspective, Calderon fit into several of these categories.

As the ability to exercise benevolent control and offer paternal protection over marginalized groups became the hallmark of successful British masculinity, middling Britons came to expect compassionate displays of authority in government at home and abroad. Garrow expressed that Picton had failed in the "duty of a man placed in his honourable and important station." Garrow pointedly stated, "it was [Picton's] duty to impress upon the minds of the people of this new colony [Trinidad], a conviction of the perfect security they would acquire" and "of the abundant advantages they would derive from the mild, benign, and equitable spirit of British jurisprudence…"[151] Yet Picton had not provided Calderon with the protections of a strong but well-mannered British rule. Instead of shielding the young and defenseless girl from indecency, Picton had subjected her to it. Garrow and the prosecution asserted Picton "must have been aware of this extremely tender age of Louisa Calderon" and "consigned her to such barbarous

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[150] Gillian Williamson, *British Masculinity in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731 to 1815* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 3.
[151] Ibid, 10.

cruelty" anyway."[152] Colonial reformist rallied around this example, overtly drawing on, even recreating this subjection again and again.

Picton's defender Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Draper had not been wrong to note the extensive use of bodily images of Calderon. Much of the case and its coverage in Britain focused on the details of Calderon's physical mortification. In one of the first printed accounts of Picton's transgressions, a published collection of statements, letters, and documents from Fullarton described Calderon as a Spanish girl in her minority who "suffered torture to extort confession, by order of B.G. Picton."[153] Fullarton detailed the intensity of Calderon's experience, recalling that "the torture is stated to have been applied two successive days, in presence of Mr. Begorrat, with such severity, that the girl fell down in appearance dead, and there was no physician nor surgeon to assist."[154] Radical journalist Pierre Franc McCallum echoed this horrific depiction, writing that the "poor girl was tortured so severely, that she fell down apparently dead, by which it is said she has lost the use of some of her limbs."[155]

The courtroom itself, and later printed accounts of the trial, produced the most explicit descriptions of Calderon's torture. Garrow insisted that Calderon only confessed to any involvement in the robbery once Picton's men exacted serious extralegal punishment. He "briefly" summarized her "dreadful state," recapping the "exercise of infernal cruelty"[156]:

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[152] *The Trial of Governor T. Picton*, 119.
[153] William Fullarton, *A Statement, Letters, and Documents, Respecting the Affairs of Trinidad* (London, 1804), 35.
[154] Ibid, 56.
[155] Pierre Franc McCallum, *Travels in Trinidad, During the Months of February, March, and April 1803* (Liverpool, 1805), 182.
[156] *The Trial of Governor T. Picton*, 9.

While her body was supported by the great toe, projected on a sharp piece of wood, the wrist of the hand on the opposite side drawn up by a pulley; so that her whole weight was sustained jointly by the pulley, and the spike, and lest she should afford herself any momentary relief by struggling in such a situation, the other hand and foot, which were not concerned in the dreadful operation, were tied together behind her.[157]

Garrow strikingly told the jury that Calderon still bore "about her the marks of the barbarity of the defendant."[158] Furthermore, he informed them that Calderon had been forced to witness two other black women, charged with witchcraft, "suffer the [same] horrid ceremony" before her own ordeal. He stressed how particularly cruel and unthinkable it was to inflict such physical brutality on women. Garrow asked the court to consider that though the specific "punishment or torture" may be "nothing to a drayman, would be death to the delicate female who has this day been produced before you."[159] He attempted to concentrate his remarks on the bodily abuse that Calderon had faced.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British audiences found graphic representations of violence extremely compelling. Karen Halttunen has most notably designated and explained this phenomenon as the humanitarian "pornography of pain." As the rising middle class embraced a culture of sensibility and reformation of manners, marked by sympathetic concern for the suffering of less fortunate others, depictions of violence became taboo. Reformers leveraged new sensitivities to pain. They created printed images that set victims anguish as the focal point as a way to illustrate the evil of a particular institution such as the

[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid, 13.
[159] Ibid, 119.

military, boarding schools, asylums, slavery, and colonialism.[160] Though the supposed point of these scenes was to identify with the suffering of the subject, viewing often became an indulgent process primarily concerned with identifying one's self in the gruesome situation. Engaging with images that often depicted severe "sexual victimization and psychological torture" also had a decidedly voyeuristic element.[161] Altogether, these scenes inscribed their subjects to a place of perpetual victimhood, pity, and oppression. These subjugated figures were harnessed for the emotional and political work of the middle class.

Black women often constituted the subject matter of these emotional tableaux. Abolitionist campaigns in particular relied heavily on the public circulation of such visuals. Scholars have documented the ways in which antislavery advocates generated images of naked, brutalized female slaves.[162] Diana Paton contends that these shocking illustrations were abolitionists' most powerful tool, one they evoked even at the exclusion of representing other forms and instances of violence. Paton claims that, "When abolitionists wanted to convey a sense of slavery's horror, they told stories about women. They emphasized the violations of women's bodies that accompanied enslavement."[163] This strategy was particularly effective as it played into metropolitan sensibilities

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[160] Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (April 1995): 303-334.
[161] Ibid, 308.
[162] For more on how abolitionist campaigns used visual portrayals of physically brutalized enslaved women see Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), and Wood, *Slavery Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Mary A. Favret, "Flogging: The Anti-Slavery Movement Writes Pornography," in *Romanticism and Gender*, ed. Anne Janowitz (Cambridge: D.S Brewer, 1998), 19-43; Altink, *Representations of Slave Women;* Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*;
[163] Paton, "Decency, Dependence, and the Lash," 163.

about the fragile nature of the female body and its need for protection and modesty.[164] Yet in their strategic constructions, created by white men, these images almost never included women's personal recollections of their trauma. Instead they artificially recreated white ideas about trauma, hyper focusing on, even fetishizing the corporeal. Marcus Wood articulates this in his own work, explaining that these visual sources from the abolition period do not reveal enslaved black lives or enslaved black suffering, but rather the white fantasies of black lives and suffering.[165]

Though the presiding judge in the Picton Calderon trial, Lord Edward Ellenborough, originally objected, he eventually allowed Garrow to introduce "a drawing in water colours" as evidence of the type of torture that befell Calderon.[166] The painting represented "her situation with the *executioner* and his attendants during the application of the torture."[167] The published account of the trial remarked that seeing the image "occasioned [Calderon] to shudder in a way which nothing but the terrific recollection of her suffering could have excited."[168] Garrow seized this opportunity and remarked to Judge Ellenborough that he wished the lord's position had enabled him to see "this involuntary expression of the sensations of the witness, on the inspection of the drawing."[169] The prosecution not only sought to narrate Calderon's past trauma, but also to visibly

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[164] Paton, "Decency, Dependence, and the Lash."
[165] Wood, *Slavery Empathy, and Pornography*, 21.
[166] Ibid, 16. The judge only admitted the drawings after the defense attorney Sir Robert Dallas consented.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

recreate her trauma in the present. When British publishers sold accounts of the trial they included these illustrations of torture to boost sales.[170]

Colonial reformers used the "pornography of pain" to raise interest in and sympathy for Calderon's case in the physical courtroom and the court of public opinion. Yet in building a case almost entirely around her physical degradation and youthful vulnerability, Calderon's supporters had little need for her actual voice. This is reflected in Calderon's brief testimony. In serving as a witness, Calderon had little opportunity to speak about her personal relationships or experiences outside of jail. Instead she generally provided short, one sentence answers about the nature of her torture: how it was carried out, who conducted it, what lasting physical marks it left. During the trial, Calderon actually reenacted the manner of her torture in front of the entire courtroom. While describing the details of her picketing, "she accompanied her explanations by placing herself in the attitude she so described."[171] Calderon was once again compelled to position her body in prostate position in a room of unfamiliar white men.

This is not to suggest that Calderon was in reality helpless or unaware. Selwyn Cudjoe's argues that Calderon's behavior in court constituted a conscious performance, one that reveals her astute understanding of how best to express the grievances of Trinidadian society in a way that was " 'receivable' by contemporaries." [172] However, Calderon's specific presentation suggests an adherence to standards of white middle class masculine respectability politics and points to the power of this entity. To receive a favorable outcome Calderon

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[170] Epstein, "Politics of Colonial Scandal," 731.
[171] *The Trial of Governor T. Picton*, 14-15.
[172] Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries,* 9-21.

was forced to present a certain fiction. All of this also highlights the British middle class reformer's hypocrisy, in the inconsistency between their supposed care and protection for marginalized black women and their willingness to re-expose these women to trauma.

III. Free Women of Color and Metropolitan Racial Anxiety

Colonial reformists' contradictory relationship with women of color extended to the way in which they used various representations of these women to promote their own agendas. In addition to portraying women of color as innocent and abused victims of their circumstance, they also employed representations of women of color as morally corrupting, manipulative temptresses. Europeans particularly assigned this later stereotype to free women of color, who were assumed to have secured their freedom and any financial stability they might possess through relationships with white men.[173] If Louisa Calderon fulfilled the image of the pure and vulnerable colonial woman in need of paternal protection, Thomas Picton's free, mixed-race mistress, Rosetta Smith, became the malevolent seductress from whom white masculine society needed protection against. Reformers used constructions of Smith to speak to Picton's evils but also the general corruption of Trinidadian colonial society.

Fullarton first introduced metropolitan readers to the French proprietress and slave-owner in his edited collection of letters. Fullarton somewhat aloofly

[173] Cassandra Pybus and Kit Candlin, *Enterprising Women: Gender, Race, and Power in the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015) 32-33.

referred to Smith as Picton's "housekeeper," as opposed to paramour or mistress (or even concubine), titles he likely deemed too important for her.[174] Yet in the colonial Caribbean context, the naming a woman as a man's "housekeeper" still implied sexual connotations.[175] In addition to accusing Smith of a variety of haughty behavior, Fullarton accused her of involving Picton in multiple illegal activities, including wrongfully imprisoning those who displeased her, illegally acquiring slaves, and providing her with a non-competitive contract "supplying the Soldiers' Barracks with Wood, and other agencies."[176] Fullarton expressed great apprehension over Smith's level of influence and control, comparing her in a later publication to one Madam Sabatin, an aristocrat who sold blank *lettres de cachet* during the French Revolution. He wrote, "Rosetta Smith, the coloured Frenchwoman, who lived with Colonel Picton, could usually effect the commitment or release of any person, in the same way as the Duc de la Vrilliere's mistress currently was wont to grant orders of commitment or release from the Bastille."[177]

Fullerton's discomfort over Smith's perceived power reflected the metropole's overall sense that colonial spaces threatened established metropolitan sexual and social regulations. Picton's inability to deploy paternal control and "tame" his female companion (i.e. Smith) would have been seen as

[174] Pybus and Candlin, *Enterprising Women*, 51.
[175] For the role of mistress and housekeeper see Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean*, 53.
[176] Ibid, 193.
[177] William Fullarton, *A Refutation of the Pamphlet which Colonel Picton lately Addressed to Lord Hobart* (London, 1805), 41. For more on Madame Sabatin see John Lough, *France on the Eve of Revolution: British Travellers' Observations 1763-1788*(New York: Routledge, 2016), 192.

out of sync with new middle class masculinity.[178] Yet perhaps more disturbing to the metropolitan audiences would have been the very idea of a sexual relationship between these two. The newly established middle class based its legitimacy in adherence to propriety and strict social order.[179] The internal stability of this white bourgeoisie was dependent on distinct categories and racially divisive ideology.[180] Thus, metropolitans increasingly expressed condemnation for sexual contact between colonial men and non-white women.[181] While a respectable Englishman should protect these women he should not bed them.

Reformists therefore condemned all interracial relationships. They generally represented these affairs as non-consensual interactions in which colonial elites preyed upon helpless black women (as was the case in characterizing Calderon's association with Ruiz). However, they may also style black women as complicit or even as the aggressors in these relationships. Colonial reformers shared in colonial elites perception that black women's sexuality could become a powerful and even dangerous force. Specifically, they believed that when British men spent time in the colonies -away from the social norms of the metropole, tempted with sexual access to black women- their

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[178] Williamson, *British Masculinity in the 'Gentleman's Magazine*, 3.
[179] Williamson suggests that the rising bourgeoisie felt particularly compelled to establish rigid social and ethical standards since they were not yet as confident in their politeness and position as the old establishment *British Masculinity in the 'Gentleman's Magazine*, 3.
[180] Frank Reeves, *British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse About Race and Race-Related Matters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 52.
[181] See Petley, *Slave Holders in Jamaica,* 45-46.

morality and masculinity were greatly jeopardized. Even the most restrained English man could become perverted.[182]

Radical pressman, Pierre Franc McCallum, used representations of Rosetta Smith to express these ideals most directly. McCallum had made his name in writing about elite corruption, namely by exposing sexual scandal.[183] In pointing to the immoral sexual behavior of elites, middling reformers sought to expose aristocrat's hypocrisy and general unfitness to rule. McCallum not only denounced Picton's sexual deviance but the depravity of the entire colonial system. In his book on Trinidad, he expressed the general idea that left unchecked, colonial men fell into wickedness. He described the supposed "moralist" quickly crossing the line that "temperance has drawn" and seeing "pernicious effects."[184] McCallum claimed that upon arriving in Trinidad white men are "free from the trammels of all moral restraint, he is at once launched into the labyrinth of guilty fascination." [185] He further stated that, removed Europeans immediately act on these impure impulses, seeking out a "mistress either of the black, yellow, or livid kind."[186] McCallum reprovingly compared the process of a white man finding a non-white female companion "pleasing to his taste" to the transaction of buying a colt at Smithfield market.[187] Yet, he painted the colonial woman as equally complicated, referring to her as "this wretched companion of

[182] For reform literature that made such assertions see William Alexander, *Address to the Public on the Present State of the Question Relative to Negro Slavery in the British Colonies* (London, 1828), 284; Thomas Cooper*, Illustrative Of The Condition Of The Negro Slaves In Jamaica* (London, 1824), 9; Thomas Jackson, *Britain's Burden: Or, the Intolerable Evils of Colonial Slavery Exposed* (Cambridge, 1832), 19.
[183] Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 172.
[184] McCallum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 72.
[185] Ibid, 73.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

his solicitude in all extravagance; she denies him nothing, and he is equally generous in return."[188]

McCallum tied all of this back to Picton and his improper relationship with Smith. He explained to readers that "moral sin" and "ruinous passion" were not only permitted in Trinidad, but also esteemed. Yet, he stated this was, in fact, "No wonder, when the example is set by *delegated authority*, that those under his command, should follow."[189] He described Picton as a "ferocious barbarian," one "whose sole delight was to torment indiscriminately." [190] McCallum compared Picton to a hunter who enjoyed tormenting his prey and wrote that his atrocities had led people to say of him, "'*he neither spared a man in his rage, nor a woman in his lust.*'" In this monstrousness, McCallum accused Picton of trying to emulate aristocrats. He speculated that Picton was extremely conscious of his "humble beginning" in a poor Welsh family and that he conceived "that the only way of shewing themselves qualified to maintain their new character, is to manifest an extreme scorn for their old one."[191]

In taking Smith to share his "pillow and power," Picton also followed a reviled elite colonial costume. But for all the corruption McCallum assigned to Picton, McCallum held that Smith was the true instigator of the governor's cruelties and the cause of his downfall in Trinidad.[192] He cast Smith as an ambitious "Medea" who "abandoned every thing dear to the imagination of a

[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid, 72.
[190] Ibid, 145, 147.
[191] Ibid, 140.
[192] Pybus and Candlin, *Enterprising Women*, 51.

female" (allegedly her husband and children) to be with Picton.[193] McCallum asserted that Smith had a strong "influence over [Picton's] mind" and used his position to arrest, punish, and bankrupt anyone who got in her social or financial way. He wrote that this "*aspera & horrenda virga"* (acerbic and horrible woman)" terrorized the government-house and encouraged the imprisonment and physical torture of blacks and whites alike.[194] In a subtle but telling allusion, McCallum compared Smith to a character in Alexander Pope's "Epistle to a Lady" from the *Moral Essays*. This poem outlines the qualities of ideal womanhood and specifically praises middle class femininity. To highlight these virtues it also presents a set of undesirable women whose attributes contradict every expectation of social and sexual decorum. McCallum referenced one of these women in his description of Smith. In his pamphlet he wrote of Smith that "who breaks with her, provokes rage from Hell'."[195] This is a reference to Pope's version of the furious and violently passionate Atossa.

Scholars suggest that Smith was actually something of a prominent businesswoman. For example, Slave Registers show that by 1813 Smith owned 32 slaves, whom she rented out for jobs in town or sold. This significant number constituted one of the largest groupings of slaves on the island. Smith lived most of her life in a vibrant, free black community in Port of Spain and remained economically and personally successful long after Picton's departure from

[193] McCallum, Travels in Trinidad, 148.
[194] Ibid, 147.
[195] Ibid.

Trinidad.[196] However, reformist depictions obscured all of this, and her legacy became that of a jezebel who pushed her lover into tyranny and dishonor.

IV. Conclusion

Britain's masculine rivalry for imperial control played out around strategic representations of women of color. The trial of Thomas Picton for the torture of Louisa Calderon exemplifies the way in which British men used women's experience as a rhetorical devise to discuss their own political and personal agendas. This resulted in a debate over the character of black women and white men, a debate that posited a set of opposed fictional icons: the pure, vulnerable, black woman in need of protection from depraved and overly powerful corrupt white men or the evil temptresses from whom white society/white men needed protection. Both of these fictions ignored the complexity of actual free women of color's lives, women who had to make choices under enormous constraint, and when struggling within such limited options may well have chosen extramarital, cross-racial sexual relationships, prostitution, theft, or all of the above, in desperate effort to secure some autonomy and subsistence, all the while being vulnerable to abuse by the state and individual white men.

There is much we cannot know for sure about those women's actual lives, and the Calderon case is an example of how much the archival sources available to us, because they were discursive tools being used in a political battle between

[196] Pybus and Candlin's chapter "That Business of Rosetta Smith" recreates Smith's economic involvement in Port of Spain based primarily on the Protocols and Slave Registers, *Enterprising Women*, 138-156.

white men, obscures about women of color's lives. Yet these sources may also give us hints from which we can begin to glimpse the actualities of these women's lives. In future, the groundwork laid in this paper should serve as a jumping off point for study on what this case can illuminate of the constraints within which free women of color lived and operated in British Caribbean slave societies.

Yet as this paper argues, the Calderon case does reveal the constructed and contested nature of British masculinity. It demonstrates the way in which nineteenth century Britain encompassed competing ideologies of masculinities, and that such masculinities relied on foreign women to construct their identity. This historicization helpfully challenges the idea of static, hegemonic white masculinity. In this, the Calderon case takes on important postcolonial implications. As Catherine Hall asserts, "An understanding of the place of 'race' and ethnicity in the construction of white men's and white women's identities in the past can facilitate the grasping of those traces of former imperial identities which survive in the present and are challenges to those contemporary forms and discourses which perpetuate such practices."[197] In recognizing this, we are not only forced to confront the fact that black Caribbean women's experiences were purposefully filtered through and ultimately obscured in British male power systems, but also to refocus on how these voices can be recovered from systematic obscurity.

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[197] Catherine Hall, "Gender Politics and Imperial Politics: Rethinking the Histories of Empire" in Verne Shepard, Bridget Breton, and Barbara Bailey, eds. *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, 49.

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