

“War is at us, my black skin”:  
The Politics of Naming an Event

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## Dedication

To Mandy, for her love and patience

To Pierre, for teaching me how to hear the music again

To Josh, for teaching me to dream again

To my Jamaican friends, for teaching me about their ancestors

## Acknowledgement

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## Abstract

### “War is at us, my black skin”: The Politics of Naming an Event

The event that scholars and Jamaicans frequently call the “Morant Bay Rebellion” of 1865 resulted in long-term social and political consequences which profoundly shaped the course of Jamaican history. Yet contestation concerning the name and the naming of this event by Jamaican people on the ground has received scant attention in the historiography. In contrast to previous approaches, this thesis establishes that ordinary, subaltern Jamaicans from 1865 to the present day specifically named and remembered the events in question as a *war* at the exclusion of names like “rebellion,” “uprising,” “riot,” and “insurrection,” and that (post)colonial elites, aided by conventional scholars and commentators, have omitted this history in order to (re)produce and legitimize the idea that oppression and exploitation on the basis of race are things of the past. In turn, this thesis demonstrates that perceptions of blackness and whiteness during the events of 1865 were contingent and shifting rather than reducible to racial binaries and essentialisms which corresponded simply with skin color. Paul Bogle and his allies imagined blackness as tied to anti-statist political orientations, while many contemporaries in support of the colonial state used racial identification to represent and differentiate various groupings of black people as (dis)loyal to the governing regime and its racial hierarchies.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Introduction .....	1
I. “This is evolution...an unfinished war”	
1. What is at Stake in the Memory of 1865? .....	10
2. (Anti-)Statist Memory, History .....	15
3. “We have to decide what we want to call it”: Contested Names, New Meanings .....	30
4. “[P]eople know it to have been a rebellion”: Historiographical Bases of a Name.....	53
II. “War is at hand”	
1. Memories of War: 1865-Present .....	76
2. Acts of Self-Naming: Warriors for Justice .....	91
3. Paul Bogle’s Letter: Contested Blackness.....	108
III. Discourse of the Colonial State	
1. “Rest assured, my friends”: Naming Rebellion, Proving Loyalty.....	129
2. “The laws which bind society together”: Contemporary Historical Narratives and the Representation of Black People .....	146
3. (Counter-)Counter-Memories and Histories: The Maroons, 1865-Present .....	161
Conclusion.....	176
Bibliography .....	184

## Introduction

On October 11, 1865 an estimated four to five hundred African-descended people from eastern Jamaica marched to the sounds of fife and drums toward the Morant Bay Courthouse. Paul Bogle, a wealthy farmer and “Native Baptist” deacon in Stony Gut, led the people that day to present their grievances over years of economic and social hardship to the Custos of the Parish of St. Thomas-in-the-East, Baron Von Ketelholdt.<sup>1</sup> Colonial authorities were already aware of a possible violent confrontation with Bogle, and had posted local militiamen at the Courthouse in anticipation.<sup>2</sup> Two days prior, colonial authorities had issued warrants for Bogle’s and twenty-seven other people for attacking police officers at the Courthouse in protest over a trespassing case. After the policemen arrived in Stony Gut to serve those warrants, hundreds of people surrounded them. They were captured and taken as prisoners. Bogle forced them to swear an oath of loyalty to him; one of the policemen reported that his oath had included kissing a Bible and affirming that he would “cleave to the black and cleave from the white.” The rest of the policemen were released after they had taken similar oaths.<sup>3</sup>

When the people arrived at the Courthouse, Ketelholdt refused to listen to their claims and demanded that they disperse. Their protests intensified, and eventually, stones were thrown at the colonial military forces. Ketelholdt gave the order to fire and the people were temporarily repulsed, giving the colonial forces time to retreat into the Courthouse. The soldiers had killed seven people. In retaliation, the survivors set fire to

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<sup>1</sup> A “Custos” in Jamaica was similar to a Justice of the Peace, functioning as the representative of the Governor-General in a parish and as Chief Magistrate. “Custodes,” Ministry of Justice, Government of Jamaica, <http://www.moj.gov.jm/services-and-information/custodes> (Accessed 10 May 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), xiii-xiv, 3-6.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence of William Fuller, *Parliamentary Papers [PP]*, [3683] XXX, Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 80-81.

the Courthouse in order to drive the officials outside. By the end of the day eighteen people had been killed, including some black people allied with the whites. Governor Eyre quickly declared martial law and mobilized elements of the white and non-white population as military forces to crush the state's enemies. Two weeks later, Paul Bogle was captured and hanged. Martial law however lasted until November 21, 1865, and in the aftermath, colonial military forces had executed at least four hundred and thirty-nine people, tortured and flogged hundreds, and burned over one thousand homes throughout eastern Jamaica.<sup>4</sup>

This event that scholars and ordinary Jamaicans frequently call the “Morant Bay Rebellion” resulted in long-term consequences that have profoundly shaped the course of Jamaican history.<sup>5</sup> While scholars continue to explore and analyze the historical trends and contexts immediately tied to the events of 1865 in ever expanding ways, the particular name by which the events are represented and remembered have received scant attention. Historians have argued over whether the events of 1865 should be understood historically as a “local riot” or a widespread, planned and organized “rebellion.” Yet they have tended to treat the names and naming practices of ordinary Jamaicans for the events of 1865 as unimportant and separate from the history of those events. Of course, in the present-day usage of terms like “rebellion,” scholars specializing in this historiography

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<sup>4</sup> Heuman, xiii, 3, 7-14. The official statistics stand at 439 killed and executed in the aftermath of the suppression. Clinton Hutton claims there is evidence for 1500 killed and executed (Clinton Hutton, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” YouTube video, 4:02:59, Posted by “Albert Binns,” October 11, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ty6yqNEHgNg>. Verene Shepherd claims the number is likely over 1000.

<sup>5</sup> Mainstream interpretations in Jamaica over the outcomes of the events of 1865 have for instance historically gravitated around (1) the aftermath of the events and public criticism of Governor Eyre over his conduct during martial law and the (2) planter dominated Jamaican legislature's agreement in 1866 to place Jamaica under direct metropolitan control as a Crown Colony, effectively ending its status as a self-governing colony. The event also prompted a greater discussion of race and class, and how to best manage the diverse peoples under its control and prevent further occurrences of violent unrest.

have rejected and gone beyond the explicitly racist conclusions and assumptions evidenced in court documents, newspapers, and contemporary works on the subject. Nevertheless, at least since the 1950s, it appears as if scholars have rested comfortably in their determination of the events as a historical “rebellion” (understood in this thesis alongside terms like “riot”, “uprising”, “insurrection”, “disturbance”, etc.). This silence further evokes profound questions concerning how an event is named, who should be recognized as having the power to name it, and the relationship of forms of collective memory making with historical representation.

In contrast to previous historiographical approaches, I argue that the many ordinary, subaltern Jamaicans remembered and singularly named the events of 1865 as *war* at the exclusion of other possible names. By engaging in a critique of how these events have been represented in contemporary and historiographical discourse over time, I show how the use of names like “rebellion” and “riot” silence the voices and memories of the Jamaican people of 1865 and today and also tacitly reproduce some of the same discursive practices fashioned by the (post)colonial state. Tracing the appellation of the name of war in primary and secondary source documents reveals additional dimensions of political contestation between Jamaicans over forms of collective memory-making and historical representation of the events in question. In turn, I demonstrate that the war of 1865 was not reducible in any straightforward sense to “blacks” versus “whites” as a binary opposition according to skin color and the category of race as such. Perceptions and ideas of blackness and whiteness were contingently determined and had more to do with how people positioned themselves politically vis-à-vis the colonial state than with maintaining fidelity towards preconceived and static racial essentialisms and absolutes.

In the context of war, Paul Bogle and his allies nonetheless advanced and affirmed an *anti-statist* black politics that would no longer allow the exploitation of the labor and bodies of black people as a race.<sup>6</sup>

This thesis is broken down into three intertwined sections. In the first section, I begin with the presentation of recent commemorations in Jamaica held in honor of Paul Bogle and the “ancestors” of 1865 as a window into how Jamaican people on-the-ground today are actively re-presenting and creating new memories, meanings, and forms of collective political action through these public gatherings and performances.<sup>7</sup> I also find it essential to locate the historical investigation in the present day and start with what black Jamaican people argue is at stake in the remembrance of the events of 1865, rather than starting from the historiographical category of the “Morant Bay Rebellion” and working down. They are the ones who have re-opened the question of the name and the naming of the event by treating the history and memory of these events as intrinsically connected to a wider field of collective political struggle over ideas of blackness and

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<sup>6</sup> I contend throughout this thesis that the names and the naming of the events of 1865 as presented in the colonial discourse as well as in much of the historiography presuppose the state as the unitary grounds of all political action. This thesis draws on Alain Badiou’s idea of politics in order to start from a historiographical position on thinking politics and political action from a position outside of the discourses of the (post)colonial nation-state and the locating of the “Morant Bay Rebellion” in its own historical narratives. Statist politics presumes fully consistent and enduring bonds that are guaranteed by external authority (i.e. the Sovereign, the law). In order to maintain these bonds, the state then attempts to foreclose any “danger of inconsistency” that could challenge and potentially dissolve these bonds. Instead, for Badiou, politics could be understood as a procedure of “unbinding” from the current bonds imposed by the state and knowledge through action (including the naming of events), which, “breaks through a status quo that is based on a fiction of hierarchical order and is founded on the internal exclusion of invisible or inexistent elements (e.g. “the international proletariat of France” or the *sans-papiers*).” Nina Power and Alberto Toscano, “Politics,” in *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, ed. A.J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2010), 95. This approach operates in the background of my analyses, and I believe it helps to open some additional space for the actions of Jamaican people today and their ancestors to count in new ways in the historiography (also as a politics). See also Alain Badiou, trans. Jason Barker, *Metapolitics* (New York: Verso, 2005); and Alain Badiou, trans. Peter Hallward, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (New York: Verso, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> I use the term “ancestors” in this case like the Jamaican people at the commemorations discussed in this thesis to refer to anyone killed, tortured, imprisoned and/or broadly involved in the immediate events of 1865.

reparatory justice for African enslavement. In turn, these themes invoke larger questions concerning the intersection and relationship between forms of black memory and historical representation based in a critique of the racist narratives put forward by the (post)colonial state historically. I follow my discussions of the commemorations with a symptomatic reading of the historiography and explore how leading scholars have dealt with the naming of the events and the new questions that Jamaican people have posed.

In the second section, although much of the evidence appears in fragments, I show in detail that many black people remembered *war* and imbued the events of 1865 with meanings of their own creation. People directly involved in conflict also named themselves as *warriors* in rejection of the colonials' labels of "rebel" and the term's various derivatives (i.e. insurgent, rioter). This was part of the active creation of the warriors' own forms of epistemic and political authority. War provided the context for the advancement of an anti-statist black politics predicated on the (1) leveling of class and racial inequalities; and (2) the affirmation of the truth that black people had built the country with their bodies and their labor, and would now claim what was already rightfully theirs. Their race-based rhetoric was thus based in the fight for a justice that the colonial state could never provide, and not on the formation of the future Jamaican nation-state and its narratives of creolized inter-racial togetherness. My stress on the affirmation of new possibilities by people instead of the measurement of the "success" and "failure" of those affirmations to produce consequences in the registers of historicism and empiricism keeps the optic on the people's action and their capacity to destabilize, in a moment of politics, the boundaries that the colonial state and the whites that ruled it sought to impose on them.

However, the meanings and political valences of whiteness and blackness remained contested on the ground. Instead of privileging the search for the reasons why something called “black unity” failed to materialize, I focus on moments in which the participants advanced a politics predicated on a rejection of whiteness that was expressed through the language of race but whose political meanings cut across “white,” “coloured,” or “black” as skin colors. Taking phrases like ‘colour for colour’ and ‘skin for skin’ in their straightforward senses obscure moments when black people engaged in the conflict attempted to include blacks, non-blacks and Maroons as part of their collective struggle against the colonial state and the whites that ruled it.<sup>8</sup> In the context of war, the ways in which people responded to racial identifications or rejected them was intertwined with perceptions of one’s position vis-à-vis the state. Only those who actively stood in the way of actualizing class and racial justice were targeted for killing. Paying attention to these nuances of race actually helps to clarify some of the contours of the anti-statist black politics that Paul Bogle and his allies affirmed in 1865.

In the third section, I undertake a close reading of emblematic contemporary sources and court documents, attending to the ways in which whites, state officials, and some non-white contemporaries used the naming of the events of 1865 to instantiate and legitimate colonial state power and white rule. A necessary part of this process for the white colonials involved the use of names like rebellion, riot, insurrection – and sometimes war – to determine which black people were loyal or disloyal, and thus who

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<sup>8</sup> As argued later in this thesis, the Maroons of 1865 and today should not be understood by scholars as loyal minions of white people and the colonial state or as “traitors to their race,” so to speak. To think that the Maroons were simply “black” is to employ the logic of the colonial discourse that renders black people racially into a single entity. They had already fought and achieved their freedom from the colonial state and its white rulers for centuries before 1865, and thus an anti-statist politics expressed through racial identification was not persuasive to the Maroons on both levels. That is, the Maroons already had their own anti-statist politics practices that had long broken any kind of inferiority on account of their blackness.

had a right to exist. In a world of binary oppositions of whites and blacks, the colonial state required assurances that black people would and could not ally with one another under any circumstances according to a race-based politics; otherwise, from the perspective of the white colonials, the state would be inviting the preconditions of its own dissolution. Thus, “rebellion” was used in the colonial discourse to create a kind of boundary-point that could be used to clarify which sets of people had stayed on the side of the law and the state, and therefore could be included into the hierarchical, unitary political body of the state on the one hand; and others that had travelled beyond the boundary into rebellion, thereby entering an imaginary zone of death, savagery, lawlessness, and a space outside of time. I hold that without this operation of the material and discursive exclusion of others, the colonial state and its agents could not purport to represent and speak for black at all because the state requires events like these to reproduce its fantasies of political and epistemic continuity and authority through violence at every moment of its functioning.

After the events, contemporary observers detected inconsistencies in the proper operation of the state and its narratives, necessitating the law and the enlightened historian to enter and “correct” the situation and restore equilibrium, so to speak. The irruption of violence and the danger of black savagery permeating into the behaviors and ideas of white colonial officials such as Governor Eyre necessitated the fashioning of the (idea of) law and “history” as the instruments of control, prediction, and crisis resolution. These frameworks would not only shape and affirm the epistemic boundaries of legitimate political action but also reify the state and its truth regime as the transcendent guarantors of peace and security. In turn, through the idea of savagery, the colonials’

tried to resolve and explain the conflict in ways that appeared to cut across skin colors and race, but, in reality, savagery remained inscribed and correlated to the condition of the black laboring body. Eyre and the whites begin with and maintain their positive form, while black people are by their very nature savage and in need of civilization, education and uplift out of their degrading ancestral condition.

Yet contemporaries produced historical analyses of the conflict that still represented whites and blacks as locked in binary and dialectical opposition with one another. Black people as a race were figured as objects of Eyre's wrath on the one hand, and loyal and docile blacks on the other. The combination of savagery with these racial binaries allowed for contemporaries to offer criticisms of the colonial state but only in terms of its failures to prevent conflict stemming from its mismanagement, exploitation, and reactive killing of black people. At the same time that some writers attempted to shift blame away from black people in general and onto the particular agents of the colonial state, the politics remained centered on race and whites versus blacks now played out in the battle to reform and civilize black people into positions chosen by the whites. In the colonial discourse, black bodies remained formless abstractions.

Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that the representation of black loyalty in the colonial discourse was part and parcel of the same naming practices and circular logic that sought to legitimate state power. I illustrate this through a brief exploration of work done by Kenneth Bilby on the oral history and collective memories of the Maroons as providing a counter-narrative because the conflict for them had nothing to do with either blackness or loyalty to white people and the colonial state. Rather, theirs was a politics at odds with Bogle and the machinations of the colonial state, operating according to its

own political prescriptions and objectives of maintaining the autonomy and freedom they had struggled for over generations; the justice that Bogle and his allies sought had already been achieved by the Maroons, and a politics based in race had little chance of swaying them. This did not mean that they were enthusiastic supporters of the colonial state and the rule of whites. Yet even the Maroons' and the historiography's rendition of the events remain contested by other counter-memories and narratives, particularly in regards to the manner of Paul Bogle's capture and execution, and perceptions of Maroon complicity with the military efforts of the colonial state in 1865. The thesis then concludes with a brief synopsis of the main themes and their historiographical implications.

Unless specified, all emphases in quoted passages correspond with the original text.

## I. “This is evolution...an unfinished war”

### 1. What is at Stake in the Memory of 1865?

On October 10, 2012 Constantine Bogle organized a commemorative candlelight vigil at Stony Gut in honor and active remembrance of his great-great grandfather Paul Bogle, the leader of “what is called the Uprising, or Morant Bay Rebellion. But we call it the liberation of black people. That is what bring about independence, and the freedom that we enjoy today.”<sup>9</sup> While Constantine Bogle had held a memorial candlelight vigil of some kind since 1999, he claimed that this commemoration was to be “the very first time” in which the people would re-enact and re-present this particular moment during the events of 1865 from start to finish on the same grounds as Paul Bogle and his people had lived, prayed, and walked. He specifically timed the commemoration to correspond with Paul Bogle’s candlelight vigil held in spiritual preparation for the confrontation of his people with colonial forces at the Morant Bay Courthouse, exactly 147 years after that date, October 11, 1865. The vigil would last through the night, followed by an eight-mile march from Stony Gut to Morant Bay in the morning.<sup>10</sup> Constantine hoped that this particular commemorative gathering would resonate with the wider black, African descended men, women, and children from both the immediate area in St. Thomas as

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<sup>9</sup> Constantine Bogle, “Paul Bogle: Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” YouTube video, 1:49:32, filmed October 2012, posted by “Claude Sinclair,” January 3, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujvePGgrhoY>.

<sup>10</sup> The march planned for the next day was begun but never completed because Constantine Bogle had forgotten to make sure that he had received a legal permit from the police to carry out such an action. Interestingly, it is the confrontation with the police that prompts the *Jamaica Observer* to report on the event, not the commemoration itself. This legalistic technicality did not appease the marchers. Claude Sinclair, the documentary maker, exclaimed through analogy “This is the atrocities that our ancestors and forefathers had to go through...as you can see, Constantine Bogle is being interrogated [by the police] like a criminal.” Claude Sinclair, “Paul Bogle: Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” YouTube video. In the background, the voices of the people rose in protest. One man connected the prevention of the march to the recent memory of a shooting of a woman by the police in Morant Bay, and the lack of any serious investigation over the matter: “Can no justice in this. Paul Bogle blood never shed for this. ... There no justice around here, we have to demand that! We have to stand up for that, no compromise! ... No divide and rule!” Unnamed Man, “Paul Bogle: Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” Youtube video.

well as all of Jamaica and the outside world, providing a basis to come together and organize in memory of the events of 1865 and what Paul Bogle and the ancestors had achieved.<sup>11</sup>

In particular, for Constantine the memories and histories of “the blood sacrifice of these people” of St. Thomas and Jamaica who had suffered in the brutal colonial suppression and its consideration in Jamaican history were at stake. Jamaican people had forgotten that the ancestors had ever existed. The temporal distance between 1865 and today and the relative calm that obtained in the present were deceptive. “We are talking just about 147 years,” Constantine argued, “but when you say 1865, people think it was 10,000 years ago.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, Constantine was indicating that there was a disjuncture between his historical memories of Paul Bogle and the ancestors and the “history” of the “Morant Bay Rebellion” as distant, abstract, and sealed off from the present.

Perhaps he intended to bridge this gap or think the relationship anew through a public performance that could make history more real and tactile, as he emphasized that the commemorations could serve as a call to action for the people of the present to recognize the immediacy of the trauma bore by the ancestors. The people needed to be

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<sup>11</sup> Constantine Bogle, “Paul Bogle Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” Youtube video. While he does speak at any length or detail on what blackness means in particular, or on his specific views on the Jamaican nation-state and its political system, he intimates that people who are black can be in control of the state apparatus, but the parliamentary-party politics framework was a failure. Constantine speaks in terms of the “country” of Jamaica (as touched upon later in this thesis, this language is consistent with Paul Bogle and his allies’ discourse in 1865) as the local field of political action: “I cannot take side with an administration or government simply to do things that I know that is not in the best interest of this country. Because I see myself as a patriotic Jamaican and I put Jamaica before politics.” Constantine Bogle added during a prayer that night that they were fighting a battle, and that the scope of the commemoration was indeed an *international*: “We know that there are those that are laughing at us, that we are fighting a battle, and we ain’t going nowhere. But because you live, and because we believe in Thee...we pray that you bind our people together. Father we are trying to bring about an international candle vigil. We are trying to use the power of fire to create a spiritual cleaning like man have never seen before.” His statements evince an overlapping of temporal and spatial scales/imaginaries while remaining ambiguous over what a “nation” might be, if he is referring to nation-states in particular, etc. (Ibid.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

made to remember that “Real, real people lose their lives. Real, real human beings, some seven thousand real human beings died in St. Thomas. Some one thousand houses burned so that we can enjoy to live in freedom.”<sup>13</sup> For him, the problems that Jamaica and Jamaicans faced in the present required a renewed reflection on the actions and struggles of the ancestors. Paul Bogle and the ancestors stood as symbols of militant sacrifice that other black Jamaicans could look up to at a time when Jamaican life had been undercut by growing class, racial, and political divisions and antagonisms. Those with material success and power had forgotten their pasts and used their positions to prevent the leveling of inequalities. For instance, Constantine stressed that “We [the Bogle family] were probably the richest black people in Jamaica...[Paul Bogle] owned 503 acres of land, a bakery, a church, his farm, donkey, ass, boat, sheep, mule, cows.” But Paul Bogle gave all of this up to fight with his people, which was significant for Constantine because “[W]e never have to make that level of sacrifice that we make...[Bogle] was stepping down off his throne, so to speak, to come down, and did what he did.”<sup>14</sup>

While the event was attended by perhaps one to two hundred people, Constantine was troubled by the fact that the media and public officials had ignored this 2012 commemoration as well as his yearly commemorations in general. He critiqued their avoidance as the product of fear and reservation over having and sustaining a serious conversation about race and ancestry, and what it really meant to be “black” and “Jamaican” today. As Constantine explained, “the same black people, in government, in

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. I cannot verify where Constantine Bogle arrived at this particular number. However, his primary emphasis on the struggles and extreme suffering of his ancestors does not change, and, perhaps, his words become even more powerful.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

television news, even though some of them from time to time accommodate us...[n]ot one news media came out here for a historic event like this!” Interestingly, he implied that it was possible for “the same black people” to “accommodate us” by acknowledging the events of 1865 as having some kind of historical importance in the formation of a modern, independent Jamaican nation-state, but nonetheless still treat the things the ancestors had struggled and suffered for, and why they did so, as elements of a dead and best forgotten past.<sup>15</sup>

These perspectives were indicative of a larger desire of many ordinary and elite Jamaicans to use economic development and education initiatives as the mechanisms of “moving on” from the African past of slavery and racial trauma, based in the systematic and systemic production of the unequal power relations inherited from the colonial state. For Constantine, the production of this future had however entailed the creation of feelings of racial shame in one’s history. People could treat them as historical and empirical facts, yet one’s heritage was something regarded as a liability and something to be hidden from public view. Jamaica was becoming a world in which “those who have been through some tertiary education and made some academic achievements” easily became “so proud that they cannot acknowledge, and embrace, their ancestors. It’s like a person’s mother was a higgler...[they] send her to school or send him to school, and then him become some famous lawyer. ... Suddenly him becomes too proud to identify himself with his history. So for too long.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, for Constantine, one was supposed to actively identify and live the history as if it carried the same immediacy and bodily-spiritual affect as one’s memories, instantiated individually and collectively. But the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

educated, middle and upper classes thought and practiced a different kind of history where notions of superiority had foreclosed the “embrace” of “their ancestors.” The opportunities provided to black people to rise in social class were thus connected to the use of the historical to separate the past from the present. Collective remembrance contained the possibility within it to begin to bridge this gap. For Constantine and many black Jamaicans, pasts are lived and irreducibly connected with the present in their everyday encounters with structural racism and the state.

The silencing of the ancestors from the history of black Jamaican people was also indicative of a wider spiritual contagion that had gripped the hearts and minds of the people. Constantine lamented that even if one “was able to acquire education...you put him out there fe lead, an institution or whatever, you get no result. Because spiritually him sick, he or she is limited in them thinking.”<sup>17</sup> Paul Bogle’s status as a Jamaican National Hero and the existence of something called the “Morant Bay Rebellion” were facts of common knowledge, but for Constantine, the events of 1865 had lost their political and polemical valences as symbols of new possibilities and change. In post-independence Jamaica, serious reflection on the representations and memories of the events as part of a struggle for *black* liberation had been forgotten and buried. While the relations between forms of history and memory remain ambiguous in Constantine’s language, it is clear that in his diagnosis they had become the tools of elites driven by their own interests.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## 2. (Anti-)statist Memory, History

Constantine invokes two major political themes in his criticism that are important for understanding the contested and intertwined relationship between modes of collective black memory and historical representation in Jamaica. First, as David Scott argues, and here I am schematizing his ideas somewhat, the relationship of history and memory should be understood according to the politics that orients their articulation in particular social and historical configurations, and the various temporalities at work in this process. That is, both “memory” and “history” are always co-implicated and exist as part of the same political moment; the politics of history/memory in relation to reparatory justice would be intertwined but distinct from liberal criminal justice, for instance. The question is not about fixing what history and memory *are* independently of a politics or a context. In the historical context of the Jamaican nation-state (which could also be said in a general sense), “history” locates pasts in relation to a present and a future and the state then commemorates and “remembers” and represents events and human actions as a continuous line of achievements towards a nation-state that has no theoretical temporal ends or limits. In turn, Scott suggests that “memory” could be thought of as a means for the experiences and stories of “the dispossessed, the disregarded, [and] the disempowered” to resist their exclusion from a statist “history” that produces particular silences and invisibilities in relation to the imperative of unitary coherence.<sup>18</sup>

Scott also holds that scholars should understand memories as constructed across generations in ways that are “*inescapably* social... generations may be said to recollect their pasts within distinct frameworks shaped not only by their direct collective experiences – of wars or riots or political transitions or national catastrophes – but also by

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<sup>18</sup> David Scott, “Introduction: On the Archaeologies of Black Memory,” *Small Axe* 26 (June 2008), x-xi.

their collective *hopes*.”<sup>19</sup> The interplay and tension of what is remembered and what is forgotten across generations, and how people “*learn* to remember in ways that encompass *both* the distinctiveness of their own generational standpoint *and* the difference between that standpoint and the frameworks of their elders” means that memory “is at once conserving *and* a condition of criticism, revision, and change.” Memories shape the conditions for both the binding and unbinding from the discursive and political authorities of the past. Moreover, and in line with Constantine’s words above, Scott stresses that scholars must not forget that memories are irreducibly constituted by the *body* as a “memory-machine” and the ways that this body acquires a “memory of being” itself in which “the past is not ‘pictured’ as such but sedimented into the body.”<sup>20</sup>

Michael Hanchard’s distinction between what he calls “black memory” and “state memory” helps to further clarify ways of thinking the relations between memory and history. According to Hanchard, black memory is “horizontally constituted” across various temporalities and spaces. It is distinguished as a “phenomena of a collectivity rather than the practice of an isolated and disparate array of individuals,” which often takes questions about “Racism, slavery, reparations, nationalism and anticolonial struggle, and migration” as its thematic cores.<sup>21</sup> For Hanchard, black memory cannot be thought independently of modes of memorialization, which instantiates individual and collective memories together in a concrete form, and provides a ground for the political articulation of “claims in contemporary life about the relationship between present

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, xv-xvi.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Hanchard, “Black Memory versus State Memory: Notes toward a Method,” *Small Axe* 26 (June 2008), 46-47.

inequalities and past injustices.”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, state memory is “vertically constituted,” and by its nature must incorporate the memories it encounters into “one narrative about the nation’s origins, founding, and maintenance, without appearing contradictory, feeble, and indecisive.”<sup>23</sup> Thus the key aspect of state memory lies in its capacity to combine the temporalities, spaces, histories and memories within its gaze into a unitary, coherent narrative. It mirrors and intertwines with the state’s prerogatives to maintain the perpetual continuity of the political bonds and obligations necessary for its reproduction.

Yet black memory and state memory can share an overlap with their thematic emphases on anti-colonial and nationalist struggle. State memory can use its own modes of commemoration to appropriate figures (e.g. Paul Bogle), events (e.g. the “Morant Bay Rebellion”) and political imaginaries (e.g. pan-Africanism) from black memory that were once despised and maligned as dangerous by the colonial state and then represent these changes as corrections to the record. Although on the surface it appears that black memories are being given value, the vocabulary and terms of this appropriation represent the past in a way that hypostasizes unity and continuity over difference and discontinuity. The state, “project[s] a beginning and a future to the nation, a people with no end in sight, even amid the daily births and deaths of its citizens.”<sup>24</sup> State memory thus predicates its idea of unity solely on the maintenance of its own perpetual and incessant reproduction: the ideal of unity is pursued for the sake of maintaining the fiction of the unitary, so to speak. In turn, this logic can permeate into

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 61.

modes of black memory.<sup>25</sup> However, Hanchard stresses that while the potential for an overlapping of black and state memory exists, it remains essential to remember that “archaeologies of black memory are multiple, distinct, and constituted by and within difference in ways that can politically disrupt the relatively seamless narrative of national time.”<sup>26</sup>

Anthony Bogues discusses the second major facet of this dilemma through the enduring historical mindsets and political orientations inherited from what he describes as “creole nationalism.” This brand of nationalism that became dominant after the 1938 labor rebellion in Jamaican politics was “primarily a product of brown middle-class Jamaican intelligentsia” that put forward a vision of Jamaica’s racial past, present, and future which silenced and excluded other competing black nationalisms in Jamaican history.<sup>27</sup> The problem with this vision was that it presented itself as “the *only* story of progress and political development” and “posited a notion of creole which stated that Jamaica was neither African nor European, while upholding European standards as the universal norm.”<sup>28</sup> In taking on the legal-judicial and civilizational/savagery discourses of Britain, figures such as Norman Manley, Richard Hart and W. Adolphe Roberts wholeheartedly advocated the adoption of all of the same parliamentary systems and

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Bogues, “Nationalism and Jamaican Political Thought,” in *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, edited by Kathleen Monteith and Glen Richards (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2002), 364. See also T.J. Desch Obi, “The *Jogo de Capoeira* and the Fallacy of ‘Creole’ Cultural Forms,” *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 5, no. 2 (July 2012), 211-228. He discusses the multiple meanings of the term “creole” historically and how its usage is based on the idea of mixture and hybridities which are predicated on racial essentialisms and concepts of miscegenation. The way that the term is used can also be “held up as if it were inherently destabilizing of, or in opposition to racial absolutes.” The division of creole and non-creole is always problematic: “There is no empirical difference between the indigenization of those cultural practices labeled ‘creole’ and those assumed to be ‘pure’; the real disparity is found in racist colonial dialectics that continue into modern scholarship (pg. 222). However, like Bogues, the main emphasis here is precisely that “creole nationalism” posits itself under such terms.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 364-65.

representative frameworks as the British colonials. Nationalist desires for independence had nothing to do with justice and the abolition of race. Rather, their political objectives were limited to national “self-determination, within an already determined framework of what constitutes the forms of a civilized human community.”<sup>29</sup> Through this building up civilization, progress, and development, Jamaica could become in their eyes the (hierarchized) multi-racial society that had been waiting patiently to be actualized in independence.

Yet the idea the creole nationalist vision of a Jamaica beyond race actually based its entire idea of multiracialism on the identification and exclusion from the political discourse anything associated with blackness. In the process of moving on in such a manner, Jamaicans as a people had not sufficiently critically reflected on the racial, class, and gendered inequalities and hierarchies inherited from the British and reproduced by the postcolonial Jamaican nation-state. Nationalist elites dismissed the question of race as divisive and antithetical to a politics of an inter-racial unity, they had also actively excluded it from serious public discussion. They thus allowed for black people to be included in the nationalist project under their own terms through the acquisition of education, thriftiness, self-sufficiency, moral values, and norms of respectability. This would uplift black people out of the histories of slavery and into the new day, while simultaneously relegating elements regarded as dangerous to the project of national unity to the past.<sup>30</sup> This led to the understanding by national and postcolonial elites that “affirmative black consciousness [was] different from national consciousness” existing “in a conflictual relationship” with one another. For instance, Bogue explores the

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 370.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 373.

anxieties over race by Norman Manley in the 1960s, and his worry that the rise of the black power movement was an indication ““that my life’s work has been in vain.””<sup>31</sup>

The creole nationalist discourse in post-emancipation Jamaica then tended to stress to the Jamaican people that race had ceased to be a relevant factor in everyday life at all. Bogue argues that this silencing was based historically in a fear that a serious public discussion of race would bring forth the reality that whites and what he terms “free-coloured people” had participated jointly in the maintenance of slavery together. It would destabilize the idea that Jamaica had no color differences and that their sufferings had been based narrowly on the oppressions of a narrow and exclusively white planter class, for instance. Through faith in middle-class values and symbols of race and class that denied the existence of race and its intersection with class, creole nationalist elites ignored how they had “become deeply embedded in the social practices of the island.”<sup>32</sup> Race carried it certain liabilities and obligations that the creole nationalist paradigm was invested in maintaining, and thus the inter-racial harmony promised by the “creole” was predicated on the silencing of race-based critiques of the state and its reproduction of class inequalities based in race. The slogan “Out of Many, One People,” and its fantasy of a future race-less, mixed citizen required racial essentialisms to have something to base itself against.”<sup>33</sup>

As these kinds of inherited paradigms took the gradual reorientation of the colonial state into an instrument of social and cultural transformation, politics was

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<sup>31</sup> Kenneth Blackburne, *Lasting Legacy: A Story of British Colonialism* (London: Johnson Publications, 1976), quoted in Bogue, 372. Bogue notes a passage from N.W. Manley’s speech at the foundation of the PNP in 1938: “Politics is essential to a civilized nation and to the development and attainment of nationality to every people in the world.” Rex Nettleford, ed. *N.W. Manley and the New Jamaica* (London: Longman, 1971), 14, quoted in Bogue, 370.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 371; Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 4.

envisioned by creole nationalists as occurring solely within the halls of the legislature and the boundaries of the law.<sup>34</sup> Their idea of the birth of a politically and historically modern Jamaica centered on the period of labor mobilizations during the 1930s in a process which culminated in the 1938 “Labor Riots,” and consequently led to the establishment of Jamaica’s two modern political parties (the People’s National Party/PNP and the Jamaica Labour Party/JLP). The successful takeover of the colonial state by nationalist forces in 1962 was then imagined as having completed the historical and political sequence begun at Morant Bay in 1865, and ever since, the basic historical narrative has remained largely the same. Influenced by these paradigms grounded in British imperial thought, contemporaries presented the “Morant Bay Rebellion” as an example of anti-colonial nationalist struggle which brought Crown Colony status to Jamaica in 1866, and laid the foundations for the eventual creation of the 1944 and 1962 Jamaican constitutions, for instance.<sup>35</sup> Outside of these statist narratives, the events of 1865 lacked any enduring meaning or relevance in the political present.

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<sup>34</sup> While I take another complementary angle in this thesis to interrogating the idea and concept of the state, for two critical works that critique the idea of the nation-state as the ultimate grounds of proper “political” activity in the context of Jamaica, see also Anthony Bogues, “Politics, Nation and PostColony: Caribbean Inflections,” *Small Axe* 11 (March 2002): 1-30; and David Scott, “Political Rationalities of the Jamaican Modern,” *Small Axe* 7, 2 (September 2003): 1-22. Bogues argues from the perspective of the construction of flexible hegemonies and their points of fracture, using figures such as N.W. Manley to illustrate the creole nationalist paradigm, and Claudius Henry to show alternative hegemonies at work during the same time. Scott investigates the postcolonial state through a framework based in Foucault’s idea of governmentality.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 365. For example, W. Adolphe Roberts, noted Jamaican writer and journalist, spoke to the Jamaica Progressive League in New York in 1937 and argued that “The Old House of Assembly, though controlled by the planters and merchants in their own interests, was none the less *Jamaican*; that it stood for the defence of local interests and the principle of self-government; that logically it should have led to democracy. . . . The 70 years that have passed since the Morant Bay Rebellion are more than enough, I think, as a period of discipline for the Jamaican people. The time has arrived to ask the Mother Country to restore their ancient rights. When this is accorded it will not be an experiment in the dark. It will be an act of justice to an old and loyal colony, allowing her to begin again politically where she left off in 1865.” *Public Opinion*, March 20, 1937.

A couple of emblematic examples from 1938 in the wake of mass labor mobilizations in Jamaica can suffice to highlight these kinds of historical perspectives. Like other outbreaks of violence in Jamaica since 1865, many contemporary observers invoked the history and memory of 1865 as they engaged with the politics and unrest of their own time. For example, on October 1, 1938 an article appeared in *Public Opinion* (the dominant left-leaning “progressive,” and “democratic socialist” newspaper in Jamaica from 1937 until the 1970s) that emphasized the need for strong leadership in the wake of the 1938 labor mobilizations so that “the unrest of the workers [could] be intelligently canalized into Trade Union or political action.” The writer compared the events of 1865 to 1938 in order to stress that neither of them had ever represented or constituted a serious threat to British rule or the social order. The outbreaks of violent unrest in 1865 had been predicated on the people’s perpetual conflict with the planters and the capitalists over the payment of wages, taxes, and rents, and the failure of the state to address and manage these contradictions. The idea that “a profound discontent caused by the persistence of the social and economic organisation of slavery” had led to violent conflict was secondary to a recognition that the events resulted in “the overthrow of the political system [the transition to Crown Colony].”<sup>36</sup>

However, the writer’s main point was that the movement of 1865 had failed because of a lack of leadership, and that the situation of 1938 was in danger of repeating the same mistakes. While in both cases unrest evidenced the presence of a new momentum and potential force that could be harnessed in the drive for political and economic change, this momentum could disappear if “a small body with clear ideas and firmly established contacts with the masses” did not rise and propose a clear ideological

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<sup>36</sup> “The Philosopher Views the Passing Show,” *Public Opinion*, October 1, 1938.

basis and political consciousness for the new movement. “The revolt of 1865 was devoid of any clear conceptions, and therefore led to temporary improvements ending in a blind alley,” they argued, and thus its “real” potency to fundamentally change the functioning of state had been lost to entropy-death: “No group existed to guide the masses; and no group was created by the events of 1865.” The events of 1938 were different insofar as they had made it possible for a new group of leaders to “build up trade unionism and a new body of social, political, and economic theory which shall finally modernize Jamaican society and create a true Jamaican civilisation.”<sup>37</sup> Through these means, the tragic histories and memories of African enslavement could be finally overcome. But these kinds of narratives proscribe the politics of Constantine Bogle by burying the past in the idea of the present and future. Moreover, the writer suggests that point of any political organization should be to fashion proper citizens and subjects out of the encounter, hence the need for strong leadership as the bearers of civilization and knowledge. Their point was not simply that black people lacked the capacity to organize themselves, which happened all the time. Rather, the problem was that instances of self-organization in Jamaica had nothing to do with taking over the machinery of the state, unless leaders stepped up.

Other articles in *Public Opinion* that year also connected the events of 1865 and 1938 together by noting their common bases in enduring systems of economic exploitation of Jamaica at the hands of the British colonials. Yet, underneath the premises of the political economic, some writers could go further in articulating just how much the events of 1865 had failed to put a dent in the legacy of Jamaica’s African, slave past because they lacked any kind of coherent political, intellectual, or ideological

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

program for the masses.<sup>38</sup> K.R. Pringle wrote on July 9, 1938 that “The Jamaican peasants had a revolution at Morant Bay in 1865” over access to land, but nevertheless, “At the height of the insurrection the particular reason for it was forgotten, and there rose to the lips of the rebels a cry, always subdued, but always latent in the heart of the people. ‘Down with backra! Land for the black man!’”<sup>39</sup> Hence, the violent nature of the unrest combined with a lack of leadership led to the “rebels” being unable to distinguish and remember why they had even fought in the first place “at the height of the insurrection.” Even though the “rebels” knew enough to proclaim the death of white people and cry for their own lands, violence dissolved their politics and thought and rendered them into abstract, primal forces of resistance and rebellion.

Pringle continued that the real relevance of the events of 1865 was located in the attempt and failure of the British to modernize Jamaica. “Paul Bogle, the peasant leader, was hung for his pains,” and that was the end of his story, and his part in Jamaican history. The consequences of his execution had been meaningful insofar as they had resulted in “Sir John Peter Grant [being] sent out to inaugurate a new policy. This policy is still being pursued, and it has failed. It is humanitarian, liberal and Christian. It

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<sup>38</sup> As Heuman notes, this view was common in the original modern historiography from the 1950s. For instance, in *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), Philip Curtin took the view that the participants in the events of 1865 advanced nothing historically new or different from other riots that had occurred in the post-emancipation period. In *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: An Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), Douglas Hall took the view common to contemporaries that the events had began as a riot but ended as a rebellion following the escalation of conflict by colonial military forces. Neither takes the naming of the event seriously from a position outside of their historical frameworks. Clinton Hutton also argues that Hall grossly underestimates the ideas and intellectual thought of Paul Bogle and others in 1865, seen in statements from Hall such as Bogle did “not merit recognition as a leader or lieutenant of organized rebellion,” and that his allies and/or blacks in general were lacking in “any new social, political or economic philosophies.” Hall, 253; 250, quoted in Hutton, 114. However, one could also add that looking for these “philosophies” is mistaken in the first place, not because black people had not created complex thinkable under the rubric of “philosophy,” but instead because the notion of “philosophy” in Western-European thought is already problematic.

<sup>39</sup> K.R. Pringle, “The Jamaica Riots,” reprinted from *The New Statesman and Nation*, in *Public Opinion*, July 9, 1938.

consists of three main articles – the education of the peasantry, settlement of the land, and the creation of an indigenous *petite bourgeoisie*.<sup>40</sup> The only thing that had been accomplished to some degree was the creation of this “*petite bourgeoisie*,” but on the whole, the Jamaican laboring people were still without land, and had remained largely illiterate. The slave past was alive and well. Pringle lamented, “the people are still primitive, superstitious and ignorant, spontaneously generating their own folk-songs and stories, preserving their magical practices, and weeping by thousands into revivalist religions like Pocomania.”<sup>41</sup> For him, 1938 therefore seemed to carry the possibility of completing what Grant’s new policies – the symbol and representative of the enlightened British (colonial) state – had set out to achieve. But in this historical narrative, as a matter of necessity, Paul Bogle and the ancestors were relegated to secondary figures that reminded Jamaica and Jamaicans of their uncivilized pasts, and thus what was to be denied and transformed by negation.

Constantine’s complaints of fellow black Jamaican people who ignored his actions were also centered on historical developments from the 1950s to the present. As Deborah Thomas argues, nationalist elites had turned all kinds of lower-class practices into cultural symbols for the state, based in “elevating aspects of Jamaican ‘folk’ culture to the realm of the ‘cultured’ in order to prove to their colonial rulers that Jamaica too possessed a culture that was not only as legitimate as British culture, but also more relevant to the surroundings and experiences of the majority of the population.”<sup>42</sup> This continued into the 1960s and 70s as Edward Seaga’s cultural policies selectively appropriated non-threatening elements of a Jamaica’s African heritage in order to co-opt

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, 65.

and gain the support of the urban poor but on the basis of “preservation and presentation rather than racially based mobilization.”<sup>43</sup> However, the primacy of state control ended up being reasserted through incorporation, which “celebrated aspects of African ancestry but contained Afro-Jamaican efforts towards self-determination.”<sup>44</sup>

Edna Manley’s 1962 creation of a sculpture of Paul Bogle to be placed at the Morant Bay Courthouse for instance attempted to rehabilitate the aesthetics of the black body that had been denigrated in its traditional historical representations. As Petrina Dacres argues, this came in the context of national independence and the elites’ drive to provide Jamaicans with symbols and representations adequate to the dignity and power that had come to Jamaica. “Manley’s attempt to sculpt a bold, heroic, black body had to refute colonial figuration of blackness, particularly that of the black rebel,” and through this rendering, “the black male body was reconstituted as a powerful, even desirous, ideal warrior in the public domain.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, in the new Jamaican nation-state and its attempt to represent independence as a radical break from the past, nationalist elites specifically avoided the public representation of their new national heroes as rebels, and “were never to be used as inspiration to question the new state that was being created in the 1960s.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 74. See also Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 13. Although writing from the context of nineteenth-century India, Ranajit Guha reminds scholars to be wary when nationalist elites appropriate “indigenous” or “peasant” representations of generalized anti-colonial struggle as part of their public persona and political platform. While the “peasant” obtains a degree of representation by being included in the nationalist discourse, whatever singular politics and meanings which might have emerged during these historical moments of armed struggle would be neutralized and denuded of their polemical thrust in the elites’ drive for state power. Their histories and politics then become “mere embellishment[s], a sort of decorative and folklorist detail” in the general historical progression towards “national independence,” and as an object for elites to pragmatically mobilize in proving their popular credibility as insiders.

<sup>45</sup> Petrina Dacres, “But Bogle was a Bold Man’: Vision, History, and Power for a New Jamaica,” *Small Axe* 28 (March 2009), 122.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 132.

The statue remains a crucial source of contention over the memories and representation of 1865. In the context of national independence, Manley took artistic and political liberties in her imagination of the black body. She relied exclusively on her own approaches and desires to stress the anti-colonial heritage of Paul Bogle and also his pastness. He had been a powerful defender for the hope of a future national independence, but his watch was over. For instance, she portrayed Bogle as half-naked, shirtless, and shoeless; the face of the statue, based on Philip Bagan, a descendent of Paul Bogle, was also made alien-like with large protruding eyes based in pre-Columbian aesthetics.<sup>47</sup> Many Jamaicans argue that the face on the statue is not the “real” face of Paul Bogle as compared with a widely known photograph of Bogle located in 1959 that has never been completely authenticated as him. The statue’s form and color look synthetic and stone-like rather than organic and dynamic, pulling inward and not moving outward. The statue is lifeless and static.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, people have also critiqued the stance of the statue as a symbolic representation of Paul Bogle cutting off his own penis as the figure forms the shape of a cross with his elbows pointed outward, hands holding a “sword” (see footnote) at his chest pointed towards ground.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>48</sup> Carolyn Cooper, “PAUL BOGLE: Revealed Restored Remembered – Documentary,” YouTube video, 22:02, posted by “JonesJr876,” March 3, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhBxxyRknak>.

<sup>49</sup> Constantine Bogle, “Paul Bogle: 150<sup>th</sup> Documented 1865-2015,” Youtube video. 1:35:52. Filmed 11 October 2015. Posted by “Claude Sinclair,” February 11, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF5IKBlalrk><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF5IKBlalrk>. Constantine Bogle argued at the 2015 commemoration, “If you look at the statue it is not a machete. It is a sword. He has no clothes on. The sword come down, and the man is naked. There’s no penis. The point of the sword mean cutting off the blood vein of the Bogle family. ... Now that we have the evidence of what was built by England, in Rome by the Queen together. ... Why should we destroy the proof? ... My position, and the position of the Paul Bogle Foundation, [is that] we have [to] turn the statue into a pillar of salt. What me say? It has no power again because any time you can’t see a dippy, he can’t do you no wrong.” However, while the statue is an enduring source of contention, not everyone in St. Thomas is opposed to the statue. See also “Paul Bogle: Revealed Restored Remembered – Documentary,” Youtube video.

From the 1970s to the present, certain forms of black nationalism in Jamaica have been gradually incorporated into the machinery and power structures of the state while maintaining selectivity over which elements of black pasts and memories are given expression. For instance, after coming to power in 1972 Michael Manley and the PNP attempted to use these cultural elements for the positive mobilization of black people on class lines and democratic socialist principles. Nevertheless, in practice the state and nationalist elites feared the prospect of a politics of race and attempted to neutralize such movements accordingly, seen in the violent suppression of Rastafari and the Black Power movements as dangerous to the integrity and security of the nation-state.<sup>50</sup> The election of Seaga to Prime Minister in 1980 fully opened Jamaica to free market capitalism. A new round of elites entered the state, this time made up of both “brown” (not a monolithic category, but possessing the potential to be counted among blacks or whites depending on class and social position, for instance) and black propertied classes that were educated in the 1950s and 1960s and made up of not only businessmen but also professional classes such as lawyers, doctors, and engineers.<sup>51</sup>

In the 1990s, a certain limited and modified form of black nationalism was integrated into the platforms of PJ Patterson (PNP), elected in 1996 and the first Prime Minister considered as black by ordinary Jamaicans. Yet nationalist elites have continued to incorporate issues and themes important to black people historically and politically if and only if these elements do not question or challenge the fundamental the

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<sup>50</sup> See also Thomas, *Modern Blackness*, 72, 76. For instance, in 1963 the state undertook a Jamaica-wide suppression of Rastafari in the wake of the “Coral Gardens disturbance” after six Rastafarians attacked a Shell Gas station over enduring issues over land scarcity. Police and civilians pursued the attackers killing eight; the expulsion of Professor Walter Rodney in 1968 for his political activities associated with Black Power movements served as a means for Jamaican people’s mobilization across class lines. The “Rodney riots” were then suppressed by the police and army after unrest spread to wealthy areas of Kingston.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-79.

central narratives and practices of the nation-state. Public discussion around blackness has also tended to gravitate around the advancement of “soft” middle class values and norms of respectability. Anxieties over “negative” practices emerging from the black, urban, lower-classes like dancehall, a lack of interest by the youth in the old “folk” cultural performances used in the 1960s and 70s, and increasing foreign media influence in daily life have thus combined with fears over anti-statist variants of black nationalism.<sup>52</sup> Even though the elites of the Jamaican nation-state could boast nationalist and anti-colonial credentials, they opened the space for particular kinds of thought and political action only insofar as they remained tamable and amenable to the standard “civilization” paradigms inherited from the British colonials.

However, Deborah Thomas argues through her idea of “modern blackness” that many black Jamaicans today have fashioned spaces of political belonging based on maintaining a distance from the Jamaican nation-state and its old narratives while remaining in negotiation and contestation with those forces. Not to be mistaken for a “revolutionary” identity in the traditional register as a force which effects the seizure of state power, Thomas contends that this black identity carves out spaces of freedom through overlap and negotiation with other “dominant” hegemonies such as the brown creole nationalist paradigm (and their black petty bourgeois allies) in the present day. Thomas rejects employing easy solutions that rely on “binaries of hegemony and resistance, global and local” to understand the development of what blackness means to Jamaican people in their everyday lives. There are tensions at work in these creative appropriations as hegemonies come to sustain one another through interplay and borrowing, yet remain distinct.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 86.

Creole nationalist forces for instance have remained a potent force by adapting consumerism and neoliberal capitalism as the engines and ends of Jamaican progress, while black hegemonic groupings mobilize capital in order to actualize freedoms and create zones of autonomy. At the same time, while capital and the state have expanded practical opportunities for thousands of middle- and lower-class Jamaicans, the underlying economic and political contradictions in the society have only intensified.<sup>53</sup> Constantine expressed these anxieties in relation with black people who have forgotten their history as connected with an integration into an individualistic, Western order that concerned itself with historical narratives of progress before the past. Nonetheless, new forms of black nationalisms have been extremely mobile and fluid. New spaces of resistance have been created, and one nationalist framework has never possessed a total and substantial primacy over others. Black Jamaican people construct spaces that allow for a distancing from the state's power while remaining in many contexts within its field of vision.

### 3. "We have to decide what we want to call it": Contested Names, Contested Meanings

In spite of his complaints in 2012, many of Constantine's hopes appeared to have been realized by the 2015 commemorations. Now timed to correspond to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Paul Bogle's candlelight vigil and march to Morant Bay, the commemoration expanded in scale, attendance, and content when compared with 2012. Promoted with the title "Following the Trail of Blood and Tears: Tribute to the Martyrs of the 1865 Morant Bay War," thousands amassed together in remembrance of the events of 1865. Irie.fm, a major radio station based in Kingston, carried coverage of the event

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 13-16.

live and featured commentary by speakers such as: Mutabaruka, famous Jamaican dub poet and political activist; Ka'bu Ma'at Kheru, Jamaican radio personality and political activist; and notable academics Professor Verene Shepherd (also the chair of Jamaica's National Commission on Reparation) and Professor Clinton Hutton, who each provided historical contextualization for listeners. All of the major news organizations like the *Gleaner* and the *Jamaica Observer* were present to report on the events, which Ka'bu and other observers remarked was the first time in recent memory that media organizations had joined together to report on a common theme outside of the context of sports.<sup>54</sup> Indicating at least some degree of official recognition of the event by the Jamaican nation-state, two members of Parliament for St. Thomas, Dr. Fenton Ferguson and Mr. James Robertson were in attendance.<sup>55</sup>

Constantine Bogle recognized these broad changes, telling the people at the candle-lighting ceremony that increased public participation had opened more opportunities for black Jamaican people to recognize one another on the basis of their shared history. Collectively, the Jamaican people had transformed the meanings and implications of not only the modern commemorations but also the history of 1865: "For more than a 100 years, [the] Morant Bay Rebellion as it is called, was the biggest liability to the people of this parish. Today, it becomes one of the biggest assets in this world. We can use the Morant Bay Rebellion to bring spiritual freedom...[and] economic freedom to the people of St. Thomas [and Jamaica]."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ka'bu Kheru, "150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15," Youtube video.

<sup>55</sup> "Paul Bogle and the Martyr's March & Ceremony 2015 – Face Xpression Production," Youtube video, 1:23:29. Filmed October, 11 2015. Posted by "Face Xpression Production," October 24, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5oKXCzxkgQ>

<sup>56</sup> Constantine Bogle, "PAUL BOGLE MEMORIAL & CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE 2015 Face Xpression Production." YouTube video, 2:30:38, filmed October 2015, posted by "Face Xpression Production," October 30, 2015. 10 October 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWpJ7AT5-zg>.

Constantine was proposing the idea that the commemorations had opened the opportunity for Jamaican people to present and “bring” these freedoms born in St. Thomas to “this world.” There appears to be some interesting tensions in his statements. Was the re-centering of historical authority back on the black people of St. Thomas and Jamaica the grounds of these freedoms? Did this freedom refer primarily to the ability to create a self-sufficient “respectable” life in line with middle-class values? As discussed above, nationalist elites have been able to appropriate discourses on freedom to serve their own ends particularly in relation to their ideas of political economy, social class, and inter-racial belonging. But the introduction of the idea of “spiritual freedom” might not be so easily taken up by the state if, through commemoration, Constantine was thinking in terms of a generalized freedom to affirm that have the power to affirm that which the state and modern secular elites took to be inexistent politically. Perhaps the re-grounding of the political economic in the “spiritual” life of the community, whatever that might be, carried with it the potential to transform the idea of freedom itself, outside of the narrow confines of a “citizenship” that politically neutralized and rendered blackness invisible.

During the commemorations, the former thematic emphases on memories of violence, race-based historical traumas, and the ancestors in relation to the present political moment returned with a vengeance. Explicitly rejecting the idea of the “ancestors” as symbolic abstractions, for instance, speakers (adults and children) engaged in the ritualized reading of the names of the ancestors who had been killed, tortured,

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Jamaican people’s rendition of the commemorations into documentary video has indeed carried the meanings and history of 1865 to the wider world.

and/or imprisoned during martial law and the British-led massacre of the people.<sup>57</sup> Shepherd and Mutabaruka noted that the naming procedure was specifically intended to witness the identification of the ancestors in a public venue, thereby presenting the ancestors as concrete, living, and existent. In turn, Shepherd stressed that the events of 1865 had therefore included more than just the active, immediate combat between Bogle's forces and the British, and Bogle's subsequent military defeat. Speakers at the commemorations frequently connected the events of 1865 with the wider history of British colonialism and the attempts after the so-called Emancipation to return people through free labor regimes to the slave relations of production.<sup>58</sup> The Jamaican people were *massacred* in 1865, but the meanings and ideas of oppression, death, and destruction embedded in that massacre were politically and historically consistent with the operation of the British colonial system and its *racist* structures of oppression in general.

Part of the expanded meanings for the event also included the public recognition of black women as active members of Paul Bogle's military forces. Speakers not only stressed the historical role of women in the battles of 1865; they also took on an active role as public speakers in much greater numbers than men.<sup>59</sup> Shepherd reminded the

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<sup>57</sup> "Paul Bogle and the Martyr's March & Ceremony 2015 – Face Xpression Production," Youtube video, 1:23:30. Filmed October, 11 2015. Posted by "Face Xpression Production," October 24, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5oKXCzkgQ>.

<sup>58</sup> Verene Shepherd, "150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15," Youtube video.

<sup>59</sup> From numerous speakers, it appears that the increased participation of women in the event and public recognition was important to people. Granted, my deductions could be based on an effect of the editing of the documentary footage during its production. Nonetheless, in the "Martyr's March" documentary evidence referenced above, nearly all of the public speakers presented on film were women. In the "Paul Bogle War" documentary footage, many speakers also referenced women's participations as significant. One man for example praised the positive "role that women play in our fight for freedom and justice. It was a woman who started the fire down by Montego Bay with Sam Sharpe...and it was a woman who throw the first stone here, so I really want to emphasize the bravery and the role that women play to ensure that we enjoy certain liberties even though we are still a far war behind." See in particular "Paul Bogle

people that women had been at the forefront of colonial oppression during slavery and afterwards, and thus it was logical that they would be “at the forefront of the [any] anti-oppression struggle.”<sup>60</sup> In addition, the move also introduced a shift in the conventional discourse on the events of 1865, as George William Gordon and Paul Bogle had typically been the centerpieces of the narrative. Coming together to honor Paul Bogle in conjunction with the ancestors had allowed for some additional and different voices to emerge that had been excluded from that discourse. In the context of the commemorations, perhaps a localized but general equality took hold between the participants for a brief moment.

Many speakers linked the meaning of the commemorations to the idea of reparatory justice for African enslavement in the context of leveling a critique against and providing an alternative to the liberal-humanitarian rights/nation-state discourses employed by the Jamaican and British nation-states.<sup>61</sup> The frequent discussions on reparations during the 2015 commemorations was no doubt exacerbated by the recent statements of David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on the question of reparations in September of that year while visiting Jamaica. Essentially, he argued that it was time that the Jamaican people “moved on” from slavery, averring that, “I acknowledge that these wounds of slavery run very deep indeed. But I do hope that as friends, and we have gone through so much together, that those darkest of times are now

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And The Martyr’s March & Ceremony 2015 - Face Xpression Production.” YouTube video; and “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>60</sup> Verene Shepherd, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>61</sup> I have appropriated this idea from Deborah Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 7, 237-38.

behind us.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, Cameron put forward an idea of reparations at the meeting. As a gesture of goodwill between “friends,” he pledged to contribute three hundred and fifty million pounds for general development projects in the Caribbean as well as twenty five million pounds for the construction of a new prison in Jamaica to house all of the Jamaica nationals currently imprisoned in Britain. For Cameron, the idea of reparations was reducible to the (non-)payment of money, and based in the occultation of race as both the British colonials and the Jamaican people suffered relatively equally under the degrading conditions of slavery during “those darkest of times.” Cameron’s use of the historical was therefore predicated on the foreclosure of other modes of history and memory making from challenging his position. From his and the state’s perspective, historical narratives are unitary, decisive, and practical, or they are nothing politically relevant at all.

Without surprise, many black Jamaicans were outraged by Cameron’s words especially given the fact that members of his family were included as beneficiaries to the twenty million pounds paid by the British to slave owners for the loss of their chattel property.<sup>63</sup> People judged that Cameron’s type of mindset was no different than white colonials’ of 1865, and his perspective obtained widely among the leaders of the international order of nation-states.<sup>64</sup> As Shepherd argued, the Queen and her advisors in

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<sup>62</sup> Hilary Beckles, “Sir Hilary Beckles: On Reparatory Justice for Global Black Enslavement,” YouTube video, 2:19:59, filmed unknown date, posted by “HarvardLawSchool,” February 25, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C53rq9iRCEQ>.

<sup>63</sup> Hilary Beckles, “On Reparatory Justice.” Beckles gives an outstanding lecture on the long-term historical dynamics and politics of reparatory justice for the enslavement of Africans. David Cameron’s ancestor six generations removed, Sir James Duff, received two million pounds in contemporary money for 202 slaves he owned in Jamaica. Numerous interviewees and speakers during the 2015 commemorations likewise commented on David Cameron’s recent statements on reparations. See also “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>64</sup> Beckles also notes the resistance to the general idea of reparations with leaders and public officials of the Western European world. Related to the political situation we find ourselves in the United States,

1865 had got it wrong in the same way as David Cameron and his advisors. No Mr. Cameron, “We cannot move on. We cannot simply move on to the future,” she exclaimed, “without settling the outstanding debt.”<sup>65</sup> Clinton Hutton also critiqued the pernicious idea that the British could just ignore centuries of African enslavement and the brutal violence employed by the state in the suppression of 1865. The commemorations and the marchers brought the history, meanings, and ancestors of 1865 into the present day in order to resist and stand against these historical silences that had reproduced the narratives and power of white colonials over black Jamaicans. The commemorations provided an additional context for the waging of this political struggle. For, on October 11, 1865, a challenge had been issued, as “the twin concepts of justice, reparation and repatriation...was heard from Stony Gut coming down here to Morant Bay, *Mr. Cameron* [Clear voice inflection in the audio].”<sup>66</sup>

Discussions on the idea of reparations overlapped with critiques of the structural conditions and politics which anti-reparations discourses of the nation-state were invested in maintaining. Shepherd repeatedly emphasized that black people took up arms against the British colonial state precisely because the British colonials and planters attempted to re-create the former slave relations of production through the use of legal and political economic regulatory mechanisms after 1838. The people had fought to actualize the promises of Emancipation that the British never really wanted to allow because they

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Hilary Clinton, Barack Obama, and Bernie Sanders are all against the concept of reparations as divisive. The “reparations” they suggest comes in the form of state-led educational and economic initiatives targeting poverty-stricken areas with high African-American populations. Sanders’ words are telling for showing how the politics of the farthest “left” candidate remains grounded in conservative defeatism: “First of all, its likelihood of getting through Congress is nil. Second of all, I think it would be very divisive.” Linda Qiu, “What Bernie Sanders, Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton have said about reparations for slavery,” *Politifact*, January 26, 2016, accessed May 7, 2016, [www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/jan/26/bernie-s/reparations-for-slavery-sanders-obama-clinton/](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/jan/26/bernie-s/reparations-for-slavery-sanders-obama-clinton/)

<sup>65</sup> Verene Shepherd, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>66</sup> Clinton Hutton, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

knew it would lead to the collapse of their power. These logics had been carried forward by the (post)colonial nation-state. The colonial system of apportioning land and their ideas of private property had never really changed. In the narratives of the state, it could not be really recognized that generation upon generation of black people had produced surpluses that the British colonials and postcolonial elites had simply robbed from black people individually and collectively.<sup>67</sup>

As Cameron intimated above, the state can use historicism and forms of historical contextualization to make *everybody* the victim of savagery and enslavement equally, thereby removing the question of race and racist structures of oppression from the conversation. What the British did was wrong and a crime; white, Western Europeans had corrected their transgressions through their own moral self-improvement, and they had already granted “freedom” to black slaves and given them every opportunity to accept the benefits of civilization and limited forms of citizenship. How people historically had used this “freedom” that supposedly everyone shared *and* politically desired was up to the people. For nationalist elites, it was thus of little consequence that the so-called emancipation, achieved only by the payment of “reparations” to British slave holders, instantiated and legitimated the idea that Africans were property to begin with, and that the British had the authority to parcel out “freedom.” The wider political objectives of Paul Bogle and the ancestors back in 1865 intersected again with the politics of today, as both were fighting for similar things: recognition, justice, and the re-centering of epistemic authority away from the state.

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<sup>67</sup> Land and land policies are an enduring source of political conflict in Jamaica. Ka’bu spoke to its function as a tool of parliamentary politics: “We call upon the government of the day because this is today, that you honor Paul Bogle...[by not] using land [policy] as a tribal tool, to get people to vote for you.” Ka’bu Kheru, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

Thus the commemorations have provided the Jamaican people with an opportunity to place 1865 in relationship with a possible black politics that would no longer be beholden to the linear and progressive narratives of the nation-state. Through commemoration, the events of 1865, modes of remembrance, the idea and concept of reparations, and the idea of blackness and pan-African struggle intersected with one another. The Jamaican people have incorporated memories and representations of Paul Bogle and the ancestors as equal participants in the present political moment. The black people of 1865 and today had both attempted to wake the people, to interrupt others' forgetting of their history, and to right historical and political wrongs and injustices. Forces and figures that were once bound to a dead and gone past within (post)colonial and nationalist discourse have been made to re-appear in a present moment of politics. The boundaries of linear time have been destabilized and become porous and malleable through the call for collective remembrance for an event 150 years prior that had never really ended. As Constantine had hoped, the commemorations were playing a substantial role in re-presenting the question of what it meant to be black in modern Jamaica. While the realization of this promise that began initially in St. Thomas-in-the-East in 1865 still lie on the horizon, a path had been opened for the envisioning of new political possibilities that would confront the racialized past and present rather than running from them.

Yet inside of the commemorative body, we find productive tensions and contestation over the meanings, memory, and history of the events of 1865. In relation to a desire to honor and remember the ancestors properly, many at 2015 commemorations have raised critical questions heretofore largely unconsidered in the historiography: what

did the black witnesses and participants in the armed conflict against the colonial state in 1865 name the event, and why is this important to the Jamaican people of today as well as the black men and women of the past? I contend that the question of how the event should be named and what it means for a people to name an event *as* a people strikes at the heart of the attempt to re-ground the black political body of the present on the actions of the ancestors.

Empowered by these kinds of questions, some Jamaican participants in the commemorations discussed above have argued that the events of 1865 should be remembered and designated as a *war*, rather than a “rebellion” or an “uprising.” The prescriptive injunction that it must be the people who create history to decide on its name and representation introduces an interruption into the conventional and historiographical discourse, since both have been primarily concerned with the identification of causes, effects, and reasons for the irruption of conflict, and then generating names for the event through their analysis of these factors. Discussing the name of war as the event was important for Ka’bu and Shepherd in order to stress to the people that this event was “more than a rebellion, even though persons are still saying Morant Bay Rebellion.”<sup>68</sup> Shepherd argued this claim on multiple points. First, she wanted to correct what she claimed was a core historiographical and historical assumption that “our ancestors...had no organizational ability” and were not really serious about a mass actualization of Emancipation in a politically meaningful way for black people outside of the terms set by white colonial agents.<sup>69</sup> While causes, effects, and reasons would be part of any historical narrative it was still necessary to remember that the point of organization

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<sup>68</sup> Ka’bu Kheru, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>69</sup> Verene Shepherd, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

was not to demonstrate to the whites that black people were proper citizens but to fight against a state and legal apparatus that stood in the way of the realization of racial justice.

Second, Shepherd added a crucial dimension to the representation of the events by using the name of war to expand the implications and consequences of the events beyond its assumed temporal and spatial limits. She averred, “It was a war against colonialism. It was a war between Africa and Europe,” thereby designating the opponents of the conflict under much more expansive terms than just Bogle versus Eyre, or black Jamaican people versus the Jamaican planters and public officials. Although the conflict played out in local terms, the waging of war was more than a simple rebellion and protest. Entire imaginaries were being brought into conflict with one another, and remembering the events in this way in many respects resisted the selective re-incorporation of elements of the historical memories of 1865 into cultural policy and what had passed for “history.” It was not a rebellion against colonialism and an insurrection against Europe, but *war*, “and that is how we want to play it today.”<sup>70</sup> In turn, the events of 1865 were further brought into line with other moments of armed conflict in the slave past. Those ancestors had also fought for justice as concrete, living beings, and their struggle had not been limited to the narrow confines of being granted “freedom” alone. Third, as a counter-attack against the colonial dominance in forms of historical representation, Shepherd later drew a boundary designating *who* had the power over memories and practice as a form of critique. Since people in Europe, America, or Israel remembered their wars and massacres like the Holocaust in ways that they saw fit, she contended, it was not the role of outsiders who had not lived the history of African slavery to tell Jamaican black people what “we should remember and what we should

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<sup>70</sup> Shepherd, *Ibid.*

forget.”<sup>71</sup> This move allowed for the power of collective memory to upset and displace historical narratives for the purposes of refashioning their relationship. Memory became a means to affirm epistemic authority over the events of 1865 and their conjuncture in time.

In this context, government ministers and elected officials from St. Thomas in attendance at the event were also not immune to public criticism. The naming of the events as war could be interpreted as providing the conditions for an intensification of critique. One unnamed woman from St. Thomas for example linked the political failures/manipulations of the Jamaican nation-state with the greater “state of amnesia” afflicting the parish of St. Thomas and all of Jamaica. She argued that politicians had failed to recognize the cyclical economic and social crises that afflicted St. Thomas, and she tied this fact directly to the consequent isolation of the people of St. Thomas from the rest of Jamaica in the aftermath of 1865. “After the war, St. Thomas was basically cast aside” by the (post)colonial state, and was sealed off from the rest of the island. The state had systematically denied the parish from accessing the political resources needed for daily life, education, and infrastructure; “It was not until 1961 that St. Thomas got a high school.”<sup>72</sup> This appeared to be a common perception, as she, Mutabaruka, and many others can be heard in the documentary evidence frequently comparing the situation of St. Thomas to Haiti in terms of economic development.<sup>73</sup> Jamaicans were not blaming black

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<sup>71</sup> Shepherd, *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Unnamed woman, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>73</sup> During fieldwork in Kingston, Jamaica 2016, when I asked people on their opinion of St. Thomas or if they had ever traveled there, many relayed the same ideas of St. Thomas being like Haiti in terms of development, and that it was the most “African” of all the parishes. When I went to Morant Bay and spoke with a taxi driver and three of his passengers, they proceeded to engage in an argument over whether St. Thomas needed a highway or not and how this would affect their integration with the wider island, particularly Kingston. The driver thought that receiving their fair share could help the parish and country because the land was fertile and could produce a lot for Jamaica and St. Thomas.

people for these conditions or monolithically praising development initiatives as the ends of politics. Instead, the history was an indication of how white colonials and statisticians had compartmentalized whole zones for the purposes of punishing the people within them for their political transgression.

Furthermore, the woman noted that part of this crisis had emerged precisely because of the underlying contradictions of the representative political system of Jamaica, which, at least in St. Thomas, was predicated on the perpetual manipulation of electoral mechanisms. She argued that, in fact, people being elected in St. Thomas were actually “carted in from outside and put in place” by the JLP and the PNP, “especially [those] in the local government, *on both sides* [emphasis added: her voice inflection clearly changes in the audio here].” In consequence, the politicians and elected representatives “cannot even think for themselves what to say for the people.” Their failure meant that black people in St. Thomas had no political existence other than as potential voters.<sup>74</sup> But the politicians had better wake up because the ancestors were watching. According to her, the ancestors for example had already taken their vengeance in 2007 by burning down the Morant Bay Courthouse after the local parish council refused to turn the site into a museum according to people’s demands.<sup>75</sup> How could the agents of the state even think that they could continue to use a site where scores of black people were executed, and then buried in a mass grave, without honor?<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Unnamed woman, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> See also *The Gleaner*, June 3, 1965. In 1965, Mr. Ray Fremmer, a local archaeologist in Jamaica, unearthed numerous skeletons buried behind the Morant Bay Courthouse. He claimed that he thought to dig there because of evidence given during the hearings of the Jamaica Royal Commission in January 1866. John Elisha Grant reported that on October 15, 1865 he had received twenty-five lashes from Provost Marshall Ramsay and then was ordered to dig a trench behind the Courthouse. Fremmer claimed that he unearthed 186 bodies consisting of 179 men and 7 women, and that two of the bodies were Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, local ally of Bogle and leader among the “Native Baptists.” He was executed on

In conjunction with these claims, Hutton's earlier call for "black unity" also gained new purchase through the name of war (however, as this explores later in more detail, the conventional idea of "unity" can be problematic for privileging commonality over difference and the construction of political solidarity across differences). As he argued, "We gather here today because 'Colour for Colour, Skin for Skin' was a call for black people to unite, to centralize. We are still working at that. And we need to work at that more."<sup>77</sup> Like Shepherd's claims, war helps to decisively pose the question of an articulation of sides. In the appearance of Hutton's argument, we find the question of the articulation of a relationship between unity under a common political identity project and the idea of an exclusion vis-à-vis one's status as a non-black person. The fact that both ideas were co-presented in the commemoration does not say in itself say enough about the precise relationship between war and its meanings to modes of political inclusions and exclusions. Nonetheless, some kind of relationship exists with the name and naming of the events of 1865 and the ideas of black political subjectivity. If Africa and Europe, or the black military forces of 1865 and their colonial adversaries, for example, face one another in combat, why should scholars begin from the idea that their politics and discourses are able to be totalized under names like "rebellion" and "riot," which privilege the perspective of the colonials, and/or place blacks and whites in dialectical relation with one another? War provides an opening to think blackness as a politics on its own terms, but it does not guarantee that this re-imagination will or must occur. Articulating the work that names like "rebellion" and "riot" have done in contemporary and political discourse to designate the boundaries of who could be included and who

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October 23, 1865 as one of the leaders of the "rebellion," but he denied having taken part in its planning and execution.

<sup>77</sup> Clinton Hutton, "150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15," Youtube video.

must be excluded therefore becomes a pressing question of the possibility of distinguishing between the possible black politics of Paul Bogle and the ancestors in 1865 and the Jamaican people of today on the one hand, and the historical and political representations produced by white colonials and postcolonial nationalist elites of black people on the other.

Like the idea and concept of reparations, the name of war and the act of (re) naming of the events of 1865 can be interpreted as a means of opening the linear, temporal boundaries of the discourse so that action and calls to action could proliferate into other domains of political struggle. For example, Mutabaruka praised the people on October 11, 2015 for answering the call to action in remembrance of the ancestors that day. Their participation in conjunction with the increased media attention had finally and publically brought “to light some of the people that stand firm against the system, then and now. ...Paul Bogle fight for, not for abolish slavery, but for the rights for the working people, the black people of 150 years ago. We have to come together now and fight for the same thing. Really weird.”<sup>78</sup> He added that Bogle had fought to give life to the Jamaican people, and through his actions demonstrated that “if something is not worth dying for, it is not worth living for.”<sup>79</sup>

Ka’bu also commented on the “uncanny” relationship of the past in the present and the present in the past.<sup>80</sup> In order to sustain and reproduce the possibilities unlocked in a moment of commemoration, she recommended the need for intensified political confrontation with public officials, changes to the content of textbooks, and nationwide educational re-structuring. In turn, she explicitly criticized the advisor to the Jamaican

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<sup>78</sup> Mutabaruka, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

<sup>79</sup> Mutabaruka, *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Ka’bu Kheru, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

Minister of Education Mr. Franklin Johnson for “one of the most insulting articles to black people in Jamaica, to African people in Jamaica, ever written. ... When we see an advisor to the Minister of Education talking about the National Reparations Commission being a Ponzi scheme, talking about young children in grade six telling him that Africans on the continent sold others into slavery, and calling up that by saying from babes and sucklings...I think that we have a very long way to go.”<sup>81</sup> The battle against this discourse and politics began in 1865. It did not originate in an independent present out of joint with the past. “This is evolution,” she argued, and the events of 1865 should be therefore understood and remembered as “an unfinished war. And [so] symbolically, we march.” Simultaneously, for her the moment had presented an opportunity to use history and memory in the construction of new symbols to serve as weapons of critique against the very idea of the “symbolic” as an oppressive discursive regime inherited from the colonialists.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. For the newspaper column Ka’bu is referring to, see Franklin Johnston, “Racism Thrives Because Black Nations Fail,” *Jamaica Observer*, July 10, 2015, [http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/Racism-thrives-because-black-nations-fail-\\_19196594](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/Racism-thrives-because-black-nations-fail-_19196594) (Accessed May 7, 2016). Mixing the ideas of Marcus Garvey in a perspective that I would suggest sounds rabidly fascist and state-centric perspectives on “black” progress, Johnston essentially argues that racism has nothing to do with Africa and slavery. “Racism is about power not race. ... Racism is about nation power. The day one black nation has top military, space and nuclear capability, racism goes into immediate remission.” The core insults appear in two passages: (1) “That slavery is the root of racism or the cause of black poverty is a cleverly crafted subterfuge by lazy-brained blacks; rip-off reparations and back-to-Africa scams;” (2) “Did capitalism cause racism? Marcus Garvey was on track with economic and military plans. The best capitalists were colour blind African, Arab and later European men who founded offshore slavery; and I am open to reparations from all of them. But I would like to put a lick on ‘Cudjoe’ in West Africa for selling my grandfather of the fifth power to white people. I do not forgive Africa.”

<sup>82</sup> Ka’bu Kheru, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video. While her comments present multiple avenues of exploration, I am emphasizing its nature as a critical instrument here. The full text is: “You know as African people that symbolism means a whole lot. And that even when we talk about the statue of Mr. Bagan [the Paul Bogle statue], it goes back to that you know. Because there are symbols, and this is not specifically to Mr. Bagan, there are symbols of oppression that we continue to [Mutabaruka fills in the statement with “maintain”] and to internalize. So the idea is how do we move on and away from these symbols of oppression, even while in this symbolic gesture, we march from Stony Gut to Morant Bay as was done 150 years ago.”

Shepherd continued that the understandings of this war must also be placed in the context of struggles against a system of “racial apartheid” constructed by the British colonials in Jamaica in the aftermath of the suppression of Bogle’s forces. (Interestingly, she presented as prior and similar to the same system introduced, named, and legitimated in South Africa). Paul Bogle and the ancestors had fought against these structures of oppression and the political and economic proscriptions that they had placed on black Jamaican people. Of course, they sought to achieve practical goals such as the equitable distribution of land, voting rights, and the general improvement of their own socioeconomic conditions. Yet for Shepherd, the struggle appeared to be about something still greater but not better than these things, even if any concrete politics by nature dealt with these issues. Understood in its essence, “What Paul Bogle and the others were saying was that we can’t have peace if we don’t have justice.”<sup>83</sup> The appellation of the name of war to the events in these ways further blurs and destabilizes any notion of fixed temporal and spatial boundaries to the events. The above speakers were taking part in the proposition for a new basis for black political subjectivity that was grounded in new ideas and meanings of justice outside of the old discursive frameworks inherited from the colonial state. And the name of war and the naming of the events as such played a decisive role in the recognition of truths that had been buried beneath layers of colonial discourse and naming schemes since 1865.

Nonetheless, not all of the participants appeared to take the proposed changes to the name of the event as relevant to the overall meanings of the commemorations, or to the history and memory of the events of 1865 in general. Constantine Bogle for instance

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<sup>83</sup> Verene Shepherd, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video.

continued to regularly refer to the event as a rebellion.<sup>84</sup> As we saw earlier, Constantine Bogle used the name of “Morant Bay Rebellion” as an index for the outcomes of the events, namely “the liberation of black people” and “the freedom that we enjoy today,” but as we have seen, the ideas of “liberation” and “freedom” expressed in such terms could also be easily appropriated by nationalist elites as a progressive and teleological argument. In this context, the question is less about determining Constantine’s intentions and more about the degree to which his memories and historical perspectives could be appropriated – and thus politically neutralized -- by the state (as demonstrated later in this thesis, the state and its laws thrive on discourses of “rebellion” for re-instantiating their own control over the historical narratives and memories of the events of 1865).

Moreover, unlike rebellion, there emerges the possibility that through the name and the naming of the events as a war, the possibility exists to interrupt the historiographical and statist narratives of those events. Through the name of war, an opening has been produced for the thought of a strategic exit from the frameworks of the state while maintaining an explicitly confrontational and oppositional stance toward it. As Shepherd argued above, war involved practical objectives previously contained within discourses on progress and development, such as land reform and parliamentary policy. But with the name of war the practical objectives could be part of the means of the political struggle and not necessarily its ends, whereas for the state, practical objectives figure as the means *and* ends of all politics, and thus its historical narratives and memories. The political sequence begun by war had never been completed, but the

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<sup>84</sup> I would suggest that Constantine’s perspective on the name and naming of the events is reflective of the norm in Jamaica. Even at the commemorations, speakers regularly referred to the events as the “Morant Bay Rebellion” and “Morant Bay Uprising.” During fieldwork in February 2016, when I spoke to people and asked what they learned in school, everyone referred to the events as a rebellion or uprising.

(post)colonial elites all agreed that the “rebellion” had been suppressed and terminated long ago.

For Constantine, however, it appeared that the name of “rebellion” had little to do contextually with what he meant and what he wanted to communicate about the need for action and the creation of new freedoms. He might have just as easily said “Morant Bay Event” and the basic meaning would have been the same. We see this also in Constantine’s equivocation of language when describing of the friendship of Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, the Baptist minister who colonial officials had executed for inciting the black population to rebellion: “because of that relationship with William Gordon, when the riot took place, or the uprising, or what you want to call it, they immediately tied William Gordon to it.”<sup>85</sup> At the 2015 commemoration, an unidentified Reverend speaking with Constantine to the crowd also prefaced a prayer with the representation of the event as “the 150th anniversary of the Morant Bay Uprising, or revolution, or whatever you call it.”<sup>86</sup>

Of course, in practice, words conflate, change, shift, transform in everyday, practical language. Through creative action, speakers take names like rebellion and uprising and take them out of whatever context they might have previously appeared in and redeploy them in another more meaningful context to the immediate question at hand. The meaning and action of the gathering of the people itself was more essential to honoring the ancestors and the memories of 1865 than the possible semantic, discursive,

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<sup>85</sup> Constantine Bogle, “Paul Bogle: Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” Youtube video.

<sup>86</sup> Unidentified Reverend, “PAUL BOGLE MEMORIAL & CANDLE LIGHTING SERVICE,” Youtube video. When talking of the events of 1865 with other Jamaicans in February 2016, an overwhelming majority of people still use the previous names for the events of 1865 in everyday conversation. The overall meanings can remain the same depending on the context of the conversation, but what is more telling and interesting is the “whatever you call it” perspective for how it relates to the posing of the question of the name.

and historical meanings of the particular name of the past occurrence that was remembered. The name itself was thus slightly arbitrary so long as the memory captured in a name led to the people coming together to remember the ancestors, and then continue the process of the transmission and translation of these historical memories into the future. But does this mean that the question of the name and the act of naming on event specifically as a war by Jamaican people on-the-ground is actually a non-question, when understood in wider drive and desire for collective remembrance and some kind of political unity?

Amina Blackwood-Meeks, local Jamaican storyteller and self-described “bonafide Citizen of the World,” clearly did not think so.<sup>87</sup> Speaking at the 2015 commemorations, she proposed that changing the name of rebellion to war was important not just for achieving accuracy. She also stressed that that using the same name would affirm what the ancestors had used to remember the events and create meaning from it. Interestingly, while a banner that reads “Morant Bay Uprising” hangs in the background, she said to the audience:

We have to decide as a people what we want to call something. Some people call it uprising, some people call it a rebellion, and some people call it war. We have to decide what we want to call it. Because when they sat about it, they were sure it was a war. [She sings] War oh! Guinea war oh!<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> On her home page, Blackwood-Meeks further describes herself further as: “Writer, director, performer, and custodian of the oral tradition; Lecturer-researcher-farmer, widely acknowledged for her instrumental contribution to the recent renaissance of the art-form of traditional Caribbean storytelling; Her deep, rich, dramatic and deliberate voice brings stories from the heads of the ancestors, connecting ancient wit and wisdom with modern needs.” “Amina Blackwood Meeks – Once upon a time is now,” Personal Homepage, <http://aminablackwoodmeeks.com> (Accessed 5 May 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Amina Blackwood-Meeks, “Paul Bogle & Martyr’s March & Ceremony 2015 – Face Xpression Production,” Youtube video. “War oh! Guinea war oh!” comes from a Kumina song that Jamaican people use to remember the events of 1865. Admittedly, I have not undertaken sufficient research into all of the connections that “Guinea” invokes in relation to the Atlantic slave trade and African ancestral descent and the ways in which “Africa” is imagined and constructed. I hope to follow up more closely on this point in a future work. For now, as we shall also discuss below, I am focusing on the fact that the song has been reproduced across generations in oral traditions and presents the name of war at the exclusion of other

Far from an arbitrary question or one of mere semantics, Blackwood-Meeks claimed that the ancestors particularly remembered the name of war over all other possible names of the event. Whatever this “it” could be or mean to the people today, the ancestors were “sure it was a war.” In turn, we find that for the ancestors, it was not only the name of the event that was essential but also the act of naming a thing. For Blackwood-Meeks, the failure to pose this question was not an innocent act of omission but rather carried with it the tacit danger that the ancestors would therefore be located in the world of “rebellion” and “uprising” instead of a world of their own designs. Constantine’s inattention potentially allowed for the state to move in and re-appropriate the events for its own ends, while Blackwood-Meeks explicitly presented the name and naming of the events as a question that was tied irreducibly to pasts and memories that the state and its historical narratives had denied. Without a correction of this particular name and its origins in this context, the events could not be remembered or reflected upon from the ancestors’ point of view, nor could they be properly honored. She also implied during her talk that the question of the name appeared to be part of a larger problem of taking the evidence of the present for proof that the trauma and suffering of the ancestors had been properly resolved and recognized. Hence Blackwood-Meeks reminded her audience to pause and “recognize the railroad of bones at the bottom of the sea now with a moment of silence.”<sup>89</sup> Underneath the surface, a battle still waged, and the memory of war was part of that battle. The silencing of the naming of the events by the ancestors served as evidence that the war had never ended.

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names. See also Clinton Hutton, *Colour for Colour, Skin for Skin: Marching with the Ancestral Spirits into War Oh at Morant Bay* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2015): 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, while an attention to the name of war reflected the present divisions of the community into segments of “some people” according to how they named the event, Blackwood-Meeks’s inclusion of the name “we” that would “decide as a people” on the name meant that her question could serve as a common project to the present community. Just like the ancestors accomplished when they “sat about it” and named the event, a common orientation to answering the question and naming the event together anew with the ancestors had the possibility to collapse the divisions and thereby make this possible new “we” a reality. It was therefore a “we” that did not yet have being in the present because that coming together was predicated on the question of the name becoming relevant in a way that destabilized the old names and naming schemes. The ancestors were waiting patiently for such a collective re-affirmation by the people. She reminded the audience “when we are gathered the ancestors are there. So if you think you’re sitting beside an empty chair say ‘Good Morning’ to the ancestor...and if you’re sitting in a chair you’re sitting in the laps of the ancestors.”<sup>90</sup> And the construction and sustained affirmation of this “we” for Blackwood-Meeks was precisely the point of any political gathering. “We [often] come together for a cause but we don’t come together as one,” she argued, but “when we leave we drop the cause.”<sup>91</sup>

As this thesis will explore shortly in more detail, Blackwood-Meeks is indeed correct: even a cursory scratching of the surface of the evidence of the Jamaica Royal Commission (JRC), the official body that was convened in order to investigate Governor Eyre for improper and illegal conduct of his handling of martial law, will turn up the appellation of *war* by a multitude of participants and witnesses. However, as seen in

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

some of the arguments by Jamaican people above, a simple substitution of terms is not enough. Changing the name of the events to the “Morant Bay War” has the capacity to generate new political meanings far beyond the shores of Jamaica, but the change alone means nothing if it is not understood in conjunction with the *action* of the appellation of war made by the ancestors in 1865, and what this war meant to them. “War” is, by itself, just a name; it is only when connected with the affirmation and struggle of the ancestors that it can become a different vehicle for the imagining and construction of a black political subjectivity.

Nonetheless, before turning straight to the court documents and contemporary sources we need to further evaluate the questions that contemporaries and the historiography have conventionally posed on the events of 1865 and the historical frameworks they bring to bear to their assessments. Historians can present and account for the name of war and continue to label the events of rebellion as a methodological necessity. The acts of commemoration and active remembrance described above can then tend to be relegated to the periphery of historical narratives, having occurred “after,” and therefore temporally and historically immune from collective memory and politics. Prompted by the Jamaican people to evaluate our own practices as scholars, we must engage in a critique of both the name of war and who, historically and politically, has been privileged in the discourse to do the naming of an event like the “Morant Bay Rebellion” in the first place.

#### 4. “People know it to have been a Rebellion”: Historiographical Bases of a Name

In contrast with the claims of many people at the commemorations, the name of war is nearly absent from contemporary and historiographical discourse on the events of 1865. Instead, Jamaican-produced contemporary works, literary adaptations, and newspapers historically referenced the events of 1865 through a set of the following terms that often could stand in and be used in conjunction with one another: outbreak, disturbance, riot, insurrection, rebellion, uprising, massacre; their rendition into proper names, and their various derivations when describing people as “rebels,” “insurgents,” part of a “mob,” and so on.<sup>92</sup> Observers did not comment on what immediate participants, or non-white, non-official witnesses to the events of 1865 had thought and named the events. The naming schemes employed by contemporaries did not care about approaching the events from the people’s perspective, and even less about the name as given by those people. While writers could use a variety of names they left the question of who did the naming and why, and whose interests this naming served hidden in the shadows.

While a more thorough investigation of contemporary Jamaican discourse over time will be attempted as part of a future work, using my survey of *The Gleaner* as a

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<sup>92</sup> My general claims on these historical trends were based in a focused search of *The Gleaner* digital archives, supplemented by a broad but non-comprehensive survey from 1865-1960s for various years of *The Colonial Standard*, *Falmouth Post*, *Colonial Advocate*, and *Public Opinion*. It can be said that by the early twentieth-century, the name “Morant Bay Rebellion” was in use among contemporary writers. See W.P. Livingstone’s *Black Jamaica: A Study in Evolution* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1900), who references the name in order to deny that the events were a rebellion: “High sounding names have been given to the disturbance at Morant Bay in 1865. It was not, however, a rebellion against the Crown. It was not a rising against the Island Government. It was not even a demonstration of a general character. It was simply a parochial riot originating in local circumstances of an acute kind.” (pg. 68). See also Frank Cundall, *Political and Social Disturbances in the West Indies* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1906). He argued that “Undoubtedly the riot, or rebellion, was a very serious one in its actual results, and still more in its possible consequences, and but for its prompt and energetic repression, it might have spread into a general negro insurrection in an island where negroes outnumber whites 50 to 1...[the event] is usually known as the ‘Morant Bay Rebellion.’” (pg. 12)

basis, I can advance a few basic claims: (1) the name of war and the appellation of this name was absent from sources that Jamaicans from 1865 to the twenty-first century would have had some access to read; (2) the conventional names like riot, rebellion, insurrection, and so on for the event were not exclusive to one another and were often interchangeable. I would suggest that the specific appellation of the name of the event was inconsequential for contemporaries that had already made up their minds on what their texts must achieve prior to any real analysis or critique (e.g. why or why not Crown Colony status had been beneficial, or that a precondition to violent unrest identified from studying the events of 1865 had been observed analogously in another time, and threatened to result in another round of violence); (3) that arguments over what to call the event are mainly in the context of determining how extensive and intensive the dangers were to life, property, and the colonial state; and (4) that the common and proper names for the event currently in circulation like “Morant Bay Rebellion” and “Morant Bay Uprising” did not really appear until decades after the events and did not really take hold until the 1920s-1960s in the context of the emergence of labor-based political parties (PNP and JLP). What is important for our discussion is that the name of war was nearly absent from this general discursive context.<sup>93</sup>

In like fashion, the general and modern historiography on the events of 1865 have approached and defined the name of the event (and thus the act of naming) as “rebellion” understood in the context of historical rebellions that had occurred throughout the

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<sup>93</sup> I mainly relied on the *The Gleaner* for two reasons. First, historically, the *Gleaner* has been the dominant newspaper in Jamaica with a wide readership. It has an online search function and is the most easily accessible as compared with the printed copies of *Colonial Standard*, *Public Opinion*, *Falmouth Post*, etc. During my short period of fieldwork in February 2016, I scanned widely across other newspapers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries looking for any mention of the name of war, to no avail. Different newspapers disagreed with one another over the meanings of the events of 1865 and the historical category of the name, but they did not think or name the event as war.

British/Atlantic imperial and colonial world. While the historiography has greatly expanded conventional understandings of the events, I argue that the general orientation towards the primary and secondary source documents as well as the naming of the event has gravitated around disagreement over the scale, extensity, intention, and organizational capacity of Bogle and the immediate participants, leading to the imposition of our own questions and distinctions between “riot” and “rebellion,” for instance. However, my contention with the historiography has less to do with oversights or omissions in the evidence, and more to do with the potential silencing effects produced by their methodological optics. While I do not mean to imply that the historiography is without value, for the purposes of this thesis, I engage in a symptomatic reading of a few emblematic works of the historiography in order to call attention to what they all end up missing in their otherwise magnificent, well-researched analyses. I am not concerned with refuting their arguments per se, but rather understanding their relationship to the questions that have been raised by Blackwood-Meeks, Shepherd, Ka’bu, and Constantine Bogle.

Many of my suspicions of the discourse of “rebellion” are based in the path-breaking, decades-long work done by scholars in the tradition of subaltern studies such as Ranajit Guha in his critique of historiographical works that take “rebellion” and “insurrection” as their subjects/objects. Although Guha wrote and spoke in the context of Indian and European historiography, already more than thirty years ago he made the insight that both conservative and potentially radical forms of historiography had nevertheless remained constitutively tied to the state through its objectives and evidence gathering procedures. The function of colonial historiography was to synthesize the

primary evidence produced by statist officials and agents in the creation of historical narratives that would achieve “causal explanation...to arrive at what its practitioners believed to be the historical truth, [which] served in colonial historiography merely as an apology for law and order—the truth of the force by which the British had annexed the subcontinent.”<sup>94</sup>

The violence inherent in the imposition of a truth by the British colonial forces came to align with the violence inherent in seeking the “causes” to these irruptions at the exclusion of the truth of the people involved at the center of collective acts of protest, struggle, and so on. In order to maintain and produce scales and positions of temporal distance with the evidence, scholars had thereby tended “to write the history of a peasant revolt as if it were some other history—that of the Raj, or of Indian nationalism, or of socialism, depending on his particular ideological bent.”<sup>95</sup> Without linking the “peasant” and the “revolt” as elements in these other histories, they are rendered un-re-presentable; lacking any being outside of these frames, the question of the peasant as a subject and the thought of “revolt” as an action and constitutive basis of the possible “consciousness” at work in moments of struggle.

As Guha argues, it is also possible to arrive at positive knowledge of the “rebellion” or “rebels” and “insurgents” by wittingly or unwittingly inverting the *evidence* of what the colonial said of the Other while leaving the notion of “evidence” as the construction of colonial epistemology not only intact but stronger.<sup>96</sup> His paradigmatic example comes in the form of a critique of Mao Tse-Tung’s binary representation of

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<sup>94</sup> Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Ranajit Guha, “On The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” in *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, ed. Ranajit Guha (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 15.

colonials and peasant insurgents through the categories of ‘It’s Terrible,’ and ‘It’s Fine.’ By drawing on primary sources, Guha illustrates that when the colonial used terms like “insurgents,” “fanatic,” and “one of their Gods to reign as a King,” (i.e. ‘It’s Terrible’) the subaltern was given its positive characteristics in the colonial discourse by inverting the terms to mean “peasants,” “Islamic puritan,” and “Santal self-rule,” respectively. In the colonial historiography, whether one attacked, defended, or tried to remain “uncontaminated by bias, judgment and opinion,” the basic elements of the discourse remained the same. Consequently, Guha argues that the actions, beliefs, desires, ideas, etc. of the historical participants in question are then only thought of as the negation and inversion of the present order, in a theoretically infinite “turning [of] things upside down.”<sup>97</sup> Gotha’s criticism here also speaks to some of the historical and political dynamics at work in the Jamaican context, given the views we saw above on politicians and elites locating the events of 1865 firmly within the history of the Jamaican nation-state. Those demanding a re-orientation can then be included in the conversation but on the terms of the nation-state, and thus the people’s politics is excluded from the conversation before it ever begins: choose the state or *lose the possibility of choosing altogether*.

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First, Gad Heuman’s ‘*The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica*’ has unquestionably formed the basis for modern historical scholarship since the 1990s on the events of 1865. Scholars (myself included) have valued the work for providing an “on-the-ground” style of historical narrative based on an exhaustive reading of the evidence produced by the Jamaica Royal Commission (JRC). He added to the

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 15.

scholarship on the event by accounting for the political, economic, and social trends active before, during, and after the events. In particular, Heuman sought to clearly demonstrate that Bogle and his military forces were not simply drawn into conflict by the British on October 11 but instead definitely organized for the possibility of rebellion and potential armed conflict before the outbreak of hostilities. This was evidenced by facts such as Bogle's drilling of forces, his attempt to secure an alliance with the Hayfield Maroons, the development of the "Native Baptist" churches and the "religious" basis of the conflict as a means of organization, and so on. By approaching the history in this way, Heuman intended to provide a counter-point to ideas that (1) the occurrence was nothing more than a "local riot" that had grown out of control and that lacked any common ideas, ideologies, practices, etc.; and (2) that black people such as Paul Bogle and his people were incapable of undertaking or actively participating in conflict of their own volition and accord.<sup>98</sup>

However, if one looks more closely at Heuman's arguments and evidence gathering procedures, we find that he cannot arrive at any other answer *but* rebellion due to the definitions and frameworks that he employs.<sup>99</sup> While excellently researched, Heuman's objective to prove rebellion appears quite similar to the original objectives of the JRC and other white colonial contemporaries. What was so different between Heuman's claims that "the outbreak was a rebellion, characterized by advance planning and by a degree of organization"<sup>100</sup> and the JRC, which was to "make inquiry into the origin, nature, and circumstances of certain late disturbances in the Island of Jamaica, and

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<sup>98</sup> Heuman, xviii.

<sup>99</sup> Symptomatically, he even takes "rebellion" in the title of his book, and places "rebellion" as the title and governing problematic of four out of 11 of his chapters.

<sup>100</sup> Heuman xvi.

with respect to the measures adopted in the course of the suppression?”<sup>101</sup> Both approaches are predicated on nothing but the measurement of the “organization” of military forces but does not seek propose any new ways of thinking about what “organization” means outside of colonial officials’ fear of black people amassing together. Furthermore, Paul Bogle and his allies could have constructed the most extensive and powerful organizational apparatuses and this would still tell scholars nothing inherently about the politics which gave meaning to those organizational efforts. In turn, theoretically assuming there had been no organization at all, if even one person affirmed war and advanced a different politics, the act would still have meaning and historical relevance. Organization defined in terms of war-making capacities alone therefore seems to privilege the perspective and voices of the colonials before the black participants in the conflict.

It is also possible to make Heuman’s language align quite easily with other elites and officials of the day. Names like “rebellion” reproduce the statist histories and memories by locating the grounds of historical investigation firmly within perspectives that begin from how the state sees and reacts against political action directed against it. Take E.N. Harrison, a Sergeant-Major involved in the suppression, who made the simple statement, “Let all those who now call it a riot...say what they like; more sensible people know it to have been a rebellion, a preconcerted [*sic*] and cruel one too.”<sup>102</sup> We could remove the word “cruel” and Harrison would serve as confirmation of Heuman’s arguments, which could then be interpreted as evidence of Heuman’s symmetry with the names and naming schemes of Harrison (I am not saying that Heuman *is* Harrison, just

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<sup>101</sup> Introduction, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 10.

<sup>102</sup> Evidence of E.N. Harrison, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1866 [3682], XXX, Papers Laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor Eyre, 27.

that a distinction between them can become ambiguous when they use the same vocabularies, despite their separation in time). In Heuman's own words, there appears little separation between his own appellations of rebellion and what he had ultimately proved on the one hand, and the thinking of white colonials on the other: "The Governor and nearly all the whites and browns in the colony believed that the island was faced with a rebellion. They saw it as part of an island-wide conspiracy to put blacks in power," that select missionaries and pastors like George William Gordon had orchestrated.<sup>103</sup>

If the idea of organization was substituted with "conspiracy," and the conflict then qualified as not really "island-wide" in the precise racial manner that "whites and browns" had feared, the same basic logic remains at work. Black people indeed sought something through a politics, but it was limited to and thinkable through "rebellion," a term that has the potential to leave the representation of blacks in dialectical and binary relations with whites in the discourse unchallenged. As this thesis discusses later in an analysis of the contemporary works produced shortly after the events of 1865, the maintenance of this dialectical relationship was essential to maintaining state power and epistemic authority over black people.

This is all quite troubling, since Heuman produces multiple sources that contain the words of people that clearly used the name of war to represent the events that they were participating in. For instance, Heuman includes a relatively minor point in his narrative that one participant John Pringle Afflick had "went from house to house encouraging people to join the rebellion and threatening those who refused."<sup>104</sup> If one looks at the footnotes, the evidence came from the testimony of Joseph Rose, who was

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<sup>103</sup> Heuman, xiii.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 26.

distinguished by politics, racial identification, and class from Afflick, and testified against him to the JRC. Checking the actual testimony then shows that the appellation and naming of the event as a “rebellion” did not come from Afflick at all but from Rose’s own opinion and interpretation of the event. Rose had in fact recalled that he “heard John Pringle say it was lucky for the whites the war broke out at Morant Bay, as the blacks were waiting for Circuit Court at Bath on the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of October, when all the white folks from Port Antonio side and Morant Bay side would be in Bath and they would kill all the white and coloured people.”<sup>105</sup>

In this way, Heuman shows that scholars can ignore the specificities of words while presuming that any term that roughly means “violent conflict” can be treated in a generic sense. Both Afflick and Rose testify to this common “fact,” so Heuman treats them each person as illustrating the same phenomenon of “rebellion.” Scholars can account for names and meanings while remaining trapped in their own frameworks that wittingly or unwittingly take the side of colonial contemporaries or leave this problem unexplained.<sup>106</sup> Thus, it seems more important to Heuman that he achieve narrative coherence around the category of rebellion rather than attending to interruption of his project by the actual naming practices of the Jamaican people. We historians can unwittingly and tacitly carry forward naming practices that accept the voices of the

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<sup>105</sup> Evidence of Joseph Rose, *PP*, [3682], Papers Laid, 38.

<sup>106</sup> See also Tanya Huelett, “‘Cleave to the Black’: Identity, Community, and Allegiance-Making in Post-Emancipation Jamaica,” (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 21. While Tanya Huelett’s historical investigation directly addresses the political contestation and nuances of racial identification in 1865, I have to disagree entirely with Huelett’s praise of Heuman because she maintains his naming practices and “rebellion” problematic. She argues thus: “By focusing on intimate aspects of the rebellion, Heuman’s 1994 study was able to center insurgents as actors and to focus more closely on their aspirations. These voices come through most clearly in his text, as they were gleaned from testimonies given as part of the Jamaica Royal Commission.”

colonials rather than the people because in an empirical sense, we think they are talking about the same happenings and that their words a priori *mean the same things*.

My point here is not to say that Heuman's historical narrative is wrong and that scholars should cast it to the side. Rather, his methodology is inadequate to think politics, history, and memory from any position outside of the state. He can tell his audience "what happened" and that black people evidenced the capacity to organize in preparation for generalized violent conflict. But how black people on the ground understood and created meaning can remain centered on the sight of the colonial state and their agents. Organization alone and the leading of "rebellion" say nothing by itself about how black people on the ground understood and constructed meaning of these events. It figures that black people solely waged their political struggles in order to "prove" to the whites and the colonial state that they were equal citizens and that they deserved equality in terms thinkable and appropriable by the colonial state.

Heuman thus begins from the state and "rebellion" and works his way down to the event and the people. The subaltern can take form and yet remain a product of abstraction produced in and through the framework. This politics allows the historian to account for the name of war, yet nevertheless always locate meanings in a historical framework of "rebellion" that neutralizes and excludes the possible differences that speakers make between names. Although he does not carry forward the explicitly racist presuppositions of Jamaican contemporaries, through the name of rebellion he presents the historical subject (i.e. the "rebel") as an element *inside* the colonial state, and made to appear in the historical timeline through the action of *reacting* to the colonial state. The name of war and armed conflict takes place of course within the field of the state, but, as

demonstrated above, the Jamaican people have used it to envision and think new possibilities and political relations vis-à-vis the state and its discourses that refuse to be enclosed by them. The state and its power were not their goal and objective. It was instead about opening up to the ancestors once again in the ongoing political struggle for justice and reparation, as Hutton argued. But Heuman begin his analyses and historical narratives with the assumption that the (post)colonial state had already won the discursive battle before it began.

Scholars need to be quite careful on these issues, since even some white public officials appeared to have engaged with the name of war on their own account and also sometimes after being prompted by participants in the conflict. Even in the past, it was possible to see and recognize the name of “war” by the participants and ignore its relevance on any other wavelength other than “rebellion,” or some other analogous framework. While we attend to more examples in more subsequent sections of this work, for now, let us briefly note that even Sir Peter John Grant, successor to Governor Eyre, recognized the name of war in the same manner as Heuman has. In 1867, he wrote to the Earl of Carnarvon on the later trials of prisoners connected to the events of 1865 according in a court of civil law. He believed this granted them a much higher degree of empirical reliability, and this grounded his claim that while “This evidence throws no light on the cause which may have led to the conspiracy...it proves that the assailants proclaimed, upon making their attack, their object to be ‘war,’ that the war announced was a war of colour, and that they themselves understood, the day after the slaughter, that what they had undertaken was war.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Governor Sir J. Peter Grant to the Right Hon. The Earl of Carnarvon, Governor of Antigua, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1867, [3859] XLIX, Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Jamaica, 6.

Moreover, in the colonial discourse of whites in 1865, just like rebellion and insurrection, the meanings of war in the colonial discourse were inherently tied to whites' fears of another Haitian revolution.<sup>108</sup> William F. Finlason produced one of the few contemporary works after the events that made active reference to Bogle's invocation of war specifically as war. However, as a clear defender of Eyre and his actions in the suppression of hostilities his main point was to demonstrate how the state's enemies had explicitly organized themselves with the primary intention of using violence as an instrument of death and terror: "The nature of the massacre [at the Courthouse]...itself portended insurrection."<sup>109</sup> Like many contemporaries that feared that Jamaica in 1865 could have turned into another Haitian war of independence, Finlason argued that the vector of causation had been based in the disparity of the size of the "negro" population relative to the whites. In the historical and political context of Jamaica, this made the "danger of a negro insurrection...in its nature extreme, nay exceptional. Nay entirely peculiar...A negro rebellion is necessarily, sooner or later, a war of *extermination*. If not

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<sup>108</sup> The idea of a "second Hayti" appears to have been based almost exclusively in relation to reports of George William Gordon's incendiary speeches made throughout Jamaica during the period of the Underhill Meetings. For instance, Mr. J.D. Ford, a secretary of the Bank of Jamaica claimed that in Vere two to three weeks before the rebellion, he had heard Gordon say "the newspapers were abusing him and misrepresenting his Vere speeches, stating that he had said that Jamaica was to become a second Hayti; he asserted that he had not used those words." Evidence of J.D. Ford, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 388. J.F. Humber reported that at a meeting at Vere on September 4, 1865, he had said "They report to the Queen that you are thieves...tell them that I George William Gordon say they dare not do it. It is tyranny. You must do what Hayti does. You [plantation overseers] have a bad name now, but you will have a worse one then." Evidence of J.F. Humber, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 32. Others such as Alexander Phillips (labeled "black" in the JRC documents) testified that Gordon had never used such language in public or in private correspondence. Evidence of A. Phillips, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 928. I could not locate any instances in which witnesses reported that the immediate participants in the conflict referenced Haiti on their own accord or in the ways that the white colonials had thought, unless witnesses that had knowledge of this reference lied or omitted it from testimony.

<sup>109</sup> William Finlason. *The History of the Jamaica Case: Being an Account of the Rebellion of the Negroes in Jamaica: The Causes which led to it, and the Measures taken for its Suppression; The Agitation Excited on the Subject, its Causes and its Character; and the Debates in parliament, and the Criminal Prosecutions arising out of it*, 2nd ed (London, Chapman & Hall, 1869), 6. For other pro-Eyre accounts, see also Hamilton Hume, *The Life of Edward John Eyre, late Governor of Jamaica* (London: Richard Bentley, 1867) and Bedford Pim, *The Negro and Jamaica*. (London: Truebner & Co., 1866).

so intended originally, it ultimately, unless soon suppressed, must become so through the necessity of fear.”<sup>110</sup>

It is likely that if/when people like Finlason encountered black people remembering or naming the event as war, the above would have been consistent with their thinking. Whichever particular name colonial contemporaries gave to the conflict, this fear of escalation into war like Haiti animated them all. The beliefs, intentions, and politics of “negro” opponents lacked all content and were reduced to elements born out of Finlason and white peoples own fears.<sup>111</sup> Encountering the name of war merely served as corroboration for the truth that black people were barbaric and savage. If they were permitted to ally with one another, their numbers would inevitably overwhelm the white population. Even if Finlason, like Grant, could recognize that the participants in the conflict remembered and affirmed that the events had been a war, they could only represent this discursively and think war and black people who even had the danger of participating in it as connected to this telos of destruction of both whites and their colonial state and the law.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, v-vi.

<sup>111</sup> Finlason’s rhetoric obtained widely in his time. At a commemoration for Eyre in Southampton, England, the Earl of Hardwicke, speaking on behalf of the Navy, told the audience that “We all know that there has been a great insurrection in Jamaica—that it was an insurrection of free people (great cheering) who enjoyed all the liberties that we do (renewed cheering)...it was nothing more nor less than the insurrection of thousands against hundreds (great cheering). It began with war to the knife (cheers). It began with “We will destroy you all if you do not save yourselves.” From *Morning Herald*, reprinted in *Colonial Advocate*, “Banquet to Eyre in Southampton,” Sep 22, 1866.

<sup>112</sup> The idea that the names of the events only measure scale and intensity of violence and destruction, and the corresponding threat to the state and the law, was a common trope in the court documents. If all the names of an event just index violent conflict, then the only distinctions between terms are legal-juridical or as historical categories. For instance, on October 20, 1865, while military action was still being carried out, Eyre wrote to the Hon. Cardwell congratulating himself for his fast and decisive action in stemming the “outbreak of the rebellion,” and that without it, “the insurrection would have been universal throughout the entire island...an almost interminable war and an unknown expense [would] have had to be incurred in suppressing it.” Continued diligence and military action was necessary, because “The whole Colony has been upon a mine, which required but a spark to ignite it.” Eyre to Cardwell, *Parliamentary Papers*, [3594], LI, Papers relating to the Disturbances, 8. General O’Connor, one of the main military officers working with Eyre during martial law, argued the same points, noting the “massacre of innocent,

Second, Thomas Holt's *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* placed the "Morant Bay Rebellion" in the broader context of the political and economic conditions that shaped Jamaicans society throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He argues that the rebellion was important because it served as a symbol for "'ex-slaves' incapacity for responsible citizenship" in the eyes of the British. This subsequently led to the removal of self-government from the island and "set a precedent soon followed in other parts of the empire."<sup>113</sup> Although he only spent one chapter on the events of 1865 (symptomatically titled: "A War of the Races"), Holt undertakes an expert empirical analysis of the political economic and high discourse of the era, showing that conflict stemmed directly from the contradictions of a "free labor" system modeled on the former regulatory regimes of slavery, the collapse of the sugar estates and planter domination, drought, land scarcity, and general economic depression.<sup>114</sup> These degenerations of the political economy and social milieu of Jamaica only bolstered British claims concerning the inherent differences and distance between the races as a scientific principle.<sup>115</sup>

However, Holt's understanding and naming of the events carries on the same methodological aporia as seen above with Heuman. Holt argues simply, "If organization, preparation, and political consciousness distinguish a rebellion from a riot, then this was a rebellion. Whether Bogle intended to ignite a rebellion on 11 October is irrelevant;

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unoffending, helpless individuals, with a ferocious savageness almost unknown among the cruelest of the African tribes; an insurrection which, if not promptly and vigorously nipped in the bud, might have burst into a general rebellion, decimating, if not utterly destroying, the white population, spreading desolation, famine, misery, and all the horrors of war, throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica." General O'Connor to Military Secretary, *Parliamentary Papers*, [33] XLII.1, Correspondence Between Horse-Guards and General O'Connor on Conduct of Military Officers During Recent Deplorable Occurrences in Jamaica, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Holt, 307.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 265-69.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 308-09.

once shots were fired, a preconceived, though ultimately abortive, plan of action ensued.”<sup>116</sup> Tellingly, in in the very same paragraph, while pulling on Bogle’s letter as an impressive and “remarkable call to arms” (that he must have seen contains multiple appellations of war), Holt focuses on the letter as a call for black unity and as an expression of the desire and need to finally gain the support of the Maroons, and then leaves the discussion alone. Race and racial identification are presented as unambiguous and clear-cut in a way that does not significantly differ from white colonial contemporaries. Furthermore, Holt’s centering on the British colonials’ assessment of the failures of “responsible citizenship” of black people presents political contestation and historical change solely from the perspective of the colonial state. He therefore forecloses the possibility within his historiographical framework that most “ex-slaves” wanted nothing to do with the maintenance and reproduction of colonialist forms of political representation.

At another point, we learn that “the rebellion involved an estimated fifteen hundred to two thousand people, men and women, African and creole, estate workers and settlers. But at its core this was a peasant war.”<sup>117</sup> Yet the categories of “war” and “peasant” remain ambiguous here however. Did this “war” that was really a “rebellion” everywhere else in Holt’s text encompass different class and political groupings together in the category of the “peasant”? Did they affirm that they were leading a “peasant war,” or is this a theoretical assessment of the events? Or was it the shared consciousness of the “peasant” that fought against non-peasants together in the waging of war? I would suggest that Holt talks about the political economy of peasants in detail but the analysis

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 301.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 299.

remains centered in the context of the contestation over ideas of citizenship and how black people had proven themselves capable of becoming equal citizens before the law as the governing problematic of his study. This is linked to his idea of freedom, based in his reading of Hegel's philosophies concerning "how freedom emerges out of absolute domination" and "the struggle for mastery and the resistance to being mastered."<sup>118</sup> Similar to Eugene Genovese's works such as *The World the Slaveholders Made* (1969) and *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974), Holt takes the dialectics of "the struggle of master and slave" as its optic by privileging "the thought and action of the Afro-Jamaican masses" over those of the elites, yet, again, the narratives and prerogatives of the state remain as the constitutive factor of politics.<sup>119</sup> The history can make it appear as if the entire political problem had been that the law had failed to actualize freedom for people and thus the solution lay in its reformation, and never its abolition.

Furthermore, like Heuman and many scholars and contemporaries dealing with 1865, names for the event can often collapse and be substituted with others in the discourse. Considering that Holt never proceeds to undertake any more discussion on the specific name of war and returns back to thinking the events of 1865 along a metric of rebellion, symptomatically, we can see that for Holt, the determination of causes, consequences, and reasons for historical change and continuity in the traditional sense

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, xxiv; 9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 9. Genovese also fully adopts the master/slave dialectic as the primary theoretical apparatus of historical interpretation. The problem is that his arguments are powerless to think blackness on any terms other than those irreducibly constituted in relation to whiteness, and thus the master. He also privileged the mentalities and ideas of slaveholders and figured that slaves readily adopted the paternalistic and conservative views of the planters. These ideas were then appropriated by slaves in order to resist the dehumanizing structures of slavery. However, this "freedom" was achieved by seeking out protectors and masters (i.e. white people), and blacks therefore do not exist without whites. He hypostasizes the dialectical relationships in the *thought* of whites about themselves and others as "history" *tout court*. See *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969); and *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

remain at the center of the historical narrative, rather than the specific meanings ascribed to the events by the participants. Although his study is empirically rich and well researched, again, it is the historian that commands the discursive situation at hand.<sup>120</sup>

This kind of problem can also emerge in approaches that employ comparative methods to link the “Morant Bay Rebellion” with other so-judged “rebellions.” This move expands the field of inquiry by linking disparate violent irruptions of all kinds that occurred in different times and places together. While this allows the historiography to connect the events of 1865 to a wider spatial and temporal context of other moments of popular unrest and armed conflict occurring in Jamaica, the West Indies, and the British Empire in general, it also carries the risk of treating these phenomena as comparable on the basis of the framework of the historian, rather than on the ways that people remember and relate these events together. The “Morant Bay Rebellion” can become irreducibly linked in an historicist register to other such slave “rebellions” like “Tacky’s War,” “The Baptist War,” or other popular “riots” that have occurred before and after 1865 (Falmouth Riots, 1859; Soldiers’ Riots 1894; Montego Bay Riots, 1902; Labour Riots of 1938, etc.), but then lead to an overestimation of what these comparative frameworks of “rebellion” can tell us about the experiences of black people in 1865 or today, and why this name of war was so important that they would use it above all others. The only distinction

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<sup>120</sup> See also Mimi Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 5, 11, 14, and 199-223. In our context, many of Sheller’s arguments concerning the “rebellion,” as she herself notes, are based empirically and discursively on Holt’s, and Heuman’s, accounts of the event. She adheres to all of the same vocabulary, and she locates the “preconditions” for rebellion more broadly, to include both economic and political contention by activists like George W. Gordon and his supporters that preceded the rebellion (pg. 201). While her study is insightful in showing the differences between the democratic participation of Haitian and Jamaican peasants in the post-Emancipation period, her study is of limited utility here because of the sociological apparatus used as the framework, and her focus on the events that preceded the events of 1865 rather than on the events themselves. Much of her narrative also employs on the sociological concept of a “public” and “civic engagement” in the “public articulation of racial and national identities,” which is not my particular focus (pg. 11).

between rebellion and war would be the level of intensity of conflict and the supposed actors or sides involved, and not how people do work to shape the context of “rebellion” from their own perspectives, and through their own names and actions. An uncritical eye towards the heritage and uses of these historical and political categories has the capacity to silence the particularities between each of the cases; or “rebellion” can make the colonial state appear as the a priori grounds of all political action, relegating anti-statist politics, histories, and/or memories to an imaginary domain of inexistence.

Third, Devon Dick’s *The Origin and Development of the Native Baptists in Jamaica and the Influence of their Biblical Hermeneutic on the 1865 Native Baptist War* (2008) has come perhaps the closest in taking the problematic of “war” as its basis, rejecting the terms of “rebellion” and “riot” as the name of the events of 1865.<sup>121</sup> However, he does so for different reasons than the speakers at the commemorations discussed above. He argues that “rebellion” is a poor choice of words to describe the events since “Rebellion has the connotation of an evil act against authority,” and proposes to replace the name to “war” in order to avoid beginning from these negative connotations in his study of the development of “Native Baptist” religious theology and its impacts on the ideologies that animated the resistance.<sup>122</sup> Thus, a change of war is required because war “can be a neutral term dependent on who the aggressor is and who is the defendant. A war can be armed conflict or a protracted struggle not involving arms.”<sup>123</sup> Dick then proposes to modify the name to the “Native Baptist War...since ‘war’ is less objectionable than ‘rebellion.’” This does justice to both the nature of the

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<sup>121</sup> Devon Dick, *The Origin and Development of the Native Baptists in Jamaica and the Influence of the Biblical Hermeneutic on the 1865 Native Baptist War* (Thesis, University of Warwick, 2008), 31-32.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 33.

conflict and the underlying bases of the goals and ideas of the resistance movement without recourse to the idea or reality of violence. His re-orientation of the question of the name does reveal some underlying historiographical gaps in thinking the events (although the way that he does so is open to questioning as noted below). For instance, he argues that the “Native Baptist” influence was unique and should be understood in relation with the paradigms of Sam Sharpe and the popular resistance movements for that led to the “Baptist War” in 1831. The basis of the war of 1865 was not an attempt to install a racial superiority of blacks over whites, to create another Haitian republic, or to convince the Maroons to join on account of a shared blackness. Instead, in their theological senses, both 1831 and 1865 had been about the achievement of justice predicated on the ideas of Christian “reconciliation” with their oppressors just as much as “resistance” to them.<sup>124</sup>

However, Dick’s solution to the name actually comes in the form of a substitution, insofar as he changes to the name of the event to “war” in the invention of a new proper name the “Native Baptist War,” which none of the immediate historical participants in question used or affirmed on any basis during the events or afterwards. While I can agree with Dick’s attempt to critique the naming of the event, he primarily interprets the meanings and possibilities of war for the participants as a stepping stone to his ultimate objective: to demonstrate that something called “Native Baptist” doctrine and ideology clearly existed as a bounded “theology” and “religion” (or not; we are never presented any consideration of this thought). In a way, it is therefore the “theology” that functions as the subject of the historical process instead of the people, on the ground, which animate and politically activate Dick’s ostensibly uncontested “theology.” The

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 385-394.

names and naming of the event by the Jamaican people are still relegated to the periphery as the historian imposes their own categories and frameworks on the historical analysis. Symptomatically, many of his sources come from missionaries and contemporaries writing before and after the events of 1865, and none of them participated in the conflict. Bible passages and the elucidation of high discourse take the place of encounters on the ground. Nor does Dick sufficiently consider the genealogical heritage of names like rebellion and war nor does he provide a method for investigating these practices. Whether “religion” or “race” is more important than the other in the historiography, “war” in the colonial discourse was hardly a neutral term, and it is doubtful that many of the black “Native Baptists” would have thought that “war” was neutral as well.

As the foremost Jamaican scholar working on the events of 1865, Clinton Hutton has explicitly touched on the fact that the African descendants that clashed with colonial authorities on October 11, 1865 called the confrontation “the ‘war’ at Morant Bay in the language and meaning of the Jamaican folk. Paul Bogle and other leaders associated with it referred to it as such.”<sup>125</sup> In contrast to Heuman and Dick, Hutton places emphasis on the black, African slave pasts and political practices that shaped the spiritual and political bases of the movement as well as the event’s reverberation into future religious movements such as Revival Zion, Alexander Bedward and his Revivalist congregations, and Rastafari. In addition to discussing the preconditions to conflict such as the collapse of the sugar industry, the development of capitalist free labor regimes, and the alienation of black people from the legislative bodies of the colony, he also shows that the intellectual and cultural basis for the construction of a new kind of black identity and consciousness that resisted colonialism was wider than just Bogle and the immediate

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<sup>125</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, xiv.

forces engaged in conflict.<sup>126</sup> His study has added to the specialist historiography by extensively cultural and religious historiography on African peoples as a counter to the colonial tendency to privilege the Judeo-Christian elements of Bogle's movement.

During a meeting with him in February 2016, Hutton further stressed the point to me that the conflict must be understood from the perspective of African and Jamaican spiritualities. "You cannot have a spiritual rebellion," Hutton reminded me, "but you can have spiritual warfare."<sup>127</sup> While a scholar like Stephan Palmié might advise caution over what appears to be Hutton's neo-empiricist tendency to take categories like "black," "African," "Kumina" and "Revival" for granted without critique, in our context, I take Hutton's inclusion of the name of war to be part of a greater historiographical and political project of integrating forgotten or downplayed cultural elements of a slave past that are usually relegated to not only the margins of historical understanding of "The Morant Bay War," but also the writing and questioning of Jamaican histories in general.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 78-95.

<sup>127</sup> Clinton Hutton, interview by Ryan Fontanilla, University of West Indies-Mona, February 20, 2016.

<sup>128</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 149-159. Clinton Hutton has added to the historiography here by articulating some of the cultural and cosmological aspects of the oaths given by Paul Bogle and other leaders of the movement in 1865 to policemen captured on October 9, 1865. He argues that the oath was meant to combine the spirits of the ancestors with the living, based in practices he links with Yoruba "Ogoun-type spirits" given symbolic form with the cutlass, "as the agent of destruction and creation. The cutlass was sown to in the oath taking ceremony... This outwardly Native Baptist deacon [Paul Bogle] was inwardly a *Poko* leader, an expression of masking... [which] is still evident in *Revival* today." Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 152. He claims that this was a way for Bogle and his allies to construct new forms of knowledge that were consistent with African-based spiritual practices rather than European ones (i.e. Baptists). However, his presentation of the evidence is tinged with concepts of "religion" that echo the presumptions of bounded wholes and "retentions" or "survivals" akin to Melville J. Herskovits, as thought by the anthropological discourse of the early and mid-twentieth century. His empirical studies could have benefitted from engagement with works such as J. Lorand Matory's *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Stephan Palmié's *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) and *The Cooking of History: How not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013) in undertaking a critique of the epistemological objectification of "religion" as it has appeared in nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropological discourse and historiographical frameworks engaged in the study of "African" ritual practices.

However, while this thesis owes much to the kinds of question that Hutton has put forward on the name and naming of war, his analysis of the name itself remains unsystematic and insufficiently theorized. He references the fact of the war but it does not significantly impact the course of his historical narrative. The relationship of this desire to get to the real “past” and the genealogies and histories of the name of the events of 1865 can lead to substitution of the event name without tracing out the politics and consequences of the former names and naming schemes of the colonial. Furthermore, as discussed in more detail below, Hutton can also present the conflict as a simple battle between blacks and whites as such without considering the ambiguities and contestation over these terms. That is, claims such as “The ‘Morant Bay Rebellion’ was the classic example of violent confrontations between blacks and whites in the society that emerged in Jamaica after the abolition of slavery” need to be unpacked further, particularly what the categories “black” and “white” did and did not mean in the moment. This issue relates back to his use of categories like “Africa” and “black” can appear in the text as static and fixed epistemic objects that have always existed as such (although these potentially anachronistic determinations are part of the politics of the moment).

Hence, even though Hutton has affirmed that the Jamaican “folk” remembered the events of 1865 as war, he does not pull on this insight to problematize the framework of any of the previous historical and historiographical narratives as they stand. The challenge can come in the form of an addition of histories that leaves the standard edifice in place. When thinking the name of war and how these particular ancestors used it, the former historiographical frameworks of scholars have not sufficiently accounted for its presence in the evidence and what it could mean for the historiography and the historical

representation of the events of 1865. While I do not pretend to be able to tell Jamaican people “what they should remember and what they should forget,” in the following section, I would like to add to the historiography by using the appellation of the name of war in the source materials as a methodological lens into some well-known and lesser known moments of this contested history. Focusing on the appearance of war in the written record and following out the claims of people like Hutton, Blackwood-Meeks, and Ka’bu Kheru serves to corroborate some of the work undertaken generally by scholars while also providing a means to think and present the events of 1865 from a position outside of the state, and centered on the people who named and remembered *war*.

## II. “War is at hand”

### 1. Memories of War, 1865-Present

References to the events as *war* are rare in contemporary newspapers and observer accounts. In *The Gleaner*, for instance, I could only locate a small number of instances before the twenty-first century where “war” reappears in relation to the representation of the events of 1865: (1) local healer and prophet Alexander Bedward’s alleged call in January 1895 to “Let them remember the Morant War,” and his subsequent trial for seditious language that took this call as one of its bases; (2) a short newspaper article on one John Shirley who during his trial for indecent language in 1911 remarked that he intended to return to Linstead, in the parish of St. Catherine, ““where I was born an’ bred,”” the home that he had left “’after the Morant Bay war”” for Kingston nearly forty-six years prior; (3) a statement in an editorial regarding the publishing of a produce book in 1912 and an elderly woman quoted as referring to the events of 1865 as the “Morant Bay War;” and (4) and an article from 1972 focusing on the folklore and songs of Jamaica printed the folk song “War down a Monklands” that referenced the event as a war but placed it symptomatically under the heading of “The Morant Bay Rebellion.”<sup>129</sup>

On the surface, it appears that the name of war and these memories of ordinary Jamaican people were not important to contemporary observers. However, from an alternative perspective, the general lack of references makes the existing evidence of memories of war more powerful and significant. For instance, Bedward could have invoked a name other than “war” for the event such as “rebellion” or “insurrection” but

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<sup>129</sup> (1) For Bedward’s statements, see *The Gleaner*, January 29, 1895 and May 1, 1895. The *Gleaner* also quoted Bedward’s call to “Remember the Morant War” in May 1895; (2) *The Gleaner*, November 1, 1911; (3) *The Gleaner*, April 25, 1912; (4) *The Gleaner*, July 20, 1977.

specifically chose not to. He chose this at the exclusion of other names, and since others distinguished by race, class, and proximity to the colonial state understood him specifically as having referred to the “rebellion” of 1865, Bedward could be interpreted as showing the existence of naming practices outside of elite contemporary discourse.<sup>130</sup>

In addition, occurring relatively close in time with one another, John Shirley and the old woman referenced above also remembered the events as war decades after the events of 1865 and could have easily carried that name with them for decades. They presumably came from the lower classes of black laborers. Tellingly, the man who wrote the editorial about the elderly woman commented on how her knowledge of produce should be removed from the book because it was impossible for a woman of her education and age to know anything current and relevant. There was thus particular class and racialized bases that were part of rejecting people’s memories of the events. Even if Shirley and the old woman had in theory picked up the name of war only after hearing of Bedward’s 1895 trial in the newspapers and/or in conversation, war was still brought forward and continued by people in their memories. Comparatively, it is clear that these memories had been excluded from the contemporary and historiographical discourse of the events of 1865.

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<sup>130</sup> Those who gave evidence against him in court thought of his naming as a way of invoking the events of 1865 in general; any name would have sufficed. John Lanigan, a sub-editor at the *Gleaner* and one of the primary witnesses against Bedward at his trial stated that he understood “the Morant war to mean an insurrection in Jamaica...the insurrection at Morant Bay, I believe.” However, he was not that familiar with the events of 1865 and thought that his invocation could have been harmless, since “I can’t say that all true Jamaicans ought to remember the rebellion of 1865. I know very little about it.”<sup>130</sup> Shortly after the conclusion of the trial and the commitment of Bedward to the Insane Asylum (he served around six months and was then released; he was later committed in 1921 for leading a march to Kingston to ascend into heaven, a popular memory captured in songs, letters, and texts of the period), the *Jamaica Advocate* criticized their rival the *Jamaica Post* for attempting to rile the government to take action against agitation by blacks for political power, saying that “We wish to tell the “Jamaica Post” that its *little* means cannot achieve its *great* purpose. Its efforts are in vain. It can neither taunt the Government, nor the people, into a *Morant Bay War*.” *Jamaica Advocate*, June 8, 1895.

Songs based in oral traditions also carried forward the name and memory of war. For instance, Walter Jekyll had already documented in 1907 the song “War Down a Monklands” which was not commented upon in *The Gleaner* until a decade after Jamaican independence. Memories of death and trauma pervade the text:

War down a Monk-land  
War down a Morant Bay  
War down a Chigger foot  
The Queen never know.  
War, war, war oh!  
War oh! Heavy war oh!  
Soldiers from Newcastle come down a Monkland  
With gun an’ sword fe kill sinner oh!  
War, war, war, oh! Heavy war oh!<sup>131</sup>

Thus memories of the name of war have been carried on and reproduced through the medium of oral tradition and history into the present day. Black Jamaican people did not remember the events as a rebellion or a riot; it was not “riot oh!” and “disturbance down a Chiggerfoot.” In the musical notation, the same notes indicated in the text for the line “war oh! Heavy war oh!” were identical to the notes sang by Blackwood-Meeks during the commemorations of today in the line “war oh! Guinea war oh!” It appears likely that the Jamaican people have remembered the particular name of war through song the entire time that contemporaries were naming the events as rebellion, riot, and insurrection. The war had been widespread throughout these locations in eastern Jamaica, and the

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<sup>131</sup> Walter Jekyll, *Jamaican Song and Story: Annancy stories, digging sings, ring tunes, and dancing tunes* (London: Folklore Society, 1907), 187. Jekyll and other subsequent scholars have treated the name “sinner” as referring to Bogle’s people that were killed in the suppression. However, it is also possible that the idea of the sinner cut across the distinction of participant/non-participant in the conflict. All could have been thought of as sinners. For instance, in the aftermath of the event, colonials continued to report that hundreds of people were gathering for spiritual and “Revival” meetings. Thomas Christy, a policeman stationed at Top Hill in St. Paul parish, reported on one such meeting, “a large number of persons there. They were shouting out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Awake, sinners, awake;’ ‘Awake, converters, awake,’ jumping up and making a noise with their mouths.” Thus, the appellation of the sinner and its potential meanings were tied to the action of waking and rising out of sin. The “sinner” is not necessarily Bogle’s people. Evidence of Thomas Christy, *PP*, [3859], Correspondence Relative to Affairs of Jamaica, 45.

perception of the “Queen” not knowing about the war has less to do with deference to authority and more to do with the perception of the colonial state and its soldiers as possessing the ability to use violence against black people without any barriers or real reasons. Once the colonial soldiers began the wave of destruction against the “sinner,” there was no stopping them. The song may have lamented the coming of war for this reason, but it remains the colonial soldiers that waged war in this way.

Another song carried on in oral traditions and recorded at least by 1907 that does not contain the appellation of war nevertheless reveals that the events of 1865 were explicitly connected in memories with the colonial state and their destruction of the *black people of St. Thomas* in particular.

Oh General Jackson!  
Oh General Jackson!  
Oh you kill all the black man them!  
Oh what a wrongful judgment!  
Oh what a wrongful judgment!  
Oh what a wrongful judgment!  
You kill all the black man them.  
Oh what an awful mourning!  
Oh what an awful mourning!  
Oh what an awful mourning!  
You bring on St. Thomas people!<sup>132</sup>

Interestingly, the “General Jackson” referred to in the song was a military officer that commanded troops at Bath and Manchioneal beginning on October 13, 1865. Jackson had been tasked with hunting Paul Bogle in particular. He reported that as he advanced into Monkland, he reported that “40 or 50 black and coloured people surrounded me in the lower cottage; they said to me, ‘Paul Bogle has been here... We know you General by name pretty well at Mahogany Vale.’”<sup>133</sup> Paul Bogle also knew

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 233.

<sup>133</sup> Evidence of General F. Jackson, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 120-21.

who Jackson was and was prepared to meet him in battle, ““Tell that d----d Mahogany Vale General bring all the white troops, and I am ready for them at Stony Gut.”” Jackson responded to them, “My good friends, I am going to bring the white troops down here.”<sup>134</sup> He later claimed that he did in fact meet Bogle on “a grey horse,” and described him as “a great big black fellow on the side, well armed.” Jackson tried to shoot Bogle but missed. Bogle then rode off into the bush.<sup>135</sup>

Although he may have embellished the details of his story, his testimony can reveal some additional facets in relation with the song.<sup>136</sup> First, “General Jackson” is presented in the song as the symbolic representation of the legal order and whiteness, and the people that Jackson met in the village also made this association. The villagers knew Jackson by name, and Bogle had told this to them recently or they could have had previous encounters with Jackson. In relation to the song, Jackson made the wrong choice in killing black people, and he was also distinguished from black people therefore as the one who had the power to decide on such a violent course of action in the first place. Each inhabits unequal power positions, as black people as a race receive punishment, and not General Jackson or the soldiers he labeled under his command as white that had brought death and destruction to the people. When Jackson called the villagers his “friends” and told them that he was specifically bringing the “white troops”

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 122.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, 120-22. During parts of his testimony, Jackson argued with the lawyers to let him tell his narrative of the events, rather than allowing the lawyers to extract bits of information from him. Also, of note, Jackson had been quite active in the suppression and oversaw countless executions:

5705. Had all those been left by the rebels? – If you would let me tell my own story it would save time. ...

5710. What did you do; we do not want all this conversation? – I am telling you what I did. ...

5767. Did you visit Stony Gut at any time after this? – No; but will the Commission allow me to say a few words with regard to Stony Gut?

5768. But you were not there, we understand? – I have not been there, but I made myself acquainted with it.

to fight, he was trying to demonstrate his power and possibly show that Bogle's provocation would be met with the full force of the colonial state.

Second, the events are remembered in song specifically as a war waged by whites against black people. Yet the reference to the "black man" in the song evokes ambiguities in how people identified race and skin color. "Black" in this case could encompass both the "black" and the "coloured" people as a shared class and ancestral position, for instance, but figured as political positions vis-à-vis the whites and the colonial state. Assuming that Jackson told the truth about his encounter with Paul Bogle and the villagers, Bogle labeled the soldiers that would be arriving for him as white. It is possible that Bogle thought that only soldiers with white skin would be fighting against him, yet it is just as likely that Bogle was making a contingent political determination that soldiers fighting against him were identified politically with the whites in control of state power. The association of whiteness with the colonial state formed a mark of distinction for Bogle and his allies to distinguish their politics of blackness from the ideas of whites and blacks advanced by the colonial state. In all likelihood, Jackson's troops would have consisted of whites and non-whites (also contingents of Maroons), so there is ambiguity and contestation over blackness in relation with whiteness but not beholden to it. Did the villagers think whiteness in the way that Bogle and/or Jackson supposedly contended? What is the relationship between whiteness and blackness vis-à-vis the colonial state and its power? These are some difficult theoretical and political questions that this thesis attempts to explore. But even at this point, it is clear that racial identifications and their political valences are shifting and contested in the moment. These themes were

represented and remembered in, through, and by war; and race-based rhetoric was part of the waging of this war.

In turn, by tracing the appearance and appellation of the name of war in witness testimonies as collected by the JRC, we also find evidence that many black people indeed remembered the events as war at the exclusion of other names. Some witnesses remembered and presented the particular name of war to the lawyers in a way that challenged the idea that the lawyers had total power over the situation. To note, the appellation of war by witnesses and the lawyers' reactions during questioning are telling because the lawyers generally tried to stick to referencing the events as a "disturbance," and the participants as "rioters" or as part of a "mob," for instance.<sup>137</sup> Since the JRC had been convened to investigate Eyre's handling of the martial law following public outcry in Britain, I think that some of the lawyers (like Mr. Gorrie, introduced later) wanted to avoid the use of the terms like "rebel" so that it would not appear as if Eyre was justified in his actions before a final judgment had been rendered by authorities. By avoiding certain terms like rebellion and rebels they could nevertheless still determine the scale and organizational capacity of Bogle's military forces and this could be achieved through any number of ways and names. Their sights could remain centered on Eyre and others who allegedly abused their positions as officials of the colonial state while keeping the

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<sup>137</sup> See, for example, Evidence of Dr. Major, *Parliamentary Papers*, [3683-I] Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, Appendix, 28, which also shows how the "rebels" can be recognized as a military contingent but it can mean nothing relevant to the white colonials except for the degree of the threat:

1035. Will you describe more particularly the way in which the mob, as I have called them, you call them the rebels, came forward, which induced you to come to the conclusion that they had been previously organized? – They came in rows. They were brandishing their cutlasses and sticks, and they were well packed together close behind each other, but not at all straggling; they advanced slowly and deliberately; they did not slacken their pace in the least, or alter their pace from the time.

1036. Were they more like troops, or like an irregular mob? Were they in rank and file? – They were more like troops, I consider.

experiences and memories of black people on the periphery as victims and/or perpetrators of the conflict and little else.

Although racial categories remained in contestation, when talking with people labeled “black” and coming from the laboring classes in the court documents, sometimes lawyers appropriated the specific name of war as used by some witnesses. From the perspectives of these witnesses, the lawyers thus corroborated their memories, wittingly or unwittingly. One interesting example comes from the testimony of Ann Mitchell, identified as “black,” who began by recounting to the questioners how her husband, Charles Mitchell, had been tied to a tree and shot in the head by a squad of Volunteers and soldiers under the command of a Mr. Ford. From the line of questioning in the court documents, it appears that the lawyers called her to the stand primarily to collect information concerning the conduct of colonial military forces during martial law. But at one point when the interrogation progressed to her knowledge of Paul Bogle, the woman interrupted the lawyer’s questioning through her particular appellation of the name of war. While at first she referred to the events as a “row,” she quickly changed the conversation by introducing the name of war, which briefly re-centered the questions on her memories:

4794. But you said some little time ago that you had never seen Paul Bogle?—I never saw him for three of four months before the row commence.

4795. You said a little time ago that you had never seen him; then you did know Paul Bogle? — I knew him; but before the war commenced, about two or three months ago, we never met together.

4796. But before the “war,” as you call it, began, had you heard it was going to begin? — I never heard it at all. . . .

4799. Then you had attended Paul Bogle’s chapel three months before the war? — Before the war last year at Christmas.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Evidence of Ann Mitchell, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 104. Another individual also alternated between “row” and “war.” In this case, it was therefore an equivalence made by the people themselves, which makes the appellation of war that much more significant as an instance of an *act of*

Interestingly, the lawyer qualified Mitchell's statement by saying "as you call it" after he encountered the appellation of war. Unless the lawyer referred to war in scare quotes as he spoke, it can still be said that they were added purposively given the fact that the other mentions of war in the passage (as well as in other witness testimonies) did not receive such marks. The word was at least important or inconsistent enough in some register to note it in such ways; it was the first time that I could locate in the JRC documents that a witness claimed that the events in question were a war. On the one hand, the lawyer could have been drawing attention to this name in order to (nonexclusively): impugn or condescend to Mitchell's understanding of the events; confirm her statements to demonstrate the murderous intent of the participants; and/or confirm her statements in order to distinguish his position from the witness but be enabled to use the name in questioning so that he would be understood. In this case, many scholars that were looking for rebellion and found war could mistake this evidence as part of the historical "rebellion," as a general name for violent intentions and action, indications of wide-scale "planning" and "organization", and so on.

On the other hand, when viewed from the perspective of Mitchell, it could also be said that she challenged her position as a passive witness and tried to shift the tables slightly against the lawyer in a reverse interrogation. The name of the events mattered to

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*naming* exclusive to names like "riot," "disturbance," "insurrection," and so on. Joseph Rose stated that "A month before the rebellion Charles Farmer, an owner of land near Hanning, told me, 'he had seen blood sprinkled at Bell Castle, Chapel, Manchioneal,' and that was a sign there was going to be a row soon. ... You river people are too afraid of white people. There's letter going and coming, and the Queen order that it is time for every black man to look out for himself." Evidence of Joseph Rose, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 38. In turn, Mary Heslop, a black woman, native of Grange Hill estate in Manchioneal, also talked with the same Charles Farmer after October 11, and told him "negroes are not justified in killing buckra this way, what are we to do without them?" He responded, "You had better not say so, or let anyone hear you, or they may kill you. I saw the blood sprinkle the other day at Belle Castle chapel and we know war was to come." Evidence of Mary Heslop, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 109.

Mitchell. She could have used any other word and been understood by the lawyer, but she chose “war,” and did not employ the word “row” over and over again, even though war and row conveyed the same basic meanings. In addition, she could have heard this language used by Bogle or his close allies before the events. Indeed, soldiers had killed her husband after they found a receipt signed by Bogle in her husband’s coat pocket, and if she had met him closer to the events than she claimed, it is improbable that she would have revealed this fact during testimony. While Mitchell’s relationship to Bogle cannot be shown with any certainty other than what is indicated in the evidence, I still find it important that people shared the same language that resisted the logic and vocabulary of the colonial discourse, however slight the connection appears on the surface.<sup>139</sup>

Drawing on Guha’s methodologies of thinking the historical subject, Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that historians have tended to miss encounters such as these because they have essentially relied on the same investigative methods as the *police*. He notes that the tendency in the historiography has been to rush to the court documents and then work outward to action and the construction of the context. The basic approach for many historians will then be to rely on evidence that is not only biased but also predicated on the production of a single, coherent narrative stream of “what really happened” during the course of an event, with a clear beginning and an end. The rendition of narratives in this way is connected to the prerogatives of the state insofar as the production of new narratives based on “primary” sources “are about assigning culpability and responsibility” by means of “individuat[ing] the crowd...[and] break[ing] the crowd into individual faces.” Chakrabarty pulls on the claims of Jacques Ranciere, adding that this

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<sup>139</sup> Evidence of Ann Mitchell, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 104.

move of individuating the crowd “is a very statist practice, a kind of Hobbesian idea of the collective,” in which the “state is made up by a contract between individuals.”<sup>140</sup>

The entire point of this practice, in the eyes of the state, is to speak for the individual and constitute the individual in the operation of selecting and distinguishing whom, as a nominally and legally “free” “individual”, was deserving of punishment, and in the most extreme case, death.<sup>141</sup> At the same time, this orientation involves an interrogation of the historical subject that is based on the provision of the material trace of an event and their individual perceptions and memories of it -- and in this case, the name and naming of war -- while simultaneously proscribing the possibility of the subject’s production of an interruption, in their time as well as in ours. That is, the historian can enable and constrain the historical subject in a context that prevents them from speaking back and posing counter-questions.

Furthermore, the possibilities of thinking historical and political subjectivity through the methods of the police are inherently circumscribed within state power. Their methodologies and procedures present the illusion that subjectivity emerges only inter-subjectively through relations that operate between legal-judicial individuals. Thinking and recognizing the presence of the subject and their actions in different ways can easily become foreclosed as a possibility before any real critical reasoning has taken place.

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<sup>140</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Subaltern Studies Panel Discussion on 30 Years of Ranajit Guha’s Elementary Aspects,” Youtube video, 1:49:29, filmed in 2013, posted by “Centre for the Study of Developing Societies,” November 6, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXKyc6pzb4>. Many scholars working with histories of the African diaspora have provided illuminating ways to evaluate court evidence, which is particularly relevant in this particular historiography because of its underpinnings in the methods of British imperial history. However, I am not discussing their works here, and hope to integrate their works more fully in a future project. For a prolific work that has also met criticism for reading into the evidence, perhaps as I have also attempted to do in this thesis generally, see also James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

Guha's insight was to think the possibility of a "collective" but "evanescent" subject that only momentarily appeared during a moment of equality born in political struggle and/or crisis. As only appearing in a brief moment, this "subject" was not reducible to a single individual nor a collection of individuals counted one-by-one nor a collection of individuals that added up to the one as a transcendent subject. This movement makes room for a certain kind of figure, a different kind of subject, "that doesn't quite document itself correctly. It can't say, 'I did it.' There is no 'I' that can speak in that sort of fashion."<sup>142</sup> This collective subject is dynamic, it changes, shifts positions; it can appear briefly and then appear to vanish; and it can appear and sustain itself but be rejected by others. The notion of the subject as a sovereign individual, a set of rational capacities, or a property and status that one possesses and loses in death are the political fictions.

Turning back to the court documents from 1865, witnesses increasingly used and remembered the name of war at the exclusion of other names. For instance, Eliza Berry, a "black" woman living at Long Bay, told lawyers that she did not properly "remember" the events at Morant Bay because she was not there in person; but immediately after the question is rephrased if she had "heard" of what happened there, she said, "Yes; I heard a war was there."<sup>143</sup> William Darby, native of Stony Gut, also gave evidence of witnessing Paul Bogle and Captain Grant leading troops in marching exercises. Before he recounted this in testimony, the lawyer had to modify his language for Darby to understand him (or equally, maybe the witness resisted "understanding" the rules of the lawyer):

22891. Do you remember the outbreak at Morant Bay? – No. [The witness did not remember, or he doesn't recognize the word, outbreak.]

22892. Did you live at Stony Gut last October? – Yes.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Evidence of Eliza Berry, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 339.

22893. Do you remember the row at Morant Bay—the war? – Yes, I remember.  
[The questioner changed the name, and is then recognized.]  
22894. Where were you the day the war began at Morant Bay? – Stony Gut.  
[The questioner confirmed the right word for the witness.]<sup>144</sup>

Thus, we have clear indications that the name of war was not only grounded in the memories of the people; it was also important to them to get the name right. Like many other witnesses, Berry and Mitchell were not passive actors in this process but were actively engaged with the lawyers, pushing back on their desires to obtain the conventional chronological and linear sequences of the events and little else.<sup>145</sup> At least for a brief moment, they interrupted the flow of the discourse, and this was more than many others witnesses that merely confirmed everything that white colonials already thought, knew, and presupposed to be true (indeed, something like a rebellion had occurred, and the law had been broken). They did not need to introduce monumental changes to the language of the lawyers or contemporary interpretations of the war to be

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<sup>144</sup> Evidence of William Darby, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 453.

<sup>145</sup> Numerous other instances of the appellation and memory of war also occur in the JRC files. For example, lawyers asked Alexander Brown, labeled “coloured” from Font Hill:

13,123. Do you recollect the war at Morant Bay? –No.

13,124. Do you remember the war there? –No.

13,125. Did you never hear of it? – Yes; I hear of it.” Evidence of Alexander Brown, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 254.

Another suggestive case occurring close to Darby’s interrogation, David Valentine, labeled as a “black” man from Middleton above Stony Gut, was accused of participating in the sacking of the Potosi estate owned by Mr. Herschell on October 12 (Herschell was purposefully killed by Bogle’s forces at the battle on October 11). His testimony was largely unremarkable except for his positive confirmation to the lawyers’ direct question that he did “remember the Wednesday morning after the war at Morant Bay.” Evidence of David Valentine, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 455. But when trying to gather evidence against Valentine on the same day, the lawyers called one Harriet Graham, also labeled as “black,” who confirmed that she had lived with Valentine and gave evidence to his actions during the military conflict. Interestingly, the lawyers who had just used the word “war” in questioning Valentine shift to the word “disturbances” followed by the re-introduction of memories of war:

23,875. At the time of the disturbances in Morant Bay were you living with a man named Samuel Valentine? – Yes.

23,876. On the Saturday morning after these disturbances did you go into Bath? – Yes.

23,877. Did you hear a person named Pedo telling a soldier anything? –Yes.

23,878. Were they white or black? – Black soldiers.

23,879. What did you hear him tell them?—That he saw Valentine making war up at Potosi Buckra-house.” Evidence of Harriet Graham, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 470.

respected as taking part in the collective sharing of memories of war even if they had not met one another or participated directly in combat. They expressed their political agency in a different way that had nothing to do with the future formation of the nation-state. Instead they help to show that the colonial discourse was incomplete, full of holes and discrepancies that obtain equally in the historiography.<sup>146</sup> While I hope to explore some of these questions in more detail in a future work, for now, my objective here is to attempt to open up spaces in the historiography for the memories of the Jamaican people to count in a different way.

And although we must be careful with the labels of “black” and “coloured” in the JRC documents, it is also important to note that a survey of the documents will show that many people who indeed were “black” and came from lower-class backgrounds continuously referred to the events as a war, often at the exclusion of other possible names of the event such as riot or rebellion. (Nonetheless, sometimes, black people did use other names for the events. But many of these testimonies came from people politically allied with the whites, or from people that were tortured and/or imprisoned during the suppression.) When giving their own opinions and testimony, white and non-

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<sup>146</sup> For instance, see James Sweet, *Domingos Álvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2011). The work has been praised by scholars he has also come under heavy criticism for arguments that Domingos promulgated a “universally understood language of anti-imperial, anticolonial political contestation,” or that he “was their [the planter’s, the colonial state’s, etc.] worst colonial nightmare.” (pg. 6) But I interpret the more important point to be that Domingos transforms the lives of others in ways that reaffirmed his own African personhood; he interacts and intertwines with the logics and temporalities of the colonial world, but his core epistemology and cosmology remained singular so that he was the one that determined the people who thought they could control him. African personhood and identity cannot be disaggregated and remade as easily as historians may think. Sweet’s argument on the wholeness of Domingos challenges us to think of the concept of hybridity in relation to set theory or the paradox of the Christian Trinity (many beings that paradoxically exist as an indivisible unity), rather than as an ontological status that assumes a kind of biologicistic notion of the substitution, addition, and subtraction of divisible and discrete components like bricks to a wall, in a way that adds up to one-hundred percent. While social and/or physical death were always real possibilities for Domingos, his politics of healing were concerned with restoration and regeneration, and not the reconstitution of fragments (pg. 225-27).

white officials, planters, white women, police, etc. never refer to the events as a war in the way that the “subaltern” in this context described them. Lawyers can also be seen to shift and tailor their language according to whom they were speaking to. Nevertheless, from a different perspective, if the lawyers changed their language in order to obtain the “facts” of the situation at hand (like who had killed whom, who had been in command during the floggings or executions of prisoners, etc.), from the perspective of the witnesses, the lawyers actually confirmed their memories. There is no a priori reason why the historian should privilege the interrogator as the controller of the situation. The actual politics and creation of meaning from the events were located at entirely different levels that did not need the external authority of lawyers and the white people to be the bearers of truth. The Jamaican people of today have already helped show us this.<sup>147</sup>

By treating the name and naming of the events in this way, scholars gain access to a whole other zone of action subsumed under the categories and frameworks of the historiography. Historically, many black people of Jamaica remember war and named the events as such, and not rebellion.

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<sup>147</sup> Interestingly, an attention to these kinds of subjective acts of interruption can also help us conceptualize the political actions of today as part of the same phenomenon. Two such instances during the 2015 commemorations are suggestive in this regard. First, at one point Ka’bu can be heard commenting on people carrying machetes in the crowd during the march to the Morant Bay Courthouse. Although the evidence is only in audio, it is apparent that Ka’bu was disquieted by this sight, speaking into the microphone, “Wow, this is a machete lady,” at a time when the woman could not hear her; upon asking why she was carrying the machete, Ka’bu received a simple answer: “I want to march with the symbol of Paul Bogle.” Ka’bu Kheru, “150 Years Later, Paul Bogle War 10.11.15,” Youtube video. Second, Blackwood-Meeks interrupts the discourse on how the commemorations were a moment of black unity insofar as all of the media organizations were present. When asked by Ka’bu if she had ever seen such a thing, she replied “[in fact] Africans do this all the time. Not all Africans recognize them boundary them. But the media sources are set to competition. That is, my voice is heard on IrieFm, [and then] my face cannot be seen somewhere else. What a piece of tribalism!” Preceded with a nervous laughter, Ka’bu responded, “We’ll talk about that another time.” The party had a laugh about the comments, and then moved onto another topic.

## 2. Acts of Self-Naming: Warriors for Justice

Paul Bogle and his allies also rejected the colonial label of “rebels,” further challenging the idea that historians are free to name the participants however they choose. “Rebel” was a term applied by witnesses when giving their interpretations and opinions of things they had seen, but not when quoting the immediate participants involved. Rather than finding evidence of participants naming themselves “rebels,” “rioters,” and “insurgents,” as many of their contemporaries would frequently label them, we find scarce but telling evidence of black peoples’ self-appellation of *warriors* (for the rest of the thesis, I refer to black people engaged in battle and political struggle in 1865 as warriors). As an act of naming, I thus treat this self-naming as part of the same practices and meanings related to memories of war, particularly given the fact that “warrior” was chosen at the exclusion of contemporary’s names and naming schemes. For example, John McLean Gray (identified as white in the JRC documents), a proprietor of a cattle-breeding pen in St. Thomas in the East, reported that men arrived at his business on October 12 demanding stores of “guns, shot, powder, and the rest, and the called for drink, which of course I supplied.” However, he made clear during questioning that “These people stole nothing; they said they were warriors. They were not thieves; but as I was getting away a quantity of thieves entered the place.”<sup>148</sup> Gray made a clear distinction between the thieves and the warriors and did so partly in response to the people’s affirmation that they were not to be confused with thieves. The items that they took were appropriated for the war effort, and they would not take or destroy things not oriented towards this purpose.

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<sup>148</sup> Evidence of John McLean Gray, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 168.

The warriors acted in naming themselves and at the same time challenged the previous edifice of names and naming, and this rubbed off on Gray. He repeated the appellation of warrior two more times in his testimony, saying that “the warriors left a man in charge of the place, and he said that until I could show where Mr. Smith was I was not to go away,” and that one “of the warriors who was watching me got quite drunk, which was my object, and I got free.”<sup>149</sup> Thus, while “thieves” and “warriors” could be rendered similar by the colonial discourse (both were law-breakers and both could potentially harm other’s property or person), to the participants and even to Gray, the names could not be treated in any sense as equivalent at all. It was more than just a distinction according to the general and empirical meanings of the terms. The warriors specifically gave themselves that name at the exclusion of other possible names, even though many contemporaries would not have cared about the distinction at all. They did keep Gray in confinement until he could show them where their real enemy Mr. Smith was hiding. Not all white people were the same to the warriors. While Gray used subterfuge in order achieve his escape and may have despised the warriors for occupying his shop, we see again that through an act of interruption, the discourse was destabilized for a brief moment in a public context through an encounter. The warriors may even have changed Gray’s mind about what their politics was really about, even if he finally chose to escape.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 168. See also the testimony of Richard Kelly, a black laborer living at the Spring Valley Estate in Manchioneal. Here, the lawyer himself uses the name of war and warrior in his questioning of Kelly: 22,101. Were you at Morant Bay, where the war was? – I was in prison at Morant Bay the night the war came on. 22,102. Do you remember the warriors coming and opening the prison? – Yes; they gave me my clothes and let me go. Evidence of Richard Kelly, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 441.

Another telling instance was Janet Martin's qualification and argumentation over how the terms "rebel" and "warrior" should be understood. John Hamilton claimed that she had entered a Mr. Mark's store in Bath on October 12, demanding that she be repaid for the servant of Mr. Mark had "broken my umbrella, and lost my handkerchief [*sic*]. Unless you pay me 7s. 6d. there will be the devil to pay here to-day." Then she allegedly took the time to clarify what she meant, stating that, "If you don't know what I mean by 'Devil' I mean 'Rebel,' and if you don't know what that means it is the fighters and warriors at Morant Bay yesterday; I will bring them here."<sup>150</sup> Martin was not just trying to express the meaning and affirmation of warrior in language that Hamilton could understand; she simultaneously corrected any kind of misconception that the participants saw themselves as "Rebels" and "Devils," breaking down the logic in steps. Martin indexed and affirmed the new figures that had emerged in the form of "the fighters and warriors at Morant Bay yesterday." The events were obviously important to Martin as part of the reason why there were now warriors to fight against the class injustices and inequalities that had afflicted people like her.

She affirmed her own power in the process, as the one that could make the warriors come to Bath for an amount of money that might seem petty to the upper classes or the petty bourgeois. "Devils" and "Rebels" were trapped in the colonial discourse to fight for their own selfish ends as the tools of demagogues and as agents of destruction, but Martin made the warriors and fighters into positive figures which resisted easy incorporation into narratives of the state and who fought specifically to bring class and racial justice to those who could not wage that struggle alone. This is part of the reason why witnesses translated the self-appellation of warrior into rioter, protester, insurgent,

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<sup>150</sup> Evidence of Janet Martin, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 481.

and rebel: these negative figures did not fight for justice in the way that Martin represented the warriors as forces that she could call upon to resolve the theft of her goods without restitution. Whites and the petty bourgeois would have forced black people to pay their fines without question. Thus warrior was distinct from other terms even though they could mean the same things in a practical sense. Martin chose to specifically to single out those terms.<sup>151</sup> White colonials, many of their allies, and contemporary observers were incapable of thinking these nuances.

The self-appellation of warrior by black people also challenged their political positions vis-à-vis the colonial state and the whites that ruled it. The warrior could fight against a state but was not bound to repeat its logic; but the rebel could only fight from inside of the state and against it. Whether fighting against the colonial state or on the same side as the postcolonial state in its narratives, the warriors remained purely negative figures of opposition in the state's memories. Yet The warriors did not seek the complete destruction of every symbol, institution, etc. associated historically with the colonial order. For example, Sligo Campbell, a "coloured" police officer, said that upon Bogle's release of the prisoners at Morant Bay on October 11, Bogle "gave orders that they must get their own clothes, for he would not like to rebel against the Queen, and he would not strike as a rebel against the Queen, and so they wanted their own clothing." Another policeman William Cuthbert, present that day with Sligo Campbell, also said that the warriors had made clear that "they would not take against our Sovereign lady the Queen and would not receive them with the prison clothes on. They said I must give them a hammer to break open the chest where the clothes were and I did so."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 481.

<sup>152</sup> Evidence of Sligo Campbell, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 140-141.

Hence, the warriors were negotiating and tarrying with the figure of sovereign authority in Queen Victoria without remaining subordinated to the colonial state and its racialized legal order in its immediately present form. It would have been a clear statement of eliminating the status or position of the Queen as a necessary consequence of the overthrow of the colonial regime in Jamaica. Anti-colonial struggle against the immediate enemies of the people did not have to entail and a priori destructive orientation towards other state forms and powers. Taking over the state and then waging war against Queen was not the objective of this anti-statist politics. In the moment, the warriors were concerned with breaking the hold of the local power of the state controlled overwhelmingly by white people. The warriors did not think of themselves or act how the imaginary internal enemies of the state were supposed to act. They were not thieves and refused to be labeled as such; and as we saw above, they were also not “rebels.” And while it was plausible that they did not want to take the clothes of the Queen because it was her “property,” at the same time, we could also say that they wanted to have nothing to do at all with the former symbolic cloths of the colonials.

Moreover, Matthew Crasser reported that George Craddock (one of Paul Bogle’s main military captains) at Stony Gut after October 11 had told the people that “this country would belong to them, and they were about getting it, to take possession, that they had been long trodden under sandals, and now they were about getting the country; it had long been theirs, and they must keep it wholly in possession.”<sup>153</sup> Thus the warriors’ contingent stance toward the Queen did not mean that they had denied the truth that Jamaica had been their country all along and must be theirs again. Whites and the

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<sup>153</sup> Evidence of Matthew Crasser, *PP*, [3683-I], Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, 144; see also Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 106.

colonial state had been the real thieves. Craddock affirmed the truth that Jamaica had always been the product and construction of the black people who labored, fought, and died in political struggle. In a moment of retrospective significance, Craddock united the past, present, and future into one affirmation as part of the same process. He was not proposing to “move on” into future: instead, it was the proposition for the actualization of a possibility and a truth that had always been true because black people had indeed built the country with their bodies and labor, and in the context of war, they were laying a radical new claim to them, and would from that moment on keep Jamaica “wholly in their possession.” We cannot ever know if their success would have resulted in vastly different outcomes state-wise if the warriors had seized colonial power from the British. But the possibility existed for something different and politically *new*, which was more than a (post)colonial state predicated on infinite negations and self-reproduction could, and can ever say. While Craddock, Bogle and their allies may have indeed envisioned the institution of a new kind of system of governance, we should not assume that the ruins of the former colonial state, its knowledge, or its paradigms of citizenship would have functioned as the templates for the new political lives of black Jamaicans. Just because black people demanded equality in relation to whites should not imply that the ends of their politics was to transform black people into the figures that the colonial state desired.

As Hutton notes, James McLaren, another notable leader of the movement, also argued that the country and its lands should be in the hands of those that built it. While Hutton uses a speech made by McLaren in September 1865 to talk specifically about the philosophies and ideologies of the participants, I would like to highlight a few other

things that the evidence reveals in regards to how leaders of the movement perceived whiteness. McLaren argued that the whites had done nothing less but to return black people to slavery, as “myself was born free, but my mother and father was slaved; but now I am still a slave by working from days to days.”<sup>154</sup> The conditions of slavery were repeating themselves, and the freedom that McLaren was born into was meaningless. They had already attempted to send numerous petitions to the governor over granting them unused land so that they could “work with cane, and cotton, and coffee like the white. But the white people say we are lazy and won’t work.” Whiteness was a politics distinguished by the active prevention of black people to either live independently or be equally incorporated into the political body.

This was not an anomaly, but part of the colonial state’s regime of control to ensure that loyal black people were always on hand for labor. McLaren correctly diagnosed this condition as he contended that the whites knew perfectly well that “if the land was given up to them they did not want anything from the white people, they would try to make their own living themselves; but they would not given them the land to work, neither give them the money; how then were they to live?” White people controlled the economic situation through their politics and vice versa. Resistance was called for in this situation, necessitating a demonstration of power by numbers “to let the white people see there was plenty black in the island... and cry out that they [black people] don’t mean to pay any more ground rent again.” Blackness here is firmly identified with this lower-class position as an imposed injustice that operated according to lies and falsehoods because “the outside land was given to them a long time and the white people kept it to

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<sup>154</sup> Evidence of William Anderson, *PP*, [3683], Jamaica Royal Commission, 165; see also Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 108.

themselves.”<sup>155</sup> While I firmly agree with Hutton that there “was a clear tendency among the freeholders that black people should own Jamaica,” I find it necessary to qualify his idea that “they [blacks] earned it” because the country was already theirs to begin with.<sup>156</sup> There was nothing to earn from the colonials or prove to them. Rather, they affirmed and claimed something that they always knew to be true. Others may debate this truth – white people, Maroons, (post)colonial nationalist elites -- but their affirmation that black people did not need to rely on the whites in control of the colonial state for anything was axiomatic of their politics of blackness. It was the whites and their immediate allies that had stolen and robbed the people, and there was nothing to earn back from a thief. Again, this anti-statist politics did not require being against the queen because, unlike in colonialism, political authority and representation was not predicated on the guarantee of security (i.e. the absence of politics) by a “sovereign” external power. In any event, the immediate concrete enemy was not the Queen or the British as such but the power of the colonial state that had colonized the country and claimed it for white people. The ideological and political categories of conservative, liberal, revolutionary, etc. can never really speak to the warriors’ singular politics that could have had nothing to do with these ideas based in the discourses of the state.

In turn, John Wilson’s encounter with warriors presents an interesting case of what blackness meant in the moment to some of the participants, particularly given the fact that Wilson self-identified as “a black man” and a “mason by trade.” Testifying to the class disparities that obtained between black people in general as well as differences across generations of people, Wilson revealed that he was “formerly a slave of Amity

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>156</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 114.

Hall estate” and had stayed there after Emancipation to become the “headman in the stillhouse.” He had struggled to accumulate enough wealth to purchase land not only at Amity Hall but also “elsewhere, bought from Mr. Barclay.”<sup>157</sup> But black laboring people perceived Wilson as having gained these advantages through his relationship with Hire, while at the same time they had been denied access to the basic means of survival. Wilson was the ““favourite”” of Mr. Hire, a local attorney for the same estate that had brought numerous cases against laborers for theft, misconduct at work, and the breaking of contracts, for example. While it is not indicated in the evidence, perhaps Wilson had even aided Hire in obtaining these convictions. Black people that had brought suits against Hire had been denied in the courts continuously. As Hutton notes, only three out of thirty-two cases between 1863 and 1865 brought by black laborers against Hire for insufficient payment had succeeded.<sup>158</sup> Wilson may very well have aided Hire in the collection of evidence, and black people may have thought him actively colluding with Hire and the legal apparatuses of the colonial state.

On October 14, “three days after the rebellion broke out in Morant Bay,” Wilson reported that he was at work at Amity Hall, when he was approached by John Lucre and asked him ““I hear you warrior swear to kill me?”” (His statements are already therefore symptomatic of the colonial discourse of “rebellion,” as he recounts the name of warrior but still represents the events as rebellion.) When Lucre replied in the affirmative, Wilson answered that he did not understand what he had done to deserve death, and that ““I only do my duty...[nevertheless] when you kill all the white people what are [you]

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<sup>157</sup> Evidence of John Wilson, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 38, 109.

<sup>158</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 66-67.

going to do with the cane and the estate.”<sup>159</sup> Wilson could not understand that the warriors were affirming that white people were not necessary at all for the running of the estates, as Lucre responded that “We will make sugar of it, and share it amongst ourselves. We never mind about the ship.” For Lucre, whatever blackness could have meant, it certainly did not include playing by the capitalists’ games and rules, which stipulated that Jamaica simply could not survive (and would not be permitted to survive) without wage-labor and the exportation of commodities produced by black labor. No, those things would stay on the island, and the blacks would run the estates like they already knew how. Wilson also reported that Lucre “was the chief murderer of Mr. Hire” along with other people that appeared to have ritualistically destroyed Hire’s body in a kind of performance. They prevented the body from being buried, and had “dragged it down the house steps, and chucked it into the hole (did he mean a well? Or perhaps a shallow grave?). They would not allow it to be put in the coffin standing at the door.”<sup>160</sup> Thus the warriors left the body out and denied burial in the ground. Perhaps, if Amity Hall was to be theirs, they did not want a white colonial buried on the property. Hire deserved no honor.

Why Wilson escaped death after being told that the warriors were sworn to kill him will remain unknown. Perhaps he ended up appealing to a shared blackness and renounced his connections to whites and avoided reporting this to the authorities in his testimony. He had a lot to lose in this encounter with the warriors: his land, his house, his capital, and the capital of the white planters. The fact that Wilson had been a slave and remained bonded to the whites was obviously a critical issue for the warriors, and he

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<sup>159</sup> Evidence of John Wilson, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 38, 109.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 38, 109.

had used his power – even if he tried to imply that he was just following orders and had no power – to exploit and oppress black people as a race and a class. It is clear that for the warriors, this kind of politics had come to an end, and that the excuses that held down black people through appeals to practicality had been negated. In the moment, Hire and Wilson’s power, and the political economic apparatuses that sustained that power, was no more. Perceptions of blackness and whiteness were less about skin color as such and more about the rectification of injustices immediately present on the ground. One had to be involved with the *active exploitation of black people as a race* to be perceived of as allied with the whites and colonial state power.

Many differences appear to have obtained between black people in ways that Bogle and his allies were actively trying to bridge not only through appeals to commonality but also as a shared political orientation poised against the state. Class and social positions and perceptions of their abuse took on new relevance. The case of Charles Price, a black elite and Vestry member at Morant Bay, is the most explicit example of the warriors consciously selecting a black person for concrete negation (although, Price’s black skin meant less than his political positioning vis-à-vis the colonial state). He had been present at the Courthouse on October 11, and was reported to even have offered two hundred pounds for his life to be spared. The warriors debated killing him until two women who had worked for him made the decision. The women claimed that they had constructed a road for Price and they had also supplied the raw materials for the project, but Price had never paid for either service. Price had stolen their labor, the products of their labor, and the surpluses of their labor, and now he

actually condescended to think that he could pay them back with money based on the exploitation of others that he had used to enrich himself.

As a Vestry member in this particular context, he had not only proven his full bond with the whites and the colonial state but also that his black skin meant nothing to him then and would probably mean nothing in the future. It was not a question of his loyalty, but his untrustworthiness: “‘he has got a black skin and a white heart.’”<sup>161</sup> The warriors subjected him to a kind of reverse interrogation to admit his blackness, perhaps in an effort to get some recognition of their politics and some justice from the entire procedure, to force a realization in public not that he had “betrayed the race” so to speak, but that he had indeed actively and purposively exploited black, laboring people as an agent of the state. To simply kill him would be to lose this chance for justice. The woman answered his offer with, “you need not keep him till before day,” and he was killed.<sup>162</sup>

Many black people of the laboring classes also rejected a politics based in anti-statist action and the rejection of the idea that black people could made their own way without the whites and their state power. Shared class positions did not translate over into support for the warriors’ black politics. For instance, one Mr. Elphick reported that “A week before the massacre a fellow named Dugald Lindsay (shot in the rebellion) called out to our ploughman Minot” and asked him, ‘Well, Minot, if war come, who you for, buckra or nigger?’ Minot said: ‘You fool! Man, who this plough for? Who land

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<sup>161</sup> Evidence of James Harrison, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 46.

<sup>162</sup> Heuman, 9-10. The text is commonly known to scholars on the situation of Mr. Price. As Heuman notes, Price was also a supporter of Baron von Ketelholdt and Rev. Herschell, both killed in the war. Part of the encounter was reported as: “‘Price, don’t you know that you are a black nigger and married to a nigger?’ They said, ‘Don’t you know, because you got into the Vestry, you don’t count yourself a nigger.’ He said, ‘Yes, I am a nigger.’ They said, ‘Take a looking glass and look on your black face.’ And Price said, ‘Yes, I am a nigger.’ Evidence of Henry Good, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 30.

this? Who cow this? Who pay me and you too? No buckra. You nigger got anything to give me?”<sup>163</sup> Minot was appealing to the “commonsense” but newly outmoded idea that “buckra” owned the land, the tools, the animals, and the money, and thus was privileged as the giver of gifts to black people. He presented this relationship as necessary and essential for black people’s survival, and attempted to use these ideas in order to silence Lindsay’s decisive question, “who you for, buckra or nigger?” Whether he actually believed this to be true or not, Minot revealed his perceptions of whiteness as associated with monopoly control over the entirety of the economic system as well as black labor. While Lindsay uses this negative language to refer to black people collectively, he nevertheless challenged the idea that “buckra” was actually in control of these things. He and Minot could have come from similar backgrounds and ancestral heritage; they could share any number of commonalities; but in this instance, their main difference was their orientation towards the colonial state and the racist ideas of white people that ruled it. Lindsay intimated that war had been on the horizon over these political differences.

Clinton Hutton has interpreted these kinds of evidences in the court documents as demonstrating that “Many African Jamaicans opposed Bogle and his methods because they felt that their progress depended on the ‘blessings’ white people ‘bestowed’ on black people.”<sup>164</sup> He also argues that many blacks understandably opposed the war “for more pragmatic reasons than for strictly race and class considerations.”<sup>165</sup> Hutton thus cites the fascinating testimony of Thomas Cousins who encountered one Richard Cousins (no relation) on October 13 attempting to expropriate the sugar crop from the Plantain Garden River estate on October 13:

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<sup>163</sup> Evidence of Joseph Rose, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 36.

<sup>164</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 221.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, 221.

I asked how they could manage to take in the crops without buckra? He said it was not buckra making sugar all the time, it was black people making the sugar. I asked them what they would do with the sugar after they made it. He said they would send it to England. I said, "Send it to England? To whom, who do you know there?"<sup>166</sup>

The argument that without "buckra," there would be no work or agents to ship the sugar produced by that work are telling and can be interpreted as the normal view. The affirmations and answers by Richard Cousins shows that white people produced nothing and that the sugar estates (and by extension Jamaica) could be ran by black people independently without consideration of the practicalities of sending their produce to England because it was simply not important, and a poor argument. Fears of economic devastation because of the withdrawal from capitalist market mechanisms were unconvincing, and they kept the idea of economy centered on white rule. In turn, Thomas Cousins tried to insert white rule back into the equation after Richard Cousins disproved his claim that "buckra" was needed to plant and harvest sugar cane, or send it to England. Thomas Cousins thus countered again with an appeal to the political and epistemic authority of the knowledge of whites for one another and how business was conducted. Scholars must never begin from the presumption either that the organization and thinking of a future political economic order has to be part of any authentic politics and that the state must be the a priori objective of a "revolutionary" politics.

In a chapter devoted to explaining the reasons why the war "failed" to attract and unify the black population, Hutton connects the text above with the governing ideology of the white ruling class and the fact that many black people appealed to commonsense and practical reasoning in their decision making. However, I want to add that Hutton is speaking precisely to the historiographical problem of evaluating and measuring black

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<sup>166</sup> Evidence of Thomas Cousins, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 424.

unity by starting with the idea of unity as the ideal and the fracture and political contestation as the reality that produces the conditions for that very idea of unity. It is not that this orientation produces bad empirical studies. Rather, the problem is that it begins with the measurement of the degree and intensity of a binding together based on an ideal and what they failed to achieve. Understandably, this is part of the politics of the present in the search for a Jamaican (and pan-African) black people to stand unified against its modern adversaries, but it may also obscure the contestation over racial identifications and the meanings of race that this thesis has explored. In addition, statist narratives and memories can appropriate discourses on unity easily; but they cannot easily integrate ideas based on multiplicity and difference.

It is therefore not enough for Hutton to end the discussion on the politics of the moment as ultimately a case of failure where the reigning ideologies and hegemonies of the whites and the historical development of “a culture and psychology of self-denial and self-hate”<sup>167</sup> take precedence over the posing of new questions that radically destabilize these premises. Of course, the failures of the moment cannot be ignored, as well as their continuing historical criticism. Statist strategies based in the management and epistemological objectification of its populations in knowledge are predicated on the identification and distinction of those populations as closed, fixed, and discrete identities (as explored in more detail below, this was precisely how the white colonials in 1865

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<sup>167</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 221. See also Huelett, 5-6, 26, 39, 275. She also focuses on the politics of the moment, arguing that race-based rhetoric was employed as a tactical measure for the building of communities according to the military exigencies at hand or as something to use in “moments of widespread, armed uprising would generate a situation of social chaos that would effectively create a space in which identities could be transformed and/or born.” Huelett, 26. I would suggest that her insightful dissertation privileges the analysis of the “failures” of black unity at this moment, preferring to analyze the history of black alliance making from 1848-1865 by taking instances when people rejected Bogle and the ancestors’ politics (i.e. Maroons, police, blacks allied with whites, etc.) as the most historically relevant for her project. She also fully takes on Heuman’s language in describing the events and the people as insurgents and rebels.

thought politics and history). Understanding the historical reasons for the failure of black unity in this moment is important, but a recognition and affirmation of the radical possibilities for new (histories/memories of) anti-statist politics is just as essential to carrying on the “unfinished war” discussed in the earlier parts of this project.

In slight modification to Hutton’s arguments, for instance, we could interpret Bogle’s expression of blackness as the affirmation of a possibility that black people would no longer remain bonded to the idea that they could be nothing without white people and their mediation. This re-centers the discussion on possibilities and ideas rather than attempting to determine fault or blame. It is true that the Maroons and black people in general were not pre-ordained as black to be convinced by the idea of an all-expansive black political subjectivity, yet scholars should not assume that Bogle and the warriors’ specifically advanced a *unitary* politics of blackness. It was under active construction in the moment and was not as important as advancing a new idea of black people independent of the racist structures of everyday life reproduced by the colonial state. The affirmation of what blackness meant and could mean in the future was tied to this project and not just the use of skin color as a basis of unity for the sake of unity.

Another telling example comes from the testimony of Emily Fraser, a “coloured” woman that lived next door to the Reverend Mr. Cooke (killed on October 11; as Heuman and Hutton have shown, the warriors did indeed purposively select Cooke for negation because of the perceived abuse of his position in the Church of England and as the owner of an estate). Upon witnessing his being slashed to death by the swords of the warriors, both male and female, she begged the warriors to stop, but they called out to her “Are you standing there crying for this white man? We shall kill you and put you by the side

of him.” They then recognized her by name, and one of the men repeated, “If you don’t move off I will kill you...I will make you know yourself for crying for buckra.”<sup>168</sup>

Interestingly, here (the threat of) violence helped to illustrate not only the seriousness of the situation Fraser found herself in but also an opportunity for her to come to “know” herself in this process.

In the moment, “crying for buckra” was one possible outcome of this reckoning, but so was coming to understand that Cooke was an agent of the state who had participated in the active oppression of their people. There was nothing to cry about any longer. The warriors could have easily killed her as connected to Cooke, but she was not their enemy. Instead, they stressed a warning to her that Cooke’s politics would no longer be tolerated, and that this did not necessitate a total and absolute war against whites, but a targeted war against particular whites and their non-white allies as part of the colonial state. And like many others during the events, she was threatened and told to move on, and left to think on the events.

While the military defeat of the warriors had already occurred by later October, speakers also kept using the name of war in a way that affirmed that the events never really ended. The borders of the event became, and remain, permeable in collective memory. Take Thomas Brown, Clerk of the Peace for St. James, who recounted a fight between two persons who had been arrested and given twelve months in prison for seditious language. While they had been fighting with one another, Brown overheard them say, “If the war is even quenched in St. Thomas in the East it will break out here. If the war should break out here, would you, being a black man, not join the black people;

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<sup>168</sup> Evidence of Rev. Cooke, *PP*, [3683-I] Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, 69.

what are you, sir, are you not a black man?”<sup>169</sup> If war came again, a decision might have to be made, and the war would bring another possibility for blacks to take the country back. Moreover, months after the ending of martial law, the Rev. Mr. Basset in January 1866 complained of the general “disaffected and rebellious state” of the “negro population” but tellingly added that one of the black residents in his parish said that “If there should be war, which God forbid, I would join my own colour.”<sup>170</sup>

Paul Bogle and the warriors began an idea of blackness based in rejecting the racist rule of whites and the colonial state, which continued long after they were killed by the state’s military forces. And it was the specific name of war that indexed their politics, their naming of themselves, and their naming of the events in time. These affirmations were in rejection of the colonials’ naming schemes.

### 3. Paul Bogle’s Letter: Contested Blackness

A letter found in Stony Gut on October 17, 1865 reveals some additional facets to the politics and the contested meanings of blackness and whiteness in the context of war. I want to remind the reader that this letter stands as one of the most oft-cited pieces of evidence in the modern historiography due to it being one of the few extant written pieces produced by Paul Bogle and his immediate allies such as James McLaren and B. Clarke within the immediate temporal boundaries of the event (to avoid redundancy in discussing the letter, I will use just Bogle’s name). For scholars, the content of the letter has served as a lens into the objectives, tactics and strategies, desires, and “racial” ideologies of the conflict and its context, and should be quoted at length:

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<sup>169</sup> Evidence of Thomas Brown, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 616.

<sup>170</sup> Reverend Bassett to WR Myers, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 59-60.

It is time now for us to help ourselves, ‘skin for skin,’ the iron bars is now broken in this parish. The white people send a proclamation to the Governor to make war against us, which we all must put our shoulder to the wheels, and pull together. The Maroons sent they proclamation to us to meet them at Hayfield at once without delay, that they will put us in the way how to act; everyone of you must leave your house, take your guns; who don’t have guns take your cutlasses down at once, come over to Stony Gut, that we might march over to meet the Maroons at once without delay...war is at us, my black skin, war is at hand from to-day, tomorrow every black man must turn out at once, for the oppression is too great, the white people are now cleaning up their guns for us which we must prepare to meet them too, cheer men, cheer; in haste, we looking for you a part of the night, or before daybreak.<sup>171</sup>

In the most straightforward senses, Bogle’s letter could be interpreted as reflecting the tactical or strategic objectives imposed by the military exigencies of the situation, which is how Heuman and Holt tend to interpret it.<sup>172</sup> Not only were the whites “cleaning up their guns for us,” Bogle intimated that securing the alliance or at least the neutrality of the Maroons would be essential for victory. Indeed, he had already attempted this before October 11 and the writing of the letter above, but he had failed.<sup>173</sup> A showing of the numerical strength and superiority of black people to the Maroons may have convinced them that Bogle’s military efforts had a chance of success. Furthermore, Bogle would have known about the oaths the Maroons had sworn to put down slave revolts historically, and that the oath was still in effect.

In conjunction, Hutton argues that the letter is also important as the symbolic expression of the possibilities of black solidarity, seen most precisely in the phrase ‘skin for skin.’ According to him, Bogle and his allies emphasized “the broadest mobilization of the black masses and the cultivation of alliances among different black groups,” and

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<sup>171</sup> Evidence of William Cathcart Gabey, *PP* [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 219.

<sup>172</sup> Heuman, 87-91; Holt, 301-302.

<sup>173</sup> Heuman, 88-91; Hutton, 105. For instance, James Walters of the Moore Town Maroons claimed that a month before, Bogle had met with them and expressed that he was “in fear of the Maroon because they were going to Court to have a battle...and he was going to the Maroon Town to tell them not to interfere. Since Bogle was afraid of the Maroons, he wanted to go there and tell them not to interfere. Evidence of James Walters, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 1032, quoted in Heuman, 88.

this had included “the solidarity of skin and colour and the alliance between the Maroons and the rest of the black population.”<sup>174</sup> In this reading, Bogle’s appellation of war and call to action was then at least partially based in collective danger and defense, since he claimed that the whites allied with the colonial state had begun the war. Their state’s actions had been unjustified, and Bogle’s call for resistance and to “put our shoulder[s] to the wheels” could be interpreted by some as showing that black people had been forced to employ violence but remained loyal to the law as the law.<sup>175</sup> His resistance would then be justified as the legitimate expression of the people’s grievances that had been habitually ignored by white colonial state agents. In response, this defensive war would force the congealment of black people together into a new political subjectivity based on a shared resistance to colonial oppression.<sup>176</sup> The colonial state was determined to destroy their enemies, and in Bogle’s text, this could have necessitated the unity of black people understood broadly in a way that at least theoretically included the Maroons as black.

However, these straightforward interpretations do not give voice to the underlying ambiguities in the letter concerning the idea of ‘skin for skin.’ While I do not disagree

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<sup>174</sup> Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 103-104.

<sup>175</sup> See Heuman, 6. As Heuman notes, Bogle had drafted another petition to the Governor likely written on either October 9 or 10, that repeated this logic of resisting the colonial state but having no immediate quarrel with the Queen: “We therefore, call upon your Excellency for protection, seeing we are Her Majesty’s loyal subjects, which protection if refused to will be compelled to put our shoulders to the wheel, as we have been imposed upon for a period of 27 years with due obeisance to the laws of our Queen and country, and we can [no] longer endure the same.” Heuman interprets this as a clear indication that Bogle and his allies were planning for conflict, while we could also interpret the petition as a clear indication that the “law” was about to be suspended if the state did not acquiesce to the demands of the people.

<sup>176</sup> There is evidence that could be used to think the meaning of war in its classical sense of defensive war. For example, Frances McCrae of Bath reported that on October 12, 1865 she saw one “James Francis, with Abraham Cornwall’s gang, armed with a cutlass and a stick...to demand rifles. We told them there were none. They said they were just from the war, and had authority to come and look for the rifles. They said they were for peace, but the white people were for war, and they would war against them. They asked for my father, but he hid himself. The leader of this gang has been hanged.” Evidence of Frances McCrae, *PP* [3682] Papers Laid, 397.

with historians' assessment of Bogle's desire to ally with the Maroons, I suggest by relating Bogle's words to other pieces of evidence, additional possible interpretations which highlight a politics of contestation over categories of blackness and whiteness become possible. Even though on the surface Bogle's claim of 'skin for skin' appears clear cut, as we have seen above in the warriors acts of self-naming, perceptions of whiteness and blackness were firmly tied to social and class positions in a political relationship to the colonial state and did not correspond with skin color as such.

Moreover, as shown in more detail later in this thesis, the Maroons were distinct from conventional understandings of whites and blacks, and most importantly, as a political entity, the Maroons were not perceived as participating directly with the everyday exploitation of black people. Political questions over the Maroons' complicity with the colonial state as expressed in the memories and historical narratives of non-Maroon black people in Jamaica has indeed occurred in the modern day, but scholars should be careful on this point because of the representation of the Maroons in the colonial discourse historically has been shaped by the same practices which underpinned the representations of Paul Bogle and the ancestors, and black people in general. He may have tried to appeal to them with race-based political rhetoric, but this should not imply that the Maroons failed to answer the call to action, or that they thought that Bogle was wrong for fighting against the colonial state. For the Maroons, sharing black skin was less important than the distinction between Maroons and non-Maroons. They had already fought for their freedom. A politics based in the idea of rejecting whiteness could mean little to people that had already left the rule of whites and the colonial state long before 1865.

For example, about four weeks before October 11, James Sterling of the Hayfield Maroons reported that Bogle had come for a visit and had discussed that “they were laboring very hard and can’t get any...pay; scarcely any estate will pay them, [and] the pay was very small.”<sup>177</sup> Sterling however emphasized both class positions and that it was already in Bogle’s power to do something about it, although the Maroons would not be a part of it. He told Bogle that his people were “free men, if you can’t get good wages it is just as cheap for you to sit at your house, till the planter want you.”<sup>178</sup> Bogle countered that the laboring people were divided in the desire to undertake such a protest. The planters and the capitalists had maintained the upper hand in their ability to force black people to work for poor wages or receive nothing at all. He noted that under these conditions, many people simply refused to consider collective action, and some would “go and work for little or nothing, and on Saturday when they go up for their pay they kick them off the steps.”<sup>179</sup> Sterling remained unconvinced, and Paul and his party left later that day. Class based arguments did not work to convince the Maroons of allying with Bogle against the colonial state; in the text, Sterling did not report that Bogle had tried to appeal to race-based rhetoric in their conversation. In any event, other black people were free to fight on their own or go along with the “planter,” but a fight for racial justice had nothing to do with the Maroons. Maroons could look like common black laboring people but they would not subscribe to either Bogle’s or white colonials’ ideas of race. Even if Bogle only sought to ensure the neutrality of the Maroons, racial and class identifications would likely not provide any help.

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<sup>177</sup> Evidence of James Sterling, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 1031; cited also by Hutton, 105.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 1031.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, 1031.

George Osbourne, a police officer was captured on October 10, 1865 and forced to take an oath swearing that he would join black people and leave his position as a public official of the state.<sup>180</sup> He recounted how he “kissed this book [the Bible] that you join your colour, so help you God,” and from his testimony we can see that after this oath, as a consequence, “[Bogle] had the ‘P’ removed from all of the captured policemen’s cap’s.” Bogle then assured the men that since they had affirmed separation from their position as public officials in service to the state, “We won’t kill any of our colour. If we kill our colour, we are brutes. We will let you go now, but let Walton [white magistrate] come.”<sup>181</sup> This removal of the “P” was a gesture that combined the symbolic and the material. The protection afforded to Osbourne was very well part of the

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<sup>180</sup> Evidence of George Osbourne, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 32. The oath rituals given by Bogle and his captains have been well documented by scholars, particularly Clinton Hutton. For the purposes of this project, I primarily want to focus on its anti-statist character, and hope to explore the other dimensions more fully in a future work. In any event, numerous other policemen present with George Osbourne rendered similar testimonies while adding in other pieces of evidence. All that the JRC could think about the oath was: “The policemen were, of course, overpowered. Some of them were severely beaten. Three of the number were made prisoners, and detained for several hours, and were ultimately released only upon their taking an oath that henceforth they would “join their colour,” that they would “cleave to the black.” Introduction, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 11. “It was proved that two or three weeks before that time meetings had been held at some meeting houses in the neighbourhood of Morant Bay, at which an oath was administered, and the names of the persons sworn were taken down. The terms of the oath were not shown. All that was proved before us respecting it was that an oath was administered, a pledge of secrecy required, and the names of the persons sworn registered.” Ibid, 12.

See also, William Lake, a policeman of St. Thomas in the East, also present with Fuller and James Foster at the attempted apprehension of Bogle on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, explained that: “He [Bogle] had a cutlass in his hand, and he said, “I have a good mind to kill you.” He said to me, “Do you know our intention?” I said, “No.” He said, “We expect to come to the Bay to kill all the white men, and all the black men that won’t join us.” ... He said they would kill all enemies, white, black, or coloured. I said that if I were to die I would not join them. ... Then the man laid hold of me again, and held up the cutlass over me, and told me to take oath that I would join them. I said I would not. He then drew his cutlass to kill me, and I bowed down to him, and said, “Do, master, for God’s sake, save my life;” and he let me go.” Evidence of William Lake, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 79. Bogle and the warriors also let him go, and did not require him to take the full oath. Perhaps his act of deference combined with the other rituals of (un)binding satisfied Bogle that he would keep his word: he had acknowledged that Bogle was “master” and invoked God’s name.

Hutton has also noted the resemblance of the oath taking ceremonies with oaths given by the Mau Mau in Kenya in the 1950s. He cites one work in particular, Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters & the Roots of Mau Mau* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), 116-172. Admittedly, I have not dealt with Mau Mau here in any detail, but hope to as part of a future work. For more on Mau Mau, see also Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992).

<sup>181</sup> Evidence of George Osbourne, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 32.

fact that he had told Bogle on October 10 that he was a Maroon, upon which Bogle had said, “Don’t kill this one, he is a Maroon, the Maroon is our back.” In addition, James Asher, another policeman and claimed descendent of the Maroons also encountered Bogle and his secretary James McLaren that day. Bogle came to strike him with his sword, but because McLaren was familiar with Asher as a Maroon, they decided upon letting him go after he swore, “that I must leave the white and cleave to the black.”<sup>182</sup> This could have been a negotiation of the situation by Bogle in order to curry favor with the Maroons as part of his wider military objectives given that Bogle likely realized that a politics of blackness would be a hard-sell to the Maroons who had already fought and won for their autonomy.

Nonetheless, Paul Bogle affirmed that war had come and dissolved the “iron bars” so that different political possibilities for black people had been opened. Interestingly, like Blackwood-Meeks in some ways, the “us” that Bogle refers to is predicated on the hope that every “black man” would indeed help each other “tomorrow.” This would have been a political decision grounded on the idea that indeed “war is at us, my black skin,” and that this relationship of war with the meanings of “black skin” was relevant. Sharing the same skin color alone could not produce the conditions for solidarity unless actual people affirmed in some new way that it was meaningful, and this would have been a political novelty among many laboring people that had no natural or racial affinity for one another.

In a way, what other commonality except for an ancestral one of some kind might Bogle have invoked to Maroons and policemen that had little reason to join him otherwise? There is no indication that they shared any “Native Baptist” orientation with

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<sup>182</sup> Evidence of James Asher, *PP*, [3683-I], Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, Appendix, 152.

Bogle or his military commanders; and Maroons were definitely not born as slaves as Bogle had been. I do not mean to imply that the Maroon was higher than Bogle, even if many Maroons indeed thought that Maroons had distinguished themselves socially and militarily over slaves and common laboring people. Instead, we see a contested moment in which a tenuous and contingent black politics was advanced despite the high likelihood of its failure and lack of historical precedent with the people that Bogle needed to join the movement. But Bogle still proposed it. War carried the possibility to introduce a break into these divisions and provide a way for black people to come together in new ways based in a shared politics that wanted nothing to do with the colonial state any longer.<sup>183</sup>

Whatever kind of idea Bogle and his allies had in mind for a black political subjectivity, it was firmly disconnected with the idea of maintaining either the political economic or the ideological status quo of the colonial state and its agents, and it did not have to be poised against the British crown and oriented towards its complete destruction. Scholars might argue about why Bogle was “right” or “wrong” about his assessments of race, but from an alternative perspective, Bogle’s affirmation of the *possibility* of a black political subjectivity based in an evolving idea of blackness is important by itself because his claim begins from an anti-statist position and resists incorporation into statist

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<sup>183</sup> Connecting the police with the history and memory of 1865 was also important to one person during the 2012 commemorations. Egton Newton, as a representative of Kingston taxi drivers, posed the question of the role of the police in the effort to capture and stop – and thus politically neutralize – Paul Bogle. His speech testifies to the importance that some people place on naming: “I have left Kingston. I leave my decks and my chair to travel here to St. Thomas, many miles from Kingston, the capital, to share in this vigil tonight and a march from here in Stony Gut, right beside this great man, to Morant Bay. One thing I want to leave with everybody in Jamaica and especially the Minister of National Security. I would like for us to reflect deeply on this man [Paul Bogle] and what he went through and call upon the Minister of National Security the honorable Peter Bunting (PNP MP) to seriously consider changing the name police force to police service. I want to deeply reflect of what happened to this man [Paul Bogle] by the police force on its inception right here in St. Thomas. Change the name from police force to police service in remembrance of today the anniversary of the Right Excellent Paul Bogle.” Egton Newton, “Paul Bogle: Jamaican Hero or Rebel?” Youtube video.

narratives and memories. As discussed above, the possibility did not strictly depend on skin color. Whiteness from his and many of the warriors' perspectives was irreducibly connected with the colonial state and its capacities to enact violence on black people as a race. Black people had not been the architects of the "iron bars" that had been broken. War had come to Bogle's "black skin," and not rebellion or insurrection. Both of these terms implicitly assume the colonial state as the primary determinant of the political field of action. He began his politics in people and their possible collective struggles through a language expressed in categories of race that, in practice, remained blurry and dependent upon contingent and contextual determinations of a potential enemy's position vis-à-vis the colonial state and the active exploitation of black people.

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As conveyed in Bogle's letter, "white people" were distinguished by their proximity to the Governor and the colonial state. The whites through state power were the ones with the resources and weaponry as well as the capacity to send for the Governor in the first place. Black people would have to use whatever weapons they had, whether it was a gun or a cutlass. While I do not deny that the cutlass was powerful and spiritually significant as per Hutton, the evidence also shows that Bogle knew that most black people did have access to the military resources of the state.<sup>184</sup> Just a couple of weeks prior, for instance, Paul Bogle had made the journey from Stony Gut to Spanish Town to present Eyre with a list of grievances, and Eyre had rejected even seeing Paul Bogle. In the oral traditions passed down to Paul Bogle's great-grandson Philip Bogle (also known as Bagan), for the entirety of the walk, Paul Bogle had flung his shoes over his shoulder

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<sup>184</sup> See also Hutton, *Colour for Colour*, 148-158.

so that they would be perfect for his meeting with the Governor.<sup>185</sup> This memory is interesting because of its emphasis on ideas of social class and who in fact was important enough to speak and to be listened to. This kind of attitude towards black people was commonplace, and this rendering of black people as invisible when convenient was part of the complex of “oppression[s]” imposed upon them.

Thus whiteness was connected to the maintenance of social and class positions through the power of the colonial state. To take up arms against black people or to be active agents in their oppression as a race was what whiteness meant, and not simply skin color. Many of the warriors understood this, as Bogle had claimed that in war they would “kill all enemies, white, black, or coloured.”<sup>186</sup> They advanced a politics of blackness through racial imagery that did correspond to skin color. In this case, in the language of war, enemies were concrete and identifiable according to their position as active in the exploitation of black people, and were not the formless “white” or “coloured” abstractions that existed in the colonial discourse.

As scholars have duly noted, multiple instances in the court documents show that while many people felt or were threatened by the “Rebels,” the proliferation of violence that white colonials assumed would come as a natural result of conflict never happened. The warriors made clear distinctions between those allied with the state and those that were not in a way that cut across skin colors. Thomas Girvan, an engineer residing in St-Thomas-in the East and employed at the Plantain Garden River Estate was threatened on

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<sup>185</sup> Philip Bagan, “Paul Bogle – The Morant Bay Rebellion [original title of documentary: “Catch a Fire”],” Youtube video, 28:17, Unknown film date, published by “Little Dread,” May 4, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJmFla96NTw>

<sup>186</sup> William Lake, a policeman of St. Thomas in the East captured on October 10, 1865, reported that Bogle stated that his intention was to “‘come to the Bay to kill all the white men, and the black men that won’t join us.’ He said that they would kill all enemies, white, black, or coloured. Evidence of William Lake, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 79.

October 12 by “a few people armed with sticks” after he encountered a crowd of black people marching in the street. The next day, Girvan reported, “a number of them came to my house shouting their war-cry, which was ‘Hell’ and ‘Lion’ and ‘Colour for Colour.’ ... They told me if I had come to them with gun or cutlass they would have killed me, or if I had been a planter they would have cut off my head. One said, we want all them ‘cotch buckra for kill.’ I said I am a Scotchman, but they said, ‘You are no planter.’ They then went into my store-room and took all the liquor they could find and a few articles, such as knives, and then went away.”<sup>187</sup>

We find that cries like ‘Colour for Colour’ and ‘Hell’ were not based on killing indiscriminately or automatically labeling all whites as part of a universal political identity, even though the language appears to be expressed in a binary. The black people that approached Girvan’s house made it clear that his white skin did not mean that he was the same as the planter in principle. Girvan was even an engineer, and educated and rich compared to most of the black people in his midst. The warriors he encountered would likely have known this, but Girvan was still “no planter” to them. If Girvan took up arms, then and only then he would be politically identified with the planter. The people proclaimed their objective to “cotch buckra for kill” right in front of Girvan and then confirmed they did not think of Girvan on the same wavelength of “buckra” at all. These warriors could march to the words of ‘Colour for Colour’ as part of the affirmation of a black political subjectivity that did not immediately correlate with skin color, at least in relation to the white people. Black people could affirm their blackness as allies of Bogle and the warriors without requiring the destruction of all white people.

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<sup>187</sup> Testimony of Thomas Girvan, *PP* [3682] Papers Laid, 47.

Notice also that it is Girvan that invests the situation with his own ideas of white and black as binary oppositions that correlate to nothing but skin color. Interestingly, Given replies to the participants *after* they have already made their intentions clear in order to introduce this point. He was the one who reminded the people that he was a Scotchman, and in his mind, this meant that he was white because all whites were the same. But the black people he encountered did not make this determination: Girvan made it himself, about himself. It was *he* that equated whiteness with skin color as such. Girvan might have been pushing back on their war cry by making a sleight against them insofar as he perceived that their call for race-based unity was insincere, since he was indeed white. In his mind, an individual/mental/psychological/political, etc. identification *as* a “Scotchman” bound him automatically to the whites and the colonial state. He asked a question back to the people about his racial status to people that the colonial state feared had no politics or purpose but to kill.<sup>188</sup> Whether he confirmed or denied his prejudices after his encounter will remain unknown. The people that Girvan encountered made it clear that they did not think race on the same terms.

After the initial battle at the Court House on October 11, many of the warriors spread throughout St. Thomas-in-the-East to the Bath, Manchioneal, and Port Antonio areas, selectively attacking plantations and businesses as they marched.<sup>189</sup> Reports of one such occurrence comes from the testimony of Evelina Williams, a black woman employed as a shopkeeper for the Plantain Garden River estate in Monklands owned by

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<sup>188</sup> The association of “Scotchmen” with “white” by other contemporaries, consistent with colonial epistemology, is also expressed in the evidence. For instance, E.N. Harrison, Sergeant-Major of the Volunteers in St. Thomas-in-the-East, mobilized and shot in the confrontation on 11 October reports a man named McTarvish had entered a shop “which was recently pillaged by the Rebels,” state that: “He would like to destroy every Scotchman and overseer about the quarter; and if it was not for the law he would beat them; but never mind, war will come soon to Jamaica, some day soon.” Evidence of E.N. Harrison, *PP* [3682] Papers Laid, 27.

<sup>189</sup> Heuman, 17-28.

Mr. and Mrs. Paterson. She had been in close interaction with people she labeled as “Rebels” who had taken over this location from at least October 12 to October 15. She reported that many of the “Rebels” were former prisoners, who we know were recently freed from the Morant Bay prison by Bogle and his forces. When they arrived, they demanded to see Mr. Paterson, but he had escaped to Kingston before the “Rebels” had arrived, and only Mrs. Paterson and some of her labor force were present. They then made sure to secure the area by taking all of the guns and the supplies.

Some witnesses claimed that Bogle himself had made it clear that he was a friend of Mr. Paterson and meant him no harm.<sup>190</sup> This is interesting in this context, considering that Paterson was an agent of the state and had been active as a Magistrate and Justice of the Peace active in the area for years.<sup>191</sup> (Paterson was clear in his testimony to the JRC that Bogle and the participants were rebels and wanted nothing to do with them, and the men never encountered one another).<sup>192</sup> However, Bogle’s intentions with Mr. Paterson are difficult to discern, as conflicting evidence suggests that Bogle had located him as a political adversary. For instance, Matthew Cresser testified that he heard Bogle tell his people after the battle at October 11 that they must no longer “go to any work. Not a man should work if he could get a dollar a-day, [and if he does] we shall appoint ten men to see that person flogged; when they want anything they must go to an estate and take a cow out and kill it; and they must go off to Monklands, and tell Mr. James Patterson to leave his place and go off the island, it is not his country.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>191</sup> See also Heuman, 71.

<sup>192</sup> Evidence of William Anderson, *PP*, [3683-I] Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, 161, cited in Heuman, 20.

<sup>193</sup> Evidence of Matthew Cresser, *PP*, [3683-I] Jamaica Royal Commission, Part II, 144.

In this case, Bogle did not treat taking a cow and killing it from the estate of a white colonial as theft. These rules and laws no longer applied, and the new crime of theft was working for a particular white person for less than a “dollar a-day.” He and white colonials robbed black bodies of their labor, and blacks’ continued acquiescence to this relationship in the colonial mind was what proved their loyalty. Bogle had wanted nothing to do with this situation because the country the black labor that built it had never been his to manage and control in the first place, thus he still threatened punishment for those that broke the new rules. Paterson had been the thief all along, and black people would no longer tolerate poor wages paid them specifically because of their race. He had already taken enough, and if the warriors took his cow, there would never be any restitution or reparation for Paterson. Every black person did not need to support or fight for this politics in order for Bogle to put forward an idea that could theoretically encompass every black person. The threat of punishment was an injunction to sustain the fight for justice until victory had been achieved. The justice they affirmed sought to shatter the limits imposed on black people by the colonial and had nothing to do in the moment of war with security, order, and the maintenance of the hierarchies of the colonial state. Bogle, like his immediate allies, again affirmed the truth that blacks had always possessed the country and the things within it.

Mrs. Paterson however came into a direct encounter with prisoners that Bogle had released during their occupation of the estate. Interestingly, in the context of war, it appears that for a brief moment, Mrs. Paterson, an upper class and wealthy white woman, was offered to join and be included as an active participant in the war effort. As stated by

her laborer Williams and located at the very end of her official testimony, she claimed that

One of the Rebels, Alsam Kelly (who has been shot) asked Mrs. Paterson on the Friday if she join her colour or she join the black side. Mrs. Paterson asked if he ever saw a black or white woman go to any war. Fagan Carr heard this and said, 'Don't bother the lady.'<sup>194</sup>

Paradoxically, in this moment, through the language of racial dualisms, it seems that Kelly was asking Mrs. Paterson to suspend her own binary thinking for a moment and consider the possibility of joining the side of the black people. She had the choice to join either “her colour” or “the black side.” War had presented the opportunity for a different decision from the past because the colonial state existed to proscribe such encounters and possibilities of the whites crossing over to the blacks, much less fighting with them. His perception of whiteness in this case was still connected with them being against the blacks, but she was still given a choice in a way that challenges the ways that race was represented in the colonial discourse. If she chose the clearly ally with on the side of the whites, then perhaps she would have become a concrete enemy. Yet Kelly did not immediately tie her to Mr. Paterson. Although Kelly expresses racial categories of black and white in a way on the surface in way that expresses itself in racial binaries, perhaps, for Kelly, a new binary was proposed to take the place of the old. I can only speculate. It still appears that it was possible for Kelly that a white woman could join up with black people in their fight for justice. At the very least, it shows that both whiteness and blackness were not as clear-cut as they might appear. Curiously, I could find no other similar cases during the events in which this type of situation occurred, and no scholars commenting on this particular evidence.

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<sup>194</sup> Evidence of Evelina Williams, *PP* [3682] Papers Laid, 401.

Of course, the gender, class, and racial distinctions that applied to the former political field were not abolished or eliminated. Perhaps, in war, they had been momentarily suspended. In addition, there could have been any other number of other plausible reasons why Kelly wanted to include Mrs. Paterson in the new political project. Perhaps he only wanted a new wife or thought that her addition to the war effort would help to allay the tactical and strategic exigencies of the military situation. He may have also said the comment in jest or for no real reason at all. But whatever this blackness was or could have been, it not only avoided killing indiscriminately; it also potentially offered people that were normally considered non-black to become politically black. All of the same concrete and immediate goals such as land reform, changes to taxation schemes, rectifying alienation based in the use and meanings of the law, and so on. In addition, contestation and struggle does not mean that an absolute and romanticized hatred existed between people.

Yet Mrs. Paterson denied and rejected Kelly's proposal, his question, and the very basis of his question. Fagan Carr, one of the former prisoners that Bogle had also recently released, aided her. She avoided answering the question, and thus affirmed that Kelly's proposal was indeed not even a real possibility. The creation of an ephemeral moment of equality that might have cut across gender, race, and class distinctions was the impossibility that she began her reasoning with. So was the idea that women were prevented by nature from "go[ing] to any war." In turn, through the category of "woman," all black women were to be therefore logically excluded from participation in their war for justice as well. Her representation of blacks and whites in relation to gender re-affirmed not only the old binary oppositions of race but also the distinctions between

men and women on the level of political action.<sup>195</sup> In her discourse and knowledge, these exclusions occur before any reasoning and thought has taken place.

Moreover, Fagan Carr illustrates that not all of the people that we might associate with Bogle shared the same political vision or politics. But scholars should not require the unquestionable bond and unity between people because the practice of actual politics never produces eternal, transcendent bonds. Like in the context of Jamaica today, contestation within the political body can be interpreted as a positive force that continuously questions and destabilizes statist discourses. Nonetheless, Carr did in fact interrupt the moment, and he did so in order to terminate it. While scholars might focus on the failure and improbability of the moment as the most important aspect of this encounter, we must not forget that it was Kelly who did the positive interrupting. He was the one that might have rejected the previous boundaries of thought and the possibility for a different perspective on the past, present and future; and he was the one who introduced a novelty into the situation. And in this wager of chance, he ultimately paid with his life, rather than killing and controlling others out of fear.

Encounters of the warriors with groups of “coolies” (the name used commonly for Indian indentured laborers of the period: I use this term to remain consistent with the testimony I cite) also speak to the potential inclusion of non-blacks into their fighting forces. Rev. Josias Cork, Rector of Westmoreland, recounted that the attorney of Mesopotamia Estate in George’s Plain told of a “coolie” who “was accosted by a

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<sup>195</sup> See also Heuman, 7, where he notes evidence that a woman named Geoghegan threw the first stone at the Courthouse. Numerous speakers at the 2015 commemorative events such as Verene Shepherd, Mutabaruka, and Clinton Hutton also emphasized the active role that women played in battle. For another perspective, see also Chapter 5 of Jenny M. Jemmott, *Ties That Bind: The Black Family in Post-Slavery Jamaica, 1834-1882* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2015). She does not speak directly to the problematic I have outlined here but she does draw heavily on the same JRC evidence in order to show how women and households suffered heavily from the executions and destruction of property by the white colonial military forces.

“negro,” one of a party, and to the coolie all perfect strangers. The coolie was asked if he had heard that war had begun against buckra [common term in Jamaica for “white”], that it would be sure to spread, and the negroes desired to know on which side the coolies would fight.” Then the coolie went to the overseer to report the incident, and said that his answer had been “Buckra brought me to the country and buckra must take me back, and if fight come me fight for buckra.”<sup>196</sup>

The man who posed the question of war did not force the coolies to make an either/or choice between the white and the black, or choice between life and death. Instead, the man that approached them already knew that the war had begun, and there was no stopping it. He affirmed the possibilities of the moment by posing a decisive question to the Indian laborers that indeed a new decision to be included with the blacks outside of the frameworks of “buckra.” Life was already difficult enough, but the fight was on. It would not be the politics of ease, luxury, and privilege, but one of action and hope. But in order to begin this entire process, a person had to believe and act as if it was indeed possible for the mind to be liberated from the political constraints of racist colonial thought. Yet the Indian laborer denied both the rupture indexed by the name of war *and* the affirmation of the new possibilities presented to him by the African man. Like Mrs. Paterson, it appears as if the coolie rejected the possibility out of hand because nothing had really changed, or, he had to maintain and negotiate with his overseer’s illusions. This would still show the kinds of arguments and language that the agents of the state found persuasive, and therefore what the warriors were up against.

The coolie also appealed to the idea that he had his own “country” that he was taken from, and he remained bonded to it through “buckra.” Thus Jamaica was not only

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<sup>196</sup> Evidence of Josiah Cork, *PP* [3682] Papers Laid, 49.

“buckra’s” country; “buckra” also had a claim to the labor and lives of everyone in it. In logical consequence, the black people of Jamaica could never have a country for themselves, and Jamaica had never been their country because their labor had never been theirs to begin with. Their class had to remain loyal or risk destruction, and could not render aid according to a politics of blackness. They had no natural affinity to black people, and their shared positions as laborers did not unite them either. But the possibility of thinking differently was nevertheless presented to the coolies, and in a small way, it could have represented a step toward resolving tension between the coolies and black people who were angered by the capitalists’ and planters’ importation of labor in order to control wage prices. Of course differences existed between them, but politics can thrive on differences.

Later that October other coolies from this estate also reported that “an African man (very tall) slept at their house one night and left again early in the morning. He told them he came from yonder where war was going, they hung minister and plenty people; that if buckra war came down here they must tell him which side they will fight.” By the time that Cork reported these happenings on January 12, 1866, they could not remember the last part of the African man’s words, saying that “the man tell them plenty about the war which they don’t understand.”<sup>197</sup>

This evidence shows a possible extended dialogue occurring between the “African man” and the coolies that revolved around the idea of war. The “minister” that he referred to could have meant George William Gordon or Paul Bogle, and this means that he thought that the war was still going on during martial law. He claimed to have just come from the area, perhaps he had witnessed first-hand the combat between Bogle’s

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 49.

military forces and those of the colonial state. The African man's discussion of the war kept the borders of the event open: the war had never really ended. He told them "plenty about the war" that they could not understand or recall in detail. It is also plausible that the coolies claimed not to remember any of the specific details in order to avoid incriminating themselves or others. In any event, they remembered the name of war itself as important, and that this war had been the topic of their discourse. They could have known and used the name of war in general to describe these kinds of events before they met the African man, but it is just as possible that the African man introduced this change during the conversation, and that the Indian laborers recalled this out of everything that he had spoken of. Moreover, the gravitation of the conversation around deciding "which side they [the coolies] will fight" might have been part of the incomprehensibility of the African man's words. The African man took the risk of revealing his ideas of war to the coolies even though this was dangerous during a period of intense reactionary, colonial violence. The coolies could have run immediately to turn the African man into Cork or the authorities, but they did not. The coolies at least minimally invited the African man into their living quarters and there is no indication that he threatened the Indian laborers in order to obtain access.

Potentially, the African man walked away from the situation with courage and a will to chance that the coolies would not only reflect on his words and call to action, but also avoid reporting him or his exact identity to the authorities. Unless he appealed to a common African ancestry in this encounter (which was unlikely), he probably used class rhetoric to convince the coolies to join with black people. Again, this evidence suggests that whiteness and blackness were tied to ideas of class and perceptions of a complicity in

the oppression of black people. Coolies were not the enemy. The question was whether they were prepared to reject their relationship with the white agents of the colonial state or not.

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Both the warriors' politics and the contested nature of racial identification in the moment were lost in the colonial discourse produced during and after these events. For colonial contemporaries, the events gravitated around fears of black savagery and disloyalty to the colonial state and white rule. According to their preconceived binary racial logics which locked whites and blacks into a permanent dialectical relationship with one another, since the natural tendency of black people would be to ally with one another for the purposes of inverting the sociopolitical hierarchy and the annihilation of *all* white people (and a section of their elite "coloured" allies), the colonial state ensured through the use of violence that this (fantasy) would remain an impossibility. In the next section, I turn to these issues in order to complete a critique of the colonial discourse so that scholars can leave behind the statist narratives and historical representations of 1865 for good.

### *III. Discourse of the Colonial State*

#### 1. “Rest assured, my friends”: Naming Rebellion, Proving Loyalty

Just as today, the names and the naming of the event did political work for the colonial state and the agents invested in maintaining its power. Essentially, I argue that the name of “rebellion” and the naming of the event as such provided the means for colonials and their allies to ground their idea of politics in the colonial state and the law. In the colonial discourse, names like “rebellion” served to index a boundary-point outside of the state and the law, beyond which lie nothing but death and nothingness. In the colonial discourse, drawing this line enabled the representation and distinction of loyal blacks located inside of the state from disloyal blacks outside of it. Indeed, some white colonials active in the military suppression in St. Thomas demanded that black people directly demonstrate their loyalty to the regime or else face destruction. For example, Brigadier General Nelson stated that he “considered the whole of St. Thomas in the East, till they came forward and proved otherwise, [as] all rebels, [and] if they did not come in and proclaim their loyalty...I considered myself employed against them.”<sup>198</sup> The naming of the events played a decisive role in colonials’ representation of black people according to their political, racial, and/or class categories in the discourse. Yet the inclusion of some black people as loyal could only come as a consequence of the reactive destruction and exclusion of imaginary disloyal figures located beyond the boundary.

As a counter-example to the 2012 and 2015 commemorations for Paul Bogle and the ancestors from the colonial perspective, I begin a discussion on these themes through a ritualized memorial held for Governor Eyre upon his retirement to England as reported

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<sup>198</sup> Evidence of Brigadier General Nelson, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 690. Nelson was selected by General O’Connor to take direct command of troops in St. Thomas on October 13, 1865.

by the *Colonial Standard* on August 9, 1866. By this time, the investigation of Eyre by the Jamaica Royal Commission (JRC) had formally cleared Eyre of official wrongdoing. It should be noted that despite the ongoing criticism of his actions in England, the JRC had at the end of its investigation admitted that Eyre did in fact save the colony from a potential rebellion. They praised him “for the skill, promptitude and vigour which he manifested during the early stages of the insurrection; to the exercise of which qualities its speedy termination is in a great degree to be attributed.”<sup>199</sup> However, in spite of their use of the word “insurrection” here, their main findings declared, “That the disturbances in St. Thomas in the East had their immediate origin in a planned resistance to lawful authority.”<sup>200</sup> There had been a “disturbance” and an “insurrection,” but Eyre and the colonial military forces had prevented the progression of conflict to the next stage of rebellion. While the JRC recognized that the entire black population of Jamaica was not involved in this “planned resistance to lawful authority,” there had still been a real danger to the security of the colony, since “some...were animated by feelings towards political and personal opponents, while not a few contemplated the attainment of their ends by the death or expulsion of the white inhabitants of the Island.”<sup>201</sup> Nonetheless, the scandal and public sentiment in England over his handling of martial law prompted the Crown to replace him that year with Sir John Peter Grant.

Nevertheless, the *Standard* as well as many contemporaries knew very well that Eyre’s political enemies still sought his prosecution as an individual citizen for the unlawful murder of George William Gordon. Hence, the writer of the newspaper article attempted to underscore the positive consequences of Eyre’s interventions in the creation

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<sup>199</sup> Conclusions, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 40.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

of a renewed harmony and peace between the colors and social classes of Jamaica. He described the events that day as “a most significant demonstration,” which had consisted of a procession down Duke Street in Kingston all the way to Port Royal (in the present day, a distance of roughly twenty-four kilometers). They claimed that countless people from all sections of Jamaican society lined the streets, and noted the presence of “clergymen of every persuasion,” “officers of every branch of the service,” and “many of the widowed and orphaned victims of 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1865,” each ready to honor Eyre for his role in saving the colony.<sup>202</sup> They also took special care to emphasize the presence of social classes and groups made up of the very people that Eyre’s opponents in England claimed he had oppressed as his enemies.

Upon reaching Port Royal, masses of people gathered to watch Eyre’s departure aboard ship, which the *Standard* found particularly meaningful. They reported:

The black people mustered by the thousands. Near the R.M. Company’s wharf multitudes stood knee-deep in the water on the beach, that they might be in the foremost rank of those come to take the last look at one to whom they owed so much. ... Even the “political prisoners” of Morant Bay, those who were said to have experienced the most bitter shafts of Mr. Eyre’s enmity, were represented there by the Reverend Edwin Palmer.<sup>203</sup>

Like many colonial contemporaries, it was clear to the *Standard* however that this supposed moment of interracial being-together had not been a predetermined outcome to the conflict. Both whites and blacks had been in danger of losing their lives and property during the “rebellion,” but the real threat was that black people could fall victim to their own savagery. “[H]ad less energy been displayed to keep them [blacks] out of it,” they wrote, “thousands who yet hesitated on the brink of rebellion... would have certainly been

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<sup>202</sup> *The Colonial Standard and Jamaica Despatch*. August 9, 1866.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*.

drawn into the vortex.”<sup>204</sup> The presence of the masses to thank Eyre combined with fears of future “rebellion” also convinced the *Standard* that it was simply “impossible for a man to be wrong, whose conduct has disarmed alike political and personal antagonism, and who unjust disgrace has called forth such universal sympathy as was expressed on Tuesday last.”<sup>205</sup> But while the degree and scale of violence had been lamentable, some good had come from it. This “rebellion” led by (some) black people had in a strange way reaffirmed the loyalty of the “black people” who “mustered by the thousands” for the white colonials that represented them. For the time being, they had earned inclusion into the political body. The name of rebellion, and its act of naming, had therefore served as a boundary- or border-point between those who were on one side of the vortex looking down, and those who had fallen in and excluded from the material trace of the text and the discourse. The idea of loyalty to the state provided a way for contemporaries to ensure that “good” black people who were otherwise potential threats could be neutralized, managed, and proscribed from allying with one another on the basis of race.

However, in the colonial discourse black people could not be represented at all without the production of inter-racial being-together in this particular manner. “Black people” in the text above never appear without white people or those functioning politically as agents of the colonial state to represent them as mediators and representatives. The “black people” represented here as a distinct identity among a plural

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. In an interesting related passage, General O’Connor, one of the main military officers working with Eyre during the suppression, specifically classified Bogle and his allies as completely outside of all legitimate political activity by locating rebellion in the domain of conspiracy while other forms that could become violent are registered as legitimate, or at least thinkable, political phenomena. The events had been much more than “a mere factious *émeute* for some real or imaginary wrong; not a strike among the lower orders...not even a political riot and party spirit contest between people of opposite creeds and opinions, but a deep-laid plot” to “sow the seeds of rebellion,” an action organized by “clever, educated men,” namely Gordon, who had recently been executed. General O’Connor to Military Secretary, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 110.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

community of likewise independent identities (“white”, “coloured”) required Eyre and the colonial state to make an intervention and decisively divide of these black people from those who had been drawn into the “vortex” of rebellion. After being divided into a set of “good” blacks, they really only took form through the gaze of Eyre, “the one to whom they owed so much.”

On the one hand then, contemporaries could text could communicate that the black people can be counted as human beings that admire and have affections in distinctly human ways. On the other hand, however, this human capacity could only be expressed through the assumption that “black people” were objects to be protected and secured *from themselves* by Eyre, the law, and the colonial state. Black people not only “owed” Eyre for restoring inter-color order; they also “owed” him for keeping them out of this rebellion in the first place, which had been interpreted by contemporaries as a demonstration of loyalty. If Eyre had been less vigilant, black people could have fallen into a space that outside the law, seen also in the claim that Governor Eyre had also somehow saved the “political prisoners” from their own death and descent into the non-political, even if they were stuck in prison. Palmer served as their necessary mediator. For contemporaries, rebellion thus helped to clarify and instantiate categories of race as political locations determined by the colonial state and predicated on the bonding of black people to that state and the whites that controlled its power. The preconditions of politics for Eyre and the colonial state were founded upon maintaining the idea that black people had no being or existence without white people; white people had no being or existence either without the perpetual reproduction of their idea of binary and dialectical relations with black people.

Ordinary laboring people, many of whom would likely be labeled as black or “coloured” in the colonial discourse also used names like rebellion in order to locate themselves on the secure side of the vortex and unquestionably inside the law and the state. Nevertheless, they had to represent themselves in ways that the colonial state could understand, and this meant making clear the ideas and people that must be excluded from presentation as the proof of loyalty. One particular letter is extremely suggestive in this context. Thanking Eyre profusely for saving Jamaica from the terrible threat of rebellion, “In the behalf of ourselves, our families, and fellow-labourers of St. Ann,” Thomas Barnett, his wife, 2 children, and “117 others” wrote:

We have all been deeply pained at learning that numbers of our country-men and fellow labourers residing in St. Thomas-in-the-East, by foolish and mistaken views, and in violation of the laws of the country, risen up in open rebellion, and have been guilty of acts which we shudder to learn of, the barbarity of which is only equaled by their madness and folly. No persons of right mind can delight in war; it is an evil that carries with it desolation and death; it sets families in total disorder; it breaks up comfortable houses; it unavoidably causes the innocent to suffer with the guilty, and it brings ruin upon a country.<sup>206</sup>

Given that St. Ann’s was one of the parishes where George William Gordon and the “Native Baptists” had been particularly politically active, perhaps Barnett hoped to clearly demonstrate their loyalty as a tactic in an ongoing negotiation with colonial power.<sup>207</sup> The killing of at least 439 people and the burning of 1000 homes across St. Thomas and Jamaica involved in the reactionary violence of the state had indeed caused trauma and suffering that many ordinary Jamaican people would have wanted to end as soon as possible. In turn, many black members of the laboring class could have been

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas Barnett to Governor Eyre, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 463-464.

<sup>207</sup> Heuman notes that George William Gordon was active in St. Ann during the period of the Underhill meetings. Through his newspaper *The Watchman and People’s Free Press* he called on the people to attend the meetings: “You who have no sugar estates to work on, nor can find other employment, we call on you to come forth and protest against the unjust representations made against you by Mr Governor Eyre and his band of Custodes.” From *The Jamaica Watchman and People’s Free Press*, 21 August 1865, quoted in Heuman, 57.

honestly distressed that their present status or future chances for social and economic advancement had been stymied by the violent actions of a select group of “rebels” coming from “persons well-to-do in life, and possessed of comfortable homes, good provision fields, and plenty of small stock” who had “brought shame upon the whole labouring population of this Island.”<sup>208</sup> The “Rebels” were precisely the same black people that could have come from similar circumstances, or what they aspired to become. Thus rebellion had challenged the possibilities of negotiating with whites in control of state power as well as advancing *through* the mechanisms and apparatuses of the colonial state. Black people could share the same status as laborers but still practice a completely different politics from one another: each group in this case could have desired the same things like economic autonomy and social advancement, but how they accomplished this politically, and to what statist or anti-statist ends this politics was directed, was a critical point of difference between them.

As loyal and disloyal blacks could share the same class basis, it was pivotal for Barnett to distinguish his people as good black *and* laboring people. Class could be interpreted as taking on a political basis insofar as Barnett had affirmed that his people’s production, surpluses and/or lands were located within the state and were legitimately subject to their management and control, taxation, the charging of rents, etc. The “Rebels” brought not only but also shame upon laboring people that sought economic and social advancement from within the political boundaries structured by the whites.

Without clear lines being drawn, the colonial state could mistakenly identify Barnett and his people as counting among the “Rebels,” and thus located beyond the boundary.

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<sup>208</sup> Thomas Barnett to Governor Eyre, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 464. They also added: “And the labouring man who is blessed with good health and strong limbs may find himself happy and comfortable within that sphere Providence has allotted to him.”

Proving to the colonial state that they had nothing to fear on either a racial and class basis could have indeed been essential to Barnett, as some contemporaries argued that either could serve as a source of political unity for enmity and violence. For instance, William Finlason believed that from the very beginning, Paul Bogle and black people had “intended the commencement of an insurrection which, by means of community of race and sympathy of class, must be likely to spread with rapidity among the black population, whether or not the conspiracy was more than local.”<sup>209</sup> As most black people in Jamaica at the time were of the laboring classes, the forces of rebellion threatened to sweep up not just every black person, but every black *laboring* person. The whites and state had thus a justified claim over the bodies of loyal black people in addition to the power to determine their political positions as a member of a racial category. The colonial state had the right to punish bodies, destroy them, or protect them.

In consequence, Barnett could only express loyalty to the colonial state by clearly distinguishing himself and his people from evil black people by presenting the good and loyal black people in almost purely negative terms, based on everything they were not supposed to be. Through rebellion, and also the inclusion of the name of war as a way to intensify the affect of his words, the text reveals that the ideal black person in the political sense was definitely a laborer; primarily sought comfort and security; and was invested in the reproduction of the colonial justice system to protect their property, possessed a mind that delighted in “peace,” could not be fooled by a politics that promised either political or class emancipation (these ideas are beyond the boundary). In fact, their use of the word *folly* and its conjunction with barbarity and madness cannot be underemphasized: it implied that any attempt to articulate a politics outside the

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<sup>209</sup> Finlason, 6.

boundaries of the law would ultimately prove itself, even retrospectively, as foolish and tragic. The use of the trope of madness further indicates that the possibility for knowledge and/or rational thought was predicated on the external authority and protection by the law and Eyre as the representative person of the Sovereign. To have anti-statist political thoughts was no different than being judged as insane, just like colonial contemporaries had done with Bedward in 1895.

Barnett's inclusion of the name of war expands the meaning of rebellion while maintaining the primacy of the colonial state in political conflict. For him, war appears as the force that powers rebellion, since if left unchecked, rebellion then progresses to war as conflict reaches its maximal intensity. To spread violence and take "delight in war" would not only spread ruin and death across the social world. Barnett also implies that destruction (and the threat and fear of destruction) has the potency to render each of the domains of social-political life (the home and the family, the law with the judgment of the innocent and the guilty, the country) equivalent in and through that destruction. Rebellion that led to war therefore had the capacity to collapse the organization of imagined sociopolitical and their hierarchies and inequalities which structured them; rebellion created the conditions for proving loyalty, but threatening "Rebel" figures always threatened to dissolve these very conditions through an uncontrollable violence. Loyalty would no longer be able to be proven in such a world that lacked (the idea of) clear and precise boundaries and bonds between different domains totalized into a unitary political body by the colonial state.

Indeed, many white contemporaries feared the possibility that loyal or potentially loyal black people would be drawn into the conflict on account of their natural racial

and/or class affinity for one another. Take Reverend Morris's argument that, "If the insurrection could have presented a successful front for even a few days it is impossible to say how frightful might have been the consequences; from the strong sympathy of blood and race among the black population, not a few of a more peaceful and subordinate disposition might have been quiescent or even drawn in to aid and abet the evil doings of the rebellious."<sup>210</sup> The alliance of blacks together would not only bring destruction to the whites but also remove black laboring bodies whose violent impulses were always "quiescent" and waiting to be activated.

Reverend Sloan, Island Curate of St. Andrew, agreed with these principles writing to Eyre that "The feeling of confidence of all the blacks appeared to have in each other, and their unity—rare qualities among negroes—their war cry was 'colour for colour.' They aimed at the destruction of the whites simply because they are white. We heard rebels outside the windows 'All buckras must be killed.'"<sup>211</sup> Here, Sloan's fears were that black people lacked the capacity to unite regularly and that rebellion would actually create the conditions for this unity that was "rare." This idea of unity was imagined according to white people's own perceptions of the binary oppositions employed in the colonial discourse. Sloan presumed that this black "unity" took violence and killing white people as its basis, and locked in a kind of feedback loop with itself. The telos of black politics could only mean the death of every white person, "simply because they are white." Thus, when convenient, whiteness *only* meant skin color and lacked any clear class privileges and political valences, and so it was actually black people that were represented as the racists.

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<sup>210</sup> Evidence of Reverend Morris, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 85.

<sup>211</sup> Reverend Sloan to Eyre, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 37.

The reality of conflict and the fear over a possible future conflict were one and the same for Morris and Sloan. Whether black people were in rebellion now or later, the danger was always the same. In 1865, the colonial state had been prompted to kill and destroy some of their imagined assets in order to save the rest of their accounts through an act of damage control, which, paradoxically, necessitated an even greater demonstration of violence. Hence, as Colin MacClaverty and seventy-two unnamed co-signers argued, “While it might have been to death to the death to those who loyally refused to join with the Rebels, it would have been certainly so in the end, at the retributive hand of justice, to those who did join their lawless bands.”<sup>212</sup> The result can only be a loyal death or a disloyal death for black people if and when rebellion comes. The ideas of the law and justice were “retributive” and predicated on vengeance and punishment against the “lawless.” Yet MacClaverty called upon the black body to be prepared to die whether they remained actually remained loyal or did not. In his thought, black people were born to toil, produce surpluses, and bond themselves to the whites and the colonial state as the preconditions for their mere *survival*.

In this register, rebellion and war thus converge with one another in the colonial discourse as they index the same ultimate possibilities of falling outside the state and the law even if they did not technically mean the same things to people. Defense and prevention against the rebellion and the forces of war from collapsing, negating, or inverting the order and orientation of political life must exclude the existence of the “rebel” and thus whatever particular or singular politics practiced by that figure. Thinking back to the historiographical and historical definitions of rebellion and war, arguments that end at historically analyzing the capacity of “rebels” to organize and plan

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<sup>212</sup> Colin MacClaverty to Governor Eyre, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 471.

military action and/or to create ideological and political commonality among one another do not in themselves challenge the meanings inherent in the colonial discourse.

Eyre's response to Barnett's letter is also suggestive of colonial notions of proving one's loyalty before the state as the basis of becoming a (temporary) friend. Eyre wrote, "My friends, I receive with much satisfaction the address presented to me by the peasantry of St. Ann, stating our deep abhorrence of the acts of rapine and bloodshed which have recently devastated this colony."<sup>213</sup> Although the letter is conventional in its language of duty to the Queen and his justification for military action, unlike many of his other letters, Eyre added the key word "friends" in his reference to Barnett and laboring peasants. These black people had proven their loyalty to the colonial state, and for whatever reasons, may have been more important to Eyre, given the agitation by George William Gordon that had occurred previously before the outbreak of conflict. Eyre praised them for belonging to a parish that "enjoyed the reputation of being a loyal one," and held them up as a model for the rest of the Jamaican "peasantry."

In even more clear terms of what it meant to be his new friend as well as the obligations that it entailed, Eyre added, "Rest assured, my friends, that the interests of all classes depend upon the preservation of peace and good order, and that neither individual nor general prosperity can exist without it."<sup>214</sup>

Eyre locates this friendship exclusively in an adherence to the colonial state and the law in the "preservation of peace and good order." "[T]he interests of all classes" bonded all of the individual and discrete political identities together under a common framework. Yet it is actually the law and the respect for its boundaries (including the

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<sup>213</sup> Eyre to Barnett, *PP*, [3682] Papers Laid, 464.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 464.

idea of a “boundary”) that creates the conditions for friendship, rather than the other way around. Friendship therefore was always tenuous because the moment that a perceived or imagined force threatened the power of the law to maintain the status quo of class interests, former friends became new potential threats from within the political body (as discussed later, the state could also include the Maroons as “friends” to be feared, especially after Emancipation). The entire point of friendship here was to neutralize potentially antagonistic entities into elements that could be measured, predicted, and controlled. By its very nature, it could have nothing to do with generosity, humility, and sacrifice because it began logically from a position of fear. The colonial discourse can only imagine friendship as a *consequence* of other black people being thrown into the vortex and destroyed. Barnett and his people could not be counted as existing in Jamaican political life at all without indexing their non-threatening status through the names of rebellion and war. The act functioned as the immediate proof of loyalty, and thus existence.

But simply affirming one’s loyalty to the colonial state did not always suffice during the events of 1865. Sometimes, a sufficient demonstration of loyalty could entail the physical killing of another person as its origins. John Sawers of Manchester witnessed one such instance when Colonel Hobbs had captured men reported by his newly appointed constables as having been engaged in “open rebellion plundering.” Under martial law, those proven to have been engaging in hostilities or damaging property were to be executed. Hobbs however wanted “to be sure that there could be no mistake in the identity of the prisoners, and then he swore the constables to an Oath of allegiance,” which consisted of holding up their right hands, and “swearing before their

Maker, and their allegiance to Queen Victoria, Governor Eyre, and the Constitution of the country.”<sup>215</sup> The “rebels” were shot, and the Constables thereby proved their loyalty as well as their non-“rebel” status simultaneously. Sawers further observed seventeen similar executions of prisoners at Coley estate shortly after his witnessing of another colonial oath. As the prisoners were lined up and shot together, one man on the far side of the line dodged the bullets and escaped. When he was re-captured a week later and “brought to Colonel Hobbs, and he [Hobbs] said his escape was so miraculous he could not think of punishing him again, so he made him what he called the Oath of Allegiance, and let him go.”<sup>216</sup>

On the one hand, the Constables could have killed the “rebels” because otherwise they themselves would be killed, or suspected of being disloyal. Understandably, in negotiation with the colonial state power and having no natural political affinity for blacks as such like the colonials claimed, the Constables killed these people so that they could continue with life. Some could also have been genuinely excited to engage in such activities out of excitement, for an opportunity to settle a score, or to plunder. But it was still the colonials that imposed and constructed these conditions; and it was they who were invested in representing the events and loyalty in this way. Sawers was called to testify over the conduct of colonial military forces during martial law, which included the above situation, but the loyalty of the Constables – and the very idea of “loyalty” – was never really in question. This is as it must be within the colonial state and its discourse, for without this killing of another, there could be neither a proving of loyalty nor the production of the proof of friendship. The colonial state and the whites that controlled it

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<sup>215</sup> Evidence of John Sawers, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 224.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

did not hate or seek to destroy every black person because the black body had value as labor (although this did not mean that black people were to be valued as people). Whites desired inter-racial existence in order to maintain their very power to define what existed in the first place.

Although many contemporaries may have indeed expressed shock and fear after the beginning of violent conflict, the bloody suppression of the rebellion under civil and martial law was actually perfectly normal, banal, and quotidian for the colonial state. This was precisely how the law and the state machine functioned, and why people came together in order to design a state in the first place. The white colonials relied on their legal-juridical discourse to conjure up and legitimate their fantasies. The ideas of loyalty and identity, the fear of being killed, and the killing of others were all part and parcel of the law's basic operation. For instance, the JRC called A. Heslop (labeled a "coloured" Attorney-General for Jamaica in the court documents) to testify to his understandings of martial law and the manner of his conduct during court martials that he presided over for "rebel" prisoners in October and November 1865. Asked to explain his rationale during the events, Heslop defended himself and the actions taken during martial law as entirely within the boundaries of both the law and the martial law because the combatants and opponents involved in the conflict had never been designated as real "Belligerents" by the State. This would have granted them protection under the law. Indeed, Heslop granted that "There is such thing as *bellum civile*, there can be therefore a war amongst persons who are subjects to the same Crown. ... [For example] The principal nations of Europe, England and France among them, recognized belligerent rights upon the part of the Confederates, that is to say they were to dealt with not as rebels, but according to the

laws of war; there is no impropriety of speaking of belligerents when there is open war.”<sup>217</sup>

But this did not apply in this case. While war within an imperial unit or state was possible, all of these examples presupposed that the only kind of war that could be recognized must occur between powers that could prove their existence as a comparable “nation” (i.e. ruled by white people; although, as argued later, the Maroons were the historical and political exception which many of the agents of the colonial state actively wanted to silence out of the discourse). Being recognized as war thus conferred upon the conflict a certain kind of (inter)national legitimacy since the belligerent was no longer entirely subject to the laws of the original state it had been at war with.

None of these laws did and could ever apply to Bogle’s people as the enemies of the state. Heslop continued that he had treated the “rebels” not as belligerents per se but as imminent and immediate threats to the very security of the state, given the (pre)conditions of possibility that he claimed were imposed on the island in the declaration of martial law. The “rebel” in this case was thus inside the state as a being subject to either civil or martial law, but excluded from the domain of “legitimate” political action at the same time. (Interestingly, change can only occur peacefully within the mechanisms of the state and the law, and Paul Bogle’s canonization as an anti-colonial Jamaican national hero by the postcolonial state has also silenced his anti-statist politics. They swing from his presentation as an abstract figure of violence to an abstract figure of peace that fought *for* the legitimacy of the state). After moving beyond the boundary, there was no coming back. They had obviously broken the civil law, as “A man can hardly be a rebel without breaking the law, and I did not certainly merely try

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<sup>217</sup> Evidence of A. Heslop, *PP*, [3683] Jamaica Royal Commission, 328.

them for murder.” This however was inconsequential to the legal question at hand. The trials, punishments, and executions meted out by the Heslop in the execution of his duties fully conformed to “what is called martial law, which I take it is the law of self-defence. ... I acted on that law, the law of resisting force by force.”<sup>218</sup>

It seems that black people in Jamaica never could actually “Rest assured [as] friends.” Through the terms set forth by the colonial discourse, the only possibility of a politics was bound to killing and fear of being killed. Antagonisms were theoretically everywhere and mismanagement of these dangers threatened to lead to further disturbances, rebellions, insurrections, and wars. These names allowed for the colonial discourse to represent black people and race through the degree of their (dis)loyalty, and at the same time place white people back as the privileged mediators that would speak for them. The state utilized names like “rebellion” in order to create the clear political distinctions and hierarchical orders necessary for the maintenance of its own circular political fictions. Whether Eyre was the individual agent of this restoration or another was superfluous.

As explored in the concluding part this section, Kenneth Bilby’s masterful critique of the historiographical discourse concerning the Maroons participation in the government suppression demonstrates how white colonials’ entire notion of loyalty was a fantasy. The Maroons had been anything but loyal, although white colonial agents went to lengths to represent them *as if* they were truly exceptional loyal subjects. In reality, the state feared the Maroons for their martial prowess, and for the fact that the state had not and could never defeat them. Yet their histories and memories of the event remain politically contested in the present day, and not just by those allied with the state and its forms of memory. Before introducing this evidence, however, I want to complete the

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 328.

critique of the colonial discourse in order to reveal how contemporary writers and their historical narratives reproduced their own naming schemes for the war of 1865 in the attempt to analyze, diagnose, predict and control the (racialized) variables they thought led to violent conflict. Both loyal and disloyal black people were rendered as formless abstractions in the process as the victims/perpetrators of savagery. The production of historical knowledge by contemporaries was linked to their idea and reification of the law as the proper instrument of resolving and safeguarding against these problems.

## 2. “The laws which bind society together”: Contemporary Historical Narratives and the Representation of Black People

In this section, I focus on a set of emblematic contemporary works that did not outright identify as pro-Eyre in order to show that contemporaries widely shared the same underlying assumptions about the function of the state and the law, and in turn, the representation of black people. While contemporary’s understood and named the events in differing ways, all of them represented black people in nearly the same ways as formless abstractions operating within historical contexts of the observer’s own design. All Eyre’s brutality had proven was the even greater need for the law and historical knowledge to reform the conditions which had led to Eyre’s as well as black people’s savagery so that potential riots and rebellions could be detected before they had begun. From the fear of war down to the smallest riot and protest, the prerogatives of the discourse were oriented towards prevention through political economic and legal analyses. Even if some contemporaries argued that colonial officials had overblown the actual threat of Bogle’s military forces and their proliferation, as argued below, their

statist and legal-juridical logic remained the same. The primacy of the law and the fear of the consequences of its failure continued to ground contemporaries' understanding of the events of 1865.

First, John Gorrie's method in *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica* (1866) was to arrange the empirical evidence in order to let it speak to the fact that black people had never planned and executed a "rebellion" as most colonials had claimed. I would suggest that the main objective of his analysis however was to demonstrate the brutality of the repression through the facts and to make a case for the illegality of Eyre's continuation of martial law due to the length of its duration. He never disagreed with the necessity that some kind of violent suppression was required. He also arranges the evidence in his text so that selected members of every class, race, and gender are represented, although none of his selections speak of war. For Gorrie, any one of the terms of the core vocabulary would suffice. In the last statements of his work, he finally refers to the events of 1865 as an instance "of repressing disturbances," that had come as the result of "the preposterous pretensions of Colonial Governors and military officers, to deal with human life and property as they please, without responsibility to the laws which bind society together."<sup>219</sup>

Gorrie presents an interesting case as an intimately connected writer to the events and the gathering of court evidence for the JRC, having been active in his efforts to try Governor Eyre in England as well as participating in the direct questioning and cross-examination of some witnesses. His work straddles the lines between what Ranajit Guha calls the "primary, secondary, and tertiary" levels of discourse in the context of colonial

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<sup>219</sup> John Gorrie, *Illustrations of Martial Law in Jamaica. Compiled from the report of the royal commissioners, and other blue books laid before Parliament* (London: Jamaica Committee, 1867), 102.

historiography on rebellion. Primary sources conveyed a sense of immediacy to the evidence (or just as easily its illusion), whereas the secondary discourse was produced in letters, memoirs, newspaper discussions, etc. that lay in close proximity to the primary but were disconnected in time from it. Nevertheless, in the engagement of the primary evidence by the secondary discourse, the primary is transformed in a reflexive maneuver that adds retroactive authority and legitimacy to the idea of the primary source as such. The politics and powers invested in the production of theories of rebellion and their prevention then ended up making the evidence perform a different kind of work by translating the colonial officials' and contemporary fears of death, negation and inversions into works of orderly and encyclopedic presentations of the evidence.

In addition, Guha argues that the articulation and overlapping of these streams was part and parcel of an idea he calls “the prose of counter-insurgency” born out of the defense operations of the colonial order against the forces of inversion inhabiting the peasant countryside. This stream of discourse did not exist independently but was instead co-produced and legitimated by the idea of its dialectical, antagonistic opposite, the “code of insurgency,” in which the abstractions in discourse are reified into concrete figures like the “peasant.” Yet this peasant possessed no form or existence outside of this code; and when located within it, they appeared as the formless and rebellious appendages of the colonial order. Whether viewing the “rebel” in a positive or negative sense, Guha’s lesson is that the interplay and necessary relationship between an inversion/negation of the colonial order and its further negation in an endless cycle discursively provides the basis for the appearance of the peasant-rebel (con)junction in the first place.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Guha, “Prose,” 7-8.

In Gorrie's account, not only does the state remain essential to any possible critique of the colonial order, it was also legitimated as the solution to the problem of the colonial state's ineptitude that had caused the production of conditions which weakened the effect of the law to prevent such outbreaks in the first place. He was much too concerned with demonstrating the raw chronology of occurrences during martial law, and how the law could have saved itself from Eyre and/or Bogle. Nor did he attempt to historically narrativize and analyze the (pre)conditions of why and how the events took place at all. A raw empiricism that accounts for the material voices of the people can therefore nevertheless betray the memory and politics of their actions entirely. Even when a writer tries to show many sides to a situation objectively, any framework that takes the law and the analysis of empirical "(pre)conditions" of "rebellion" as presuppositions carry forward all of same naming practices and objectives as the colonial agents that directly led the retributive military efforts against the people of St. Thomas-in-the-East.

Second, Gardiner Hubbard's *The Late Insurrection in Jamaica* (1867) also attempted to give himself a greater epistemic authority by stressing its objectivity and sober analyses of the events of 1865. While he does not spend too much thought on the name and the naming, his understanding of these events was bound up with the assumption that violent conflicts unfold and progress in "stages," which the historical observer then breaks apart and analyzes in order to determine both the prognosis of the events and notes for their future prevention. For instance, in his narrative, he represents the battle at Morant Bay courthouse on October 11 as an "outbreak" of a "riot," which

then progressed into a full “rebellion.”<sup>221</sup> At the root of these stages lie a set of clear political economic (pre)conditions and determinations to the conflict while the state and the law instruments of their resolution. For Hubbard, the collapse of the sugar industry had begun the sequence of violent conflict because of the insufficient payment to planters for the loss of their chattel property, which, at six million pounds for “three hundred and eleven thousand slaves, or nineteen pounds for each slave—not half their market value.”<sup>222</sup> Hubbard then reasoned that the lack of capital to employ labor had caused increasing antagonisms between planters and their labor forces, which, without state intervention and legal reform, were bound to result in incidents such as those in 1865.<sup>223</sup> However, even if an observer did not argue that the supposed victimization of the planters had been the underlying of political economic bases for violent conflict,

Furthermore, Hubbard linked the events to the historical legacies of slavery and their promotion of the worst practices associated with black, or as Hubbard termed them in his text, “negro” peoples. Emancipation had not been “responsible for the present degraded condition of the negro; while to the negro, and the faithful efforts of the missionary, belong the credit of his improvement and his efforts for further advancement.”<sup>224</sup> As the privileged mediator, the missionary functioned as the representative and proof of the black people’s improvement in a way that can be measured, since his voice counts as existing. The missionary was represented as the agent that would dissolve the bindings of a past slavery but only by propelling the “negro” into a future of wage-labor and chronic landlessness. Thus Hubbard’s

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<sup>221</sup> Gardiner G. Hubbard, *The Late Insurrection in Jamaica* (New Haven: Printed in the New Englander for January, 1867), 56-58.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

understanding of slavery and its relationship with the events of 1865 were abstract and hollow. He confirmed this view through his claim that “we do not deny the laziness and profligacy of the negro, but we believe that other influences may stimulate him to industry and virtue besides the lash and branding iron. We do not deny his propensity to lie and steal, but consider these rather as faults common to our fallen humanity.”<sup>225</sup>

This concept of humanity that ostensibly united all human beings together was actually based on the idea that all people shared a propensity for evil. As a negative definition, it says nothing about how the contemporaries measured and distinguished different kinds of evils from one another: black savagery and their requirement of mediation and civilization was not the same as white savagery, which in this context was always predicated on an encounter with black people. After falling into a state of savagery, white colonials could return from it and have a second chance. Black people were continually denied the chance to do anything on account of their race, and those that fell into savagery also were perceived as saying something about their race. White savages spoke for themselves, and no one else.

Since the state defends and secures against evil, the idea of a universal humanity in fact re-centers the state as the arena in which the human must operate in order to be considered a human at all. In addition, Hubbard invokes this concept of the human in order to facilitate his representation of black people through his own mediation as the superior authority. Whatever the form of these “other influences” that could be used to effect positive changes in the “negro” population, Hubbard clearly envisioned that the future lie in inverting the “laziness and profligacy” of black people into positive traits of “industry and virtue.” The ineptitude of the ruling classes of Jamaica to succeed in this

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 69.

positive inversion following Emancipation was the real lesson of the events of 1865. Hubbard thus reasoned that the transition of Jamaica to Crown Colony status was the only way to check the planters that were incapable of being “safe custodian[s] of the rights of freedom” to black people. All the while, his entire argument only really concerned a particular set of “black people” who were degenerates but had at least remained loyal to the colonial state and the power of whites.<sup>226</sup>

Thomas Harvey’s and William Brewin’s *Jamaica in 1866: A Narrative of a Tour Through the Island* (1867) continued naming the event as a means to diagnose the (pre)conditions to violent unrest. They praised the objective findings of the JRC of “the non-existence of a widespread conspiracy” on the part of the black population. The “grave, conservative” nature of the Commissioners, “by no means indisposed to exonerate and approve had been done by authority,” only further corroborated the veracity and empirical authority of Harvey and Brewin’s conclusion that the event was a local outbreak, which, in “reality,” had been relatively minor before being magnified by the colonial military forces.<sup>227</sup> The entire incident could have been stemmed on October 9 with the choice not to overreact against Bogle and his people through the issuance of warrants for their arrest. The failure of the “administration of justice” had led to the breakdown of the legal/contractual/political-economic relations “between employers and employed” and “between the higher and lower classes.”<sup>228</sup>

At the same time, the presentation of the empirical evidence in this way carried with it an explicit denial of the possibility of understanding the motivations of Paul Bogle

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>227</sup> Thomas Harvey and William Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866: A Narrative of a Tour Through the Island, with Remarks on its Social, Educational and Industrial Condition* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1867), 23.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid, 22.

and the warriors on terms outside the colonial discourse. They suggested that while an investigation of Paul Bogle's motivations and beliefs might be interesting, the limited amount of documentation providing conclusive evidence on him was infinitely less important than preventing another incident – and thus another Bogle – from occurring again. This historical orientation actively produces the exclusion of Bogle and the warriors from politics and from its thought while nevertheless giving them “objective” form through the text. Yet their argument was reducible to the notion that a natural kind of enmity obtained between the black and the white because of the failure of the state and the law to check this enmity. Public officials and state agents had ruled in a “generally arbitrary, irritating and excessively indiscreet” manner. Thus, for the colonial discourse as well as the modern historiography, however existent or inexistent a conspiracy was, or however much the participants in conflict planned and organized, the black person could not be presented without relegating them to these contexts and imagining them as violent forces of disorder before any reasoning could begin.

Lastly, the most polemical contemporary critique of the colonial order came from Henry Bleby, a notable Baptist missionary active in Jamaica during the events of 1865 (but not in St. Thomas). Symptomatically titled *The Reign of Terror: A Narrative of Facts Concerning ex-Governor Eyre, George William Gordon, and the Jamaica Atrocities* (1868), Bleby discussed the preconditions to the eruption of violence like the writers discussed above, but blamed white colonials almost exclusively for the entire affair. Bleby claimed that the events at Morant Bay definitely began as a “local riot” that had been “magnified by the craven fears of the civil and military authorities of the island into ‘a dreadful rebellion,’ and made the occasion and pretext for shocking excesses, to

which it will be difficult to find a parallel in British colonial history.” There had never existed a widespread plot, and the “outburst of popular fury” had been caused by the failures of emancipation to correct the “misgovernment and mal-administration by which the labouring classes had been oppressed... The planting interest, so called, has always been dominant, infusing its own evil selfish spirit into legislation of the colony, and controlling the administration of laws for its own purposes.”<sup>229</sup> For Bleby, the issuance of arrest warrants on October 9 had “amounted to something like a declaration of war against the black people concerned, who had certainly done nothing more than resist... and it could scarcely have any other effect.”<sup>230</sup> Thus, “The moral responsibility of all the murders of Negroes, and burning of Negro cottages... that took place during the reign of terror called martial law, rests upon his [Eyre’s] head.”<sup>231</sup>

In conjunction with his critique of colonial planters and officials, he did in fact express a degree of sympathy for the murdered black people represented in his text. Even though he believed that “most of the Negroes in Jamaica” were “unlettered and ignorant,” he also implied that they had proven their capacity to recognize their own interests in the situation. This had been accomplished through the form of vicious attacks by Eyre as the harbinger of negation and savagery that Bleby represented as crossing the racial boundary: “they are fully awake to the fact that life and liberty were never more insecure... than when they lay at the mercy of Mr. Eyre and his advisers.”<sup>232</sup> The violence that occurred in the event said nothing of the general “black people of our

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<sup>229</sup> Henry Bleby, *Reign of Terror: A Narrative of Facts Concerning Ex-Governor Eyre, George William Gordon and the Jamaican Atrocities* (London: W. Nichols, 1868), 9. For a similar perspective, see also Edward Bean Underhill, *The Tragedy of Morant Bay* (London: Alexander and Shephard, 1895).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

colonies,” who were “by no means sanguinary or revengeful” as a matter of inborn nature and constitution. But while they had been “enduring, patient, and forgiving...they are, like other men, capable of being aroused and excited by accumulated provocation to deeds of fury and blood: and at Morant Bay the provocation was supplied.”<sup>233</sup>

These views of stages and progressions towards were also linked to the trope of eruption as an analogy for all kinds of occurrences involving violent disorder. It was a common strategy of the colonial historiography and discourse. In one stream, through the perspectives associated with kinds of “natural history,” the irruption of “rebellion” could be thought of as the expression of an internally bound but modifiable “very low state of civilization” and hence was a “normal” condition in the context of colonized and underdeveloped peoples in general.<sup>234</sup> “In conditions governed by the norm of unquestioning obedience to authority,” Guha argues, “a revolt of the subaltern shocks by its relative entropy. Hence the suddenness so often attributed to peasant uprisings and the verbal imageries of eruption, explosion, and conflagration used to describe it. What is intended by such usage in many languages and cultures is to communicate the sense of an unforeseen break, a sharp discontinuity.”<sup>235</sup> On the other hand, at the same time that inherent savagery engenders the (pre)conditions of rebellion and insurrection, so did the exacerbation of social and political economic contradictions to the point that they “trigger[ed] off rebellion as a sort of reflex action, that is, as an instinctive and almost mindless response to physical suffering of one kind or another...or as a passive reaction to some initiative of his subordinate enemy.”<sup>236</sup> Taking Guha’s logic slightly further, if

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>234</sup> Guha, *Elementary*, 18.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>236</sup> Guha, “Prose,” 3.

either approach formed the methodological and historiographical basis of the investigation into the “peasant” or the collective subject, insurgency could not be thought of outside of its colonial registers. This mode of historical production imagines “rebellion” as the place where the peasant/rebel “comes to know himself,” which silences the historical subjectivity that acts in these events in a new re-“measurement of difference and distance between the divisions and binaries imposed by colonialism.”<sup>237</sup>

Nevertheless, even when coming from a sympathetic position, the use of terror, massacre and death in his narrative ended up reproducing all of the former colonial binaries. He presented whites and blacks involved in the conflict as having become the same through violence and savagery (sharing a common “humanity”) but this comparison was itself based on race. On the one hand, Bleby’s moralistic line of discourse ultimately thought and reduced people like Governor Eyre to symbolic representations of an abstract, irrational, atavistic savagery that said nothing politically other than the administration had failed to honor and administer the law. Bleby wrote about how Eyre had abused his official position in the chase for political power, “taking part in the cruel death of a poor Negro, who in the silence of the night is dragged from his home, and, after a wretched mockery of a trial...is at once put to death with circumstances of revolting inhumanity.”<sup>238</sup> The good name of the British army and navy had been “sullied by the brutality of the military and naval officers, and the readiness with which they lent themselves to perform deeds of cruelty, to which we can scarcely find a parallel amongst

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<sup>237</sup> Guha, *Elementary*, 18.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

any savage people on the face of the earth.”<sup>239</sup> Thus violence and victimhood allowed for the representation of black people.

And while the black victims who had not taken part in violent conflict were to be pitied and saved, the people who had marched to Morant Bay on October 11 were to be condemned and disavowed in their entirety. Even though the colonial state had forced them into conflict, “not one word can be said in apology for these lawless deeds...[of] the savage violence which marked the conduct of the mob at Morant Bay. ... [These deeds] must be strongly reprobated, even by those who take the most favorable view of their case.”<sup>240</sup> The black victim can shift to the position of rebel perpetrator. Bleby sought to eliminate from serious thought or consideration both the perpetrators and those who took a “favorable view of their case.” Simultaneously, the law remained the basis by which to judge savagery, and its targeting apparatus could point towards whites, blacks, or to both simultaneously.

However, the fact that a white person had acted savagely was not to be associated with white as a race. Rather, white savagery was a degenerating effect caused by not only the unbridled power granted to officials in colonial contexts but also the interaction with lower races and baser forms of life. Even though savagery could cross race, the entire premise of the savage was tied to the black body. Bogle and Eyre were thus the same as each was violent, savage, and lawless; but Bogle carried the inscription of that savagery on his skin as a feared and raced black enemy while Eyre remained an individual savage body. The black person who acted savagely could stand for himself and the entire of their “race” as black. The events had only clarified this relationship.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 44.

In turn, the outburst of violence by the “mob” must be condemned, and then the black body has to be tamed, managed, and re-created by the whites and the law. The ancestors that marched to the Morant Bay courthouse were nothing but a mob, and anyone who took a “most favorable view of their case” was not only mistaken but also implicated in the reproduction of savagery and lawlessness. “Black” for Bleby is therefore a complete liability. The victim remained that which is to be pitied and raised back up like a hurt animal; reflexively, the victim was imagined as (1) a product of violence that could bounce back against whites in reaction to that violence; and (2) an object to be raised into civilization and limited citizenship through the selective replacement of undesirable racial traits that could be allayed but never destroyed. Otherwise, there would be no way for those inside the state and the law to know and prove in the colonial discourse that they were in fact, outside of savagery.

This was an orientation that treated “savagery” as everywhere but whose presence paradoxically justified and legitimated the law as the check against such savagery. Since Bleby assumed that violence such as this could never be inherent to the law, elites could use the law in order to prevent the possibility of violence by constantly making sure to delineate those outside of the law relative to those that had remained inside of it. This savagery based in the idea of the law also carried with it an explicitly racialized premise that was hidden behind a supposed savagery that affected “humanity” but articulated itself on an individual white body or the collective black body. Moreover, combating savagery gave the law something to react against, providing the basis for the desires for proper management of political economy and morality. The fear of this failure and the perceived possibility of the dissolution of the law again governed the entire process of

making black witnesses, black people, white people – everyone – appear in a thinkable and meaningful way in the discourse. Black people as such were still mere objects to be thrown about in the field of representations. While peace and order had no meaning to the colonial outside of their binary relationship with war and disorder, these kinds of terms could describe or represent nothing else really but the *absence* of an ideal peace and order (even “unity”) that never really existed, leaving readers with an entirely negative description of the event and the black people operating inside of it.

White contemporaries thus redirected and transferred his own ideas of barbarity, cruelty, and death upon himself in their drive for moral purification. In effect, the law and the state remained the mechanisms of discrimination between life and its savage outside. From the position of the law and the state, Eyre’s opponents were actually the same as Eyre. Take for instance Peter Taylor, former Treasurer of the Jamaica Committee for the prosecution of Governor Eyre. He was pleased that even though anti-Eyre elites in England had failed in bringing Eyre to prosecution, they had succeeded in “stamp[ing] out a policy. Never again in a British colony shall be enacted the policy of ex-Governor Eyre, nor the world stand aghast at the atrocities of a Jamaica massacre. ... We have been violent, cruel, tyrannical.”<sup>241</sup> Like sympathetic and unsympathetic contemporaries alike, Taylor could only recognize black people indirectly as *objects* of Eyre’s wrath. The possibility of black people articulating a politics as subjects apart from this violence is excluded from presentation. Hence for Taylor, the events of 1865 “[were]

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<sup>241</sup> The Jamaica Committee was a separate body of elite English liberals who sought to prosecute Eyre for the unlawful murder of George William Gordon during martial law. For a detailed look into these politics see also Bernard Semmel, *Democracy or Empire: The Governor Eyre Controversy* (London: McKibben & Kee, 1962).

a case of cowardice[,] which magnified a *trumpery* riot into a widespread insurrection, and then drowned the phantom it created in an ocean of murder, anarchy, and blood.”<sup>242</sup>

In turn, from the perspective of the colonial, the politics of Paul Bogle and the warriors were “of little or no value; trifling, paltry, insignificant; worthless, rubbishy, trashy.” (Admittedly, I had to look up the meaning of this word, itself a problematic procedure given our discussion on “rebellion” and “war,” yet I believe it telling of Taylor’s ideas).<sup>243</sup> Black people remained the epistemological objects of a colonial savagery gone haywire on one side, and the variables of disorder from the perspective of the legal system on the other. In the discourse, it was represented as if each side derived their identity in the encounter with its dialectical opposite as an object to be hated and feared, a necessary but dangerous encounter that threatened to transform the subject into an object itself. Yet the projection of savagery onto Eyre actually reproduces the cycle of negations and inversions because it is the law that must step in as the apparatus to secure against, and proscribe such savagery; the historical and the historiographical become the tools of the state to predict, diagnose, and resolve potential moments of “rebellion” and “riot.” The colonial vision of justice was the maintenance of “peace” through the proper social and political economic management of “populations.” Black people continued to have to prove that they were loyal and located on the right side of the boundary indexed by “rebellion” and similar events, and that they were *not* disloyal blacks. White people were automatically included in the political body, and must commit a “crime” to be disavowed, and even then the official sanctions received would be weak compared to the

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<sup>242</sup> Peter Taylor, Quoted in Semmel, 186.

<sup>243</sup> Oxford English Dictionary, entry updated last 1915. Other definitions are also symptomatic of Taylor’s views: “Applied to abstract things, as beliefs, practices, discourse, writing, etc.: Nonsense, rubbish,” and “showy but unsubstantial apparel; worthless finery.”

retribution brought to a black person. The worst problem that Eyre faced after his dismissal was difficulty in paying his court costs.

What many black people in 1865 as well as today remember as a war was unthinkable to white contemporary writers under any other terms than those set forth above.

### 3. (Counter-)Counter-Narratives: The Maroons, 1865-Present

However, these representations and renditions of the events by white colonial officials were based in statist fantasies and self-legitimizing illusions. Names like “rebellion” and “riot” served to distinguish loyal, law-abiding black people from other black people located beyond the state and the law was how contemporaries rendered the events thinkable, which should in no way be taken as fact. Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, oral traditions, and photographic evidence acquired recently by Princeton University, Kenneth Bilby expertly demonstrates that many Maroons remember and represent their participation with the colonial state during martial law under completely different terms than as they appeared in statist narratives.

The colonial state went through leaps and bounds to represent and commemorate the Maroons as enthusiastic and loyal fighters of the colonial state during and after the events. For instance, Bilby notes that Eyre wrote a kind of press release to the newspapers and public officials on October 20, 1865 discussing the successful amassing of the Maroons as military forces. He emphasized not only their loyalty but also his firm control over the situation. He had “personally inspected the Maroons, a fine body of about 150 men” as if they had lined up for him like a disciplined, colonial army. The

Maroons evinced “the most loyal spirit...unbounded in their devotion and loyalty” in their presentation to Eyre, and had even “come down on the day preceding out arrival...and were beyond measure delighted to see again their former captain, the Honourable A.G. Fyfe.”<sup>244</sup> Subsequently, in the aftermath of the events and public outcry over the atrocities visited on the people, the Maroons were also given banquets by the colonial state as heroes, which gave the appearance that they were “gloating over Bogle’s defeat and the role they had played in it.”<sup>245</sup> Months later, people such as William Kirkland even thought it their “duty” to write to *The Gleaner* in expression for the “approval of their [Maroons] conduct, [and] I have to thank [them] for saving my life; it was not until I heard the sound of your warlike shout, (the sound of which dispersed the Rebels).”<sup>246</sup> Thus in the colonial discourse, it appeared as if the Maroons, at best, were highly-skilled soldiers that simply went along with the state and Eyre as their duty. Elements of this core narrative were subsequently taken up in both statist and popular histories and memories following the “canonization” of Paul Bogle after national independence, and have remained largely up to the present day.<sup>247</sup>

This is not the way that the Maroons have represented or remembered the events in their own collective memories and historical narratives. Bilby argues that the “rebellion” began for the Maroons not with Paul Bogle’s march to Morant Bay, but rather their encounter with Governor Eyre in Port Antonio after the beginning of the conflict. In their oral traditions, Eyre had been fearful of his meeting with the Maroons because (1)

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<sup>244</sup> Supplement to the *London Gazette*, November 17-18, 1865, quoted in Kenneth Bilby, “Image and Imagination: Re-Visioning Maroons in the Morant Bay Rebellion.” *History and Memory* 24, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012), 50-51.

<sup>245</sup> Bilby, 64.

<sup>246</sup> *The Gleaner*, November 16, 1865.

<sup>247</sup> Bilby, 43-44. See also Mimi Sheller, “Hidden Textures of Race and Historical Memory: The Rediscovery of Photographs Relating to Jamaica’s Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865,” *Princeton University Chronicle* 72, no. 2 (Winter 2011).

they had not fought for the colonial state since 1831-32; and (2) since blacks had a natural affinity for one another and Maroons appeared black, the Maroons had just as likely allied with the “Rebels” and were coming to the meeting to kill Eyre and his soldiers. While on the one hand they had potentially lost their skills, on the other hand, the Maroons would become even more dangerous after being armed.<sup>248</sup>

Moreover, the Maroons were not simply “delighted” to see Colonel Fyfe as Eyre had claimed. Instead, Fyfe was the only person that Eyre could have brought that would have persuaded the Maroons to join, and Eyre knew this. First, their blood oath of 1739 had been to the British crown, and not to the colonial state of Jamaica. The Maroons fought alongside the agents of the colonial state only on their own terms, even if this was represented as “loyalty” by the British. Second, the Maroons knew that Eyre and many of his agents were untrustworthy, and they had learned to be wary of dealings with the colonial state after the Second Maroon War of 1795-1796 between the Trelawny Maroons and the British. The Trelawny Maroons had made peace with Governor Balcarres only to be betrayed and deported to Nova Scotia, and four years later, to Sierra Leone.<sup>249</sup> Lastly, the colonial state proved how far friendship went after their 1842 nullification of key provisions of the 1738/39 treaties in an effort to abolish the Maroons’ separate status, and therefore, to treat them the same as non-Maroon people and to impose social control over their hard-won freedoms. Maroons resisted being labeled as the same as *all* black people on the basis of race because the Maroons had already liberated themselves from the strictures and structures of the racialized colonial order. The policy changes introduced by the British failed because of Maroon resistance, but the

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 51-52.

encounter must have reminded the Maroons how tenuous their autonomy could be if they did not remain diligent in the different racial order of post-Emancipation Jamaica.

Their encounter had had absolutely nothing to do with a demonstration of loyalty or presenting themselves for inspection as good, disciplined soldiers of the colonial state. As Eyre noted in his letter referenced above, the Maroons had indeed met with Colonel Fyfe the day before. But, as the Maroons knew that Eyre was scared and might try to kill them, they planned along with Fyfe a demonstration of their martial prowess to Eyre so that there would be no mistake the party that was in control of the situation. The next day, Eyre arrived in Port Antonio with his contingent of colonial soldiers. When they received word that the Maroons had begun advancing toward the town, just like the Maroons had predicted, Eyre readied his troops to fire at any approaching targets. Fyfe however made a wager with Eyre that if any of his soldiers hit just one Maroon, they must take Fyfe's life. Eyre agreed to the terms and the soldiers discharged their weapons into the direction of the Maroons in the bush. The smoke cleared, and immediately the Maroons emerged with machetes in hand and surrounded Eyre. Not one had been harmed. Eyre had been bested by the Maroons and proceeded to arm them.

Thus, in this memory, the Maroons *determined* Eyre and their own political position in the situation, and not the other way around. The Maroons had not demonstrated their martial ability to the colonials in the desire to prove their loyalty or that they still had the capacity to fight. Instead, the entire performance had been predicated on reminding Eyre how weak and powerless he really was.<sup>250</sup> In addition, the Maroons did not simply reject joining Paul Bogle out of hand or castigate him for his race-based political rhetoric (even if it was ultimately unconvincing to the Maroons).

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 49-50.

Based in their collective memory, present day Moore Town Maroons agree that Paul Bogle's fight against the colonial state was justified and understandable. However, they knew that Bogle had not sufficiently planned for battle and had little chance of victory. To join with Bogle would have invited the destruction of the Maroons' political autonomy which had already come under threat in post-Emancipation Jamaica.<sup>251</sup> As Bilby contends, the Maroons could not trust Eyre and also could not "risk a war they could not win...In effect, they walked a tightrope."<sup>252</sup>

Tanya Huelett argues further that the prospect of equalization with the rest of the black population had prompted a re-evaluation of their positions in respect to other black people whom they had no real connection with. A Maroon could look the same as a black laborer but was definitely not to be confused for one. Bogle's affirmation of a black politics would have held little sway just like any politics based on racial identifications in general. Their contingent decision to support the colonial state was based in a strategic compromise in the struggle to maintain the freedom that Maroons and *their own ancestors* had fought for. This decision said nothing substantive about being anti- and/or pro-black or white.<sup>253</sup> Furthermore, while the colonials paraded individual Maroons around at banquets, the Maroons had also explicitly rejected the four hundred pound bounty offered to the Maroons for having captured Paul Bogle. The Maroons argued that accepting this money "could cause the whole purpose of their participation to be misconstrued, and though pressed they remained adamant."<sup>254</sup> This is significant, because historically, they would have accepted this money. Hence their rejection can be

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>253</sup> Huelett, 223-25, 230-32.

<sup>254</sup> C.L.G. Harris, "The Maroons—Praised and Condemned," *The Daily Gleaner*, July 23, 1967; quoted in Bilby, 64.

interpreted as a further distancing of their memories from the narratives and memories of the state. The story was *never* as clear-cut and unitary as the colonial state and its discourses would have others believe.

Nevertheless, the memories of Philip Bogle introduce an interesting tension into both Maroons' collective memory and the historiographical accounts of the conditions of Paul Bogle's capture and execution (Philip Bogle he was the great-grandson of Paul Bogle; also known as Bagan, which is the name I will use because speakers at the 2015 events referred to him so ).<sup>255</sup> First, in Maroon oral history and the written historiography, Paul Bogle was captured without violence. From the Maroons perspective, it was remembered that that a young boy approached Bogle in a thicket as he was reading his Hymnbook. After the shells were sounded that Bogle had been identified, the Maroons surrounded him. Bogle gave himself up, and "he surrendered in a sullen manner, muttering, 'I will surrender to your people; but I never would have to any other.'"<sup>256</sup> In the historiography based in the JRC court documents, Joseph Briscoe (the highest ranked Maroon captain during military action) captured Bogle as he emerged onto a road between Torrington and Stony Gut from the bush.<sup>257</sup> Bogle had been taken without incident.

Second, although the evidence is scarce concerning the exact way that Bogle was executed, scholars have generally accepted that Paul Bogle was hung at the Morant Bay Courthouse in the same manner as executioners would have hung anyone. Since Bogle's execution was not described in detail in the JRC court documents or in newspapers,

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<sup>255</sup> Bagan was the man that Edna Manley claimed she had used for her imagining of the face for the Paul Bogle statue.

<sup>256</sup> Anonymous, "The Capture of Paul Bogle," *The Gleaner and DeCordova's Advertising Sheet*, November 16, 1865, quoted in Bilby, 63.

<sup>257</sup> Heuman, 132.

scholars have used evidence in contemporary portraits to imagine the scene. Mimi Sheller has for instance referenced a portrait of the execution scene of twenty-two people at the Morant Bay Courthouse, Paul Bogle and his generals being included in this count. In the portrait, all of the figures have been hung in the standard fashion. Three men are pictured hanging in the archway, and Sheller suggests that one of them was likely Bogle. On the cover of Heuman's *'The Killing Time'*, a solitary figure, presumably Paul Bogle, hangs from the archway of the Morant Bay Courthouse with a number of other men hanging on a scaffold constructed below him. He is also hung in the standard fashion.<sup>258</sup> Each of the portraits are different, but share many overlaps (e.g. both have prisoners being made to watch the execution by their guards; white people and soldiers are also pictured in the scene; the burned down Morant Bay Courthouse sits in the background).

Bagan remembers Paul Bogle's encounter with the Maroons however as explicitly violent, and present a memory at odds with the above accounts. His statements are full of fascinating imagery and symbolism that indicates his perceptions that the Maroons and colonial soldiers subjected Paul Bogle to a kind of ritualized destruction which involved "bleeding him out," so to speak. In the documentary footage, while seated in a chair, Philip slapped his right shoulder and said,

[T]he Maroon soldiers them, wop! Catch him. And them chop off the right shoulder. And carried him, in all that blood, to Morant Bay. Paul hang with six more persons. Them take him up, hang up block and tackle like when you kill a cow at slaughterhouse. And they hitch Paul [Philip grabs his right ankle] and turn down his head [they hung him upside down]. What a thing man! When a man take you up by your foot and turn down your head. With that blood [he touches

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<sup>258</sup> Sheller, "Hidden Textures," 549; Heuman, front book cover. The artist for both portraits is unknown.

his shoulder again].<sup>259</sup>

While a more thorough analysis of this imagery will have to wait for a future work (admittedly, I do not have the historiographical bases to argue points on any detail), some speculation is still possible. Paul Bogle's bloody march back to Morant Bay from Stony Gut could be considered as a kind of dramatic reversal of the situation that had obtained just two weeks prior when Paul Bogle had led the people to the Courthouse to demand justice and freedom. Now, he was being led back to the site of his original political resistance. Presumably, his blood would have dripped down onto the ground during the march, populating it with his life. Moreover, Paul Bogle was executed like an animal, "sacrificed," and made to bleed out. The colonials are represented as attempting to negate and destroy the entirety of Paul Bogle. Recall Constantine's remarks on the Paul Bogle statue footnoted above, where the "sword" held by the figure "come[s] down, and the man is naked. There's no penis. The point of the sword mean cutting off the blood vein of the Bogle family."<sup>260</sup> Unlike Bogle's war waged against the colonial state for justice, the colonials' conditions of victory were unconditional and had involved the attempt to eliminate in retribution an entire generational line from the world: *a disloyal black bloodline*.

In another scene in the documentary footage, Bagan intimates that Paul Bogle had actually gave himself up to the colonial military forces of his own accord. Paul Bogle had been convinced to do so by his brother, Moses, who said, "You have to come out and you have to give yourself up because them killing too much of the young people. They

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<sup>259</sup> Philip Bogle, "Paul Bogle – The Morant Bay Rebellion [original title of documentary: "Catch a Fire," Youtube video, 28:17, Unknown film date, published by "Little Dread," May 4, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJmFla96NTw>.

<sup>260</sup> Constantine Bogle, "Paul Bogle: 150<sup>th</sup> Documented 1865-2015," Youtube video.

are killing too much of the young people. Nobody will be left to tell the tale.” The very reproduction and recall of the capacity to recall the memories and stories of what had happened was in danger of being lost altogether, and so, “Brother Paul he is out.”<sup>261</sup> Whether Bagan’s statements are “true” or “false” are beside the point. More importantly, like Constantine Bogle, Bagan represents Paul Bogle as a symbol of (self-)sacrifice. It was a question of generations and the re-creation of collective memories across those generations, and Bogle’s continued resistance and potential victory would only have come at great cost. This could be interpreted as the assertion that Bogle went out according to his own terms, at least in small some way. His surrender was *conditional*, and based on conditions of his choosing, even if Bogle had little chance of success or any relevant politics from the point of view of white contemporaries. Bagan references the importance of the next generation in a way that has nothing immediately to do with the national future as imagined by the state.

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The perception of Maroon complicity in aiding the colonials in 1865 as well as historically participating in the defeat of the wars led by slaves in Jamaica also remains a contested subject in the present day. I want to briefly outline a case in which calls have been made for the Maroons to apologize for this history. My point is not to demonstrate who was right or wrong, true or false (which are rather pointless questions analytically here). Instead, I want to close the discussion by highlighting the intersection of history and memory today, and the ways Jamaican people today jointly mobilize them in their continued attempt to relate the past to the present political moment.

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<sup>261</sup> Philip Bogle, “Paul Bogle – The Morant Bay Rebellion [original title of documentary: “Catch a Fire],” Youtube video.

In 2012, a conference was held in Accompong intending to bring together diverse strands of Jamaican people for a renewed discussion concerning these pasts and the colonial state, and, in turn, the very idea of the historical. In particular, the Maroon colonels Frank Lumsden (Charles Town Maroons near Portland in eastern Jamaica) and Ferron Williams of Accompong (western Jamaica) had come to meet with Verene Shepherd (the same as discussed in the first section of this thesis) concerning the same images of the Maroons from the collection of images that appeared in Bilby's study as referenced above. In an empiricist maneuver, Shepherd referenced these photos as conclusive evidence that the Maroons had actively participated with the colonial state and the maintenance of white rule. (Although it is not indicated in the newspaper article that reported on this meeting, perhaps she was attempting to imply that the fact that they had posed for a picture represents some degree of complicity beyond what the Maroons would admit to; I am only speculating however). She stressed that her point was not to demonize the Maroons. Instead, her goal was to explore some kind of idea of a shared history between Maroons and non-Maroons (as considered above, from the perspective of the Maroons, the potential of sharing their histories and memories with outsiders was unlikely to succeed).<sup>262</sup>

Shepherd attempted to advance a different and contrasting idea of the historical at the meeting. She imagined history as a political instrument that had the potential to reveal things that were difficult to discuss but carried with them an opportunity for a new commonality. She attempted to appeal to their shared qualities as Jamaicans as a corroborative factor in this project (itself potentially problematic as an appeal to the state,

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<sup>262</sup> Garfield Myers, "Maroons Defiant!" *Jamaica Observer*, November 12, 2012, accessed May 15, 2016, <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Maroons-defiant->

but not immediately so). From her perspective, the Jamaican people's discomfort with the history of the Maroons did not prevent them from coming to conferences and celebrating the successes of the Maroons, and thus there was no a priori reason why that openness could not be reciprocated. Histories and memories of violence, and their relationship with modern day concerns required the posing of these difficult questions (e.g. police brutality at Coral Gardens in 1963, and European payment of reparations for African slavery, for instance), Shepherd later added during a private interview portion with the *Jamaica Observer*, "When you read the account of the Morant Bay war...when you see the number of times, it says: 'Shot by Maroons, Shot by Maroons, Shot by Maroons'...I am saying let's talk about what happened in the past, let's reconcile so we can move forward."<sup>263</sup> At the same time, history in this case threatens to destabilize the Maroons' division between outsiders and insiders as Shepherd claimed that the new evidence has shown that the Maroons "must tell [their] own story including the uncomfortable truths."<sup>264</sup>

The Maroons at the convention countered with their own use of, and appeal to, the historical. Lumsden argued that even if they wanted to apologize, they did not have the authority to do so, since "It was not vested in me to apologise for the actions of my ancestors, and I speak as representing the Windward Maroons, which includes Charles Town, Moore Town and Scots Hall...All I am saying is that you have to understand the

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<sup>263</sup> Verene Shepherd, quoted in Myers, "Maroons Defiant!"

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. Shepherd also argued in potential problematic fashion that the European-led enslavement of Africans had committed "a crime against unity," thus invoking the idea of a "unity" that, in historical terms, never really existed, but is nonetheless *politically* true. The "unity" that Shepherd is calling for could be of a statist nature as well as her appeal to the category of the criminal although this is not immediately evident from her statements. And while not all scholars would share her approach to the presentation of empirical evidence in the fashion referenced above, her use of the historical as a constructive tool with the capacity to transgress boundaries (irreducibly, acts of violence?) is an orientation that lies at the heart of historiographical and historical practices, for better or worse.

root causes...I am saying regardless of what they did, understand why they did what they did.” Thus, we find the intersection of memory and history occurring in relation to both the singular nature of the ancestors of the Maroons which are remembered and historical in being both alive and important for the present constitution of the Maroons’ politics. The Maroons were bound to honor their own ancestors as a collective people and the stress on the need for historical contextualization to understand the “root causes” of the Maroons’ actions separates the Maroons from the colonial state while also remaining independent and resistant to the Shepherd’s maneuvers. Lumsden also suggested that it was “not just Maroons” who were involved in the suppression with the colonial state but also “roving gangs of free [black] people.”<sup>265</sup> Thus, Lumsden was attempting to push back on the underlying racial bases of Shepherd’s understanding of the conflict.

Many Maroons at the conference further referenced the oath they had taken with the British crown had prevented their positive intervention for Bogle because “In Ghan[a], a blood oath cannot be broken, not may, not or...to this day we honour those treaties...We [Maroons] have a contract with the Queen.”<sup>266</sup> In addition, Lumsden appealed to historical authority in a way similar to Shepherd, but firmly centered on the collective memories of the Maroons and their political autonomy. One could go and see “our museum in Charles Town...there is a statement that the Maroons, by their daily struggle for freedom, forged for themselves an identity, according to which they judged themselves.” Without a contextualized reading of both history and memory, “any judgment of them [the Maroons] will be flawed.”<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Frank Lumsden, quoted in Myers, “Maroons Defiant!”

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

On the other hand, Williams was much more forceful in his rejection of Shepherd's entire line of questioning. For him, it was impossible to ever make such an apology for the past actions of the Maroons' ancestors; consequently, the kind of apology Shepherd sought would *never* happen, “whether present or [in the] future.”<sup>268</sup> His claim was based not just in the collective agreement between Maroons that obtained in the present day. Rather, “until they [accusers] can prove beyond a shadow of doubt what was in the minds of our forefathers,”-- something that no one can actually accomplish -- “none of us, as colonels...will make such an apology.”<sup>269</sup> This appeal to hard proof that was “beyond a shadow of a doubt” uses history to reveal its very limits because it could never obtain this degree of certitude, although it would have to be employed as the epistemological apparatus to investigate what was really “in the minds of our forefathers.”

Moreover, public agitation over these questions could have possibly disquieted Williams more than his fellow Maroon colonels, as he also noted that people from St. Thomas had been calling him to press him to apologize for “capturing Paul Bogle.” To the people of St. Thomas, even if Williams' ancestors had nothing to do with Bogle's capture, in politics, old boundaries are questioned and the possibility opens for destabilization and transgression, while mobilizing counter-forces of politics in the process. Williams tried to emphasize that the Maroons inhabiting the western part of Jamaica were too far away to have done anything in 1865 as the facts of the matter, although Garfield Myers (the writer covering the convention) implied that Williams had missed the larger point of the questions, as he “appeared at one point to be attempting to

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<sup>268</sup> Ferron Williams, quoted in Myers, “Maroons Defiant!”

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

cast doubt on the stories of Maroon collaboration with the British...[and] made no mention of western Maroon involvement in the suppression of slave insurrections nor the capturing of runaway slaves.”<sup>270</sup>

Regrettably, the journalist did not elaborate on the particularities that led him to make these claims. Yet we still get a feel for the historical and the memorial are irreducibly connected to, and constituted through, politics. Even if Myers read into the situation, he illustrates the possible ways in which Jamaican people today can perceive their place and history in relation to the Maroons. Each side put forward their own political prescriptions that designate and delineate the kind of historical proofs that would be accepted as evidence. These proofs, and the political and historical frameworks which activate them, exist in relationship with memories of racial trauma, death, and hope. People can use memories to problematize as well as legitimate the historical, and the reverse logic is also possible. The Maroons represented themselves as possessing a singular identity with one another in the present day, grounded in a nuanced and contextualized history that Shepherd’s politics threaten to “unify” the Maroons with the histories and memories of other black Jamaican people, so to speak. The Maroons may empathize and understand calls for racial unity but the Maroons simply do not have the same “black memories” as non-Maroon Jamaican people, and outsiders should not forget this.

Hence while the Maroons do not find the arguments of non-Maroons convincing in this case just like Paul Bogle in 1865, many non-Maroons are not persuaded by the Maroons’ account of their own participation with the colonial state. Perhaps, there will never be equally meaningful collective histories and memories shared between each side,

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<sup>270</sup> Garfield Myers, “Maroons Defiant!”

and it is possible that this project is, ultimately, a misguided one in its political senses.

The Maroons were not the daily exploiters of slaves and black people in post-Emancipation society like the colonial state. Political contestation over the meanings and remembrance of the events of 1865 will likely continue for years to come.

## Conclusion

It is a small part of our responsibility to the time in which we live. It is a small part of our duty to center ourselves in our history, to participate in it, and to contribute to it. ... [For] this 150 is coming in the middle of the storm. I don't know if the storm is coming in the middle or if the storm them finish. But it was a storm that was stirred up two weeks ago about justice and reparation and moving on. And part of what I think we ought to be considering, is how we move forward, and on whose agenda.<sup>271</sup>

Amina Blackwood-Meeks  
150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Morant Bay War

Through the re-naming of the events of 1865 as *war*, black Jamaican people today have re-connected their memories and historical representations of Paul Bogle and the ancestors to the present political moment. In the process, they have introduced a critical fissure into the historiographical discourse on the “Morant Bay Rebellion,” and, at the same time, shown scholars that the name and the naming of an event constructs and shapes the history and meanings of that event. Expanding upon a political sequence that began in 1865, Jamaican people have expanded the boundaries of the event to include contexts, times, and spaces far beyond the borders of the Jamaican nation-state. Hopes for reparatory justice and the realization of a new idea of “Emancipation” have helped to power this expansion. In many respects, the call for reparatory justice and the positive proposition of a new framework of political thought in the present could be interpreted as analogous to Paul Bogle’s and the warriors’ call for others to take their minds, bodies and labor as their own. The ancestors that affirmed their collective memories together through the name of war are therefore not dead, raw materials to be used for the construction of our historical narratives nor instruments or symbols for the perpetual legitimization of the “foundations” of the postcolonial Jamaican nation-state.

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<sup>271</sup> Amina Blackwood-Meeks, “Paul Bogle & Martyr’s March & Ceremony 2015 – Face Xpression Production,” Youtube video.

As Blackwood-Meeks argues above and as this thesis has explored, the question of who sets the “agenda” historically, and how political action might change this condition remains a pressing question for black Jamaicans that are attempting to re-articulate black histories and memories through modes of public remembrance. The action of “centering” oneself in a history and a relationship with the past carries with it the danger of modes of state memory and historical representation re-colonizing areas of overlap relating to the anti-colonial and nationalist struggles of (post)colonial statist elites. This point relates to Blackwood-Meeks’ reference to the “storm” that irrupted up over the question of reparations which inherently challenges and destabilizes the legal-judicial and historical discourses perpetuated by the global order of nation-states.

Histories and memories appear as cyclical rather than linear as Jamaican people today have observed that the discourses and narratives that animated the colonial state’s racial discourse in 1865 are nearly the same. People like David Cameron attempt to locate all real political action within the boundaries of the law and the state, while arguments for reparations are imagined as disruptive and divisive to national unity, threatening to produce the preconditions of (racial) violence and the takeover and/or dissolution of state power by its savage outside. The warlord-capitalist-parliamentarian’s paradoxical need for (a fear of) ever-present crisis to sustain itself in the world today is also no different than the colonials’ use of rebellion as an opportunity to prove the martial primacy of the state in reacting against it. All the while, the law and its agents can wait in the background to punish and resolve any inconsistencies that emerge in the execution of “legitimate” state violence. Law thus becomes the great unnatural mechanism that seals off the natural and understandable savage state of human beings singularly

predicated on the negative, imaginary figure of the black body as formless/victim/perpetrator.

By becoming civilized and playing the rules and remaining loyal to (the idea of) them, people like Cameron, Bleby, and Eyre then bestow their gifts and contributions to development initiatives the building of prisons alike, while the politics and claims of those labeled disloyal and “rebellious” cannot even be entertained. In the (post)colonial mind, slavery is over, and so is the war of 1865; both were regrettable, violent, and brutal, but it is time to “move on” into a multi-racial world grounded in the idea of the unitary and nominally race less nation-state (which nevertheless depends on racial essentialisms for the daily maintenance of state power as well as the representation of specifically race-based atavisms and qualities based in “the past” that the state orients its populations *away* from). As I also argued in the third section of this thesis, black people in these kinds of discourses remain formless variables to be managed, uplifted, and predicted. Cameron’s pledging of funds for “development” and efforts to civilize and educate black people *as a race* out of their degrading ancestral conditions in 1865 to the present day are no different from one another.

The colonial and historiographical discourse on the “Morant Bay Rebellion” has played a significant role in shaping these statist politics. Blackwood-Meeks’ call to action to take responsibility and participate in the present political moment applies equally to scholars as it does to other Jamaicans. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the scholars’ inheritance of the colonial discourse embedded in all conventional schemes of names and the naming of the events of 1865 must be critiqued at every move, lest we repeat their same statist logics of exclusion and neutralization of the politics of the

ancestors and the Jamaican people of today. Without getting the singular appellation of the name of war made by the ancestors correct in both the theoretical and empirical senses, scholars miss a fundamental aspect concerning how they distinguished their politics, discourse, ideas, and hopes from those of the (post)colonial state. Historiographical approaches that take categories of “rebellion” and “insurrection” as their governing problematic become implicated in the genealogies of the colonial discourse which tried (and failed) to annihilate the ancestors by throwing them into a “vortex” created in and through the name of rebellion. Failure to take the names and acts of naming seriously is not simply to deny the existence of the ancestors that Jamaican people take to be important. In a way, to represent their “unfinished war” as a rebellion is to pretend as if the narratives and vocabularies of the colonial state and the historiography *must* always have priority.

This thesis has shown that Jamaican people from 1865 to the present actively remembered war at the exclusion of names like “rebellion” and “riot” that were common in the discourse of public officials, contemporary observers, and historians. Ordinary black people created meaning to the events of 1865 through the use of their own names and naming schemes (particularly through oral traditions) in order to distance themselves and their memories from the (post)colonial state and its discourse. Some of the immediate participants in the conflict also renamed themselves as warriors through the same kind of operation. They stood against the colonial state but based that resistance in the drive to actualize justice for black people that whites and the colonial state had oppressed politically, economically, and spiritually according to racial absolutes and essentialisms. In turn, the anti-statist black politics practiced by Paul Bogle and the

warriors was predicated on the affirmation that black people collectively in Jamaica did not need white rule and their state power to thrive and create new and different forms of political life. Their objectives were not the revolutionary takeover of the state and independence from the Queen, the abolition of the law in its entirety, or the attempt to realize some paradigm of “citizenship” dreamed up by elite philosophers and statesmen. Instead, they advanced the truth that the black laboring bodies that built “Jamaica” – and thus the island and its produce – had never been the property of white people and their statist allies to begin with. The rectification of this falsehood and the actualization of a relevant and new kind of justice was why Bogle and the warriors fought their war. Whether one aided or abstained from conflict, the denial or affirmation of this truth was a crucial aspect which shaped perceptions of blackness and whiteness as expressions of one’s relationship vis-à-vis the colonial state.

Furthermore, this thesis has presented and analyzed multiple instances that challenge the idea that the war of 1865 was a simple conflict between “whites” and “blacks” as fixed racial identities. In many cases, perceptions and ideas of blackness and whiteness cut across the conventional racial categories typically presented in contemporary and historiographical discourse. In 1865, many people that Bogle and the warriors’ encountered found their anti-statist black politics unconvincing, thereby revealing how class and racial identifications and their particular political valences remained contested on-the-ground among people in general, black and non-black alike. Black laborers and the petty bourgeois advanced ideas of whiteness tied to the belief that black people could not survive without white rule, and the Maroons altogether rejected

the colonial state, whiteness, and blackness as the basis of any of their own anti-statist politics.

Nonetheless, the evidence also showed situations in which Bogle and the warriors allowed for black and non-black people alike to be included within the black political body. All of these points significantly challenge the idea that black people's calls of 'colour for colour' and 'skin for skin' meant that skin color and blackness as an anti-statist politics automatically corresponded with one another. This kind of "unity" predicated on the idea of natural racial identities and affinities was a phantasm of the colonial discourse of the state, just like colonial contemporary's ideas of loyalty and savagery. In the collective memories of Maroons, they were neither loyal, mindless minions for whites or the colonial state nor enthusiastic enemies of Paul Bogle and his black politics. Their decision likely had nothing to do with an antagonism towards anti-statist political orientations, ideas of blackness inherited wholesale from the colonial discourse, or black people attempting to fight the colonial state because they were black. Their decisions were contingent upon the safeguarding of their own freedom from a colonial state that had increasingly taken steps after Emancipation to negate the Maroons' autonomy and special status.

Yet political contestation over collective black memories, historical representation, and what these projects mean to non-Maroons and Maroons in Jamaica remains contested up to the present day. Old and new questions of violence and race-based traumas at the hands of the colonial state and its racisms emerge in the intersection of the historical and the commemorative. In the case discussed above, Verene Shepherd attempted to pose particular questions that employed history as a means of opening pasts

so that Maroons and non-Maroons could share a common blackness, whereas the Maroons, in accordance with their own politics, ancestors, and oaths, mobilize the historical to mark off their differences from non-Maroons; race-based political rhetoric is not persuasive because we are really dealing with two histories and sets of memories here.

The posing of these kinds of hard questions on the past, present and future are part and parcel of the political exigencies and aspirations of the present. They will likely continue as black Jamaican people today struggle to achieve some kind of justice and healing for the wrongs and violence experienced in the negotiation of the structural racism in everyday life. The questions opened by the 2015 commemorations for the “Morant Bay War” reverberate past the shores of Jamaica, interrupting and waking people to the waging of an “unfinished war” against a world that treats their affirmations and ancestors as invisible and/or delusional, vestiges of a racial and enslaved “past” best forgotten. In my small attempt at a moment of politics, I hope that my posing of different questions of the historiography can provide some tools and weapons for Jamaican people to call upon one day in their continuing fight for reparatory justice.

Already more than sixty years ago, Frantz Fanon expressed my feelings and thoughts better than I ever could:

It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.

Superiority? Inferiority?

Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?

Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You*?

At the conclusion of this study, I want the world to recognize, with me, the open door of every consciousness.

My final prayer: O my body, make of me always a man who questions!<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952], trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Grove Press, 2008), 181.

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