The Power of "Retributive Justice"[1]:
Punishment and the Body in the Morant Bay Rebellion, 1865

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[1] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), October 31st, 1865.

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Dedication

To my husband, Barlow, for his unending love and support.

To my brother, Andrew, for providing the model of scholarship that got me here.

To my friends who often expect more of me than I do of myself.

To my family who instilled a deep love for the beautiful island of our roots.

Thank you.

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Abstract

The Power of “Retributive Justice”

On Wednesday October 11th, 1865, a group of malcontented men and women in Jamaica, a British colony, began a rebellion whose aftershocks echoed well beyond the confines of Morant Bay, the small town where it started. Although the initial rebellion lasted for just a few days, its brutal suppression and the implications that it held for the British Empire sparked a controversy that touched on some of the deepest fissures in British society at that time. At its heart, the rebellion highlighted the contested notions of power within the British imperial system. In Jamaica, disenfranchised local peasants rebelled to challenge a political system that excluded and oppressed them. The recently appointed governor of the island, Edward John Eyre, ordered a military force to decisively suppress the rebellion as a statement of his strength and as a testament to the power of the British government he saw himself representing. In both Britain and Jamaica, leading political figures used this event as touchstone to promote their personal agendas and assert their authority, whether real or imagined, over their opponents. As these rival forces clashed around the events in Jamaica in 1865, they represented a maelstrom of competing forces which sought to claim power during a time when British hegemony was being tested. Additionally, these struggles for power occurred within discussions of race and gender which undergirded British thought during the nineteenth century. The uniquely racialized and gendered experiences of the men and women who took part in the rebellion, many of them former slaves, thus demonstrate the changing dynamics of power in Jamaica during this time and offer an important lens to view this event.

Table of Contents

Dedication …… iii

Acknowledgement ……... iv

Abstract …… v

List of Images …….. vii

Introduction ……...……... 1

Britain And Its Empire ……...…….. 7

The Rebellion ……..…….. 14

Framing the Suppression …….…… 27

The Suppression in Context ……...……..... 36
Eyre and the Colonial Government……...…… 37
Beyond Jamaica ……..……..…….. 44

Stories of Suppression ……..…… 51

Gendered Punishments ……..... 61

Race ……..… 76

Conclusion ……...… 94

Bibliography …… 99

List of Images

“The town of Morant, Morant Bay, Jamaica'” …… 1

“Revolté des negres a la Jamaique” ……..... 15

“Soulouque” ……. 38

“Massacre off the boats at Cawnpore” …… 38

“Execution of Paul Bogle and his fello negro rioters” ……. 52

“Am I not a Man and a Brother?” …… 78

"The black question" …… 78

Introduction

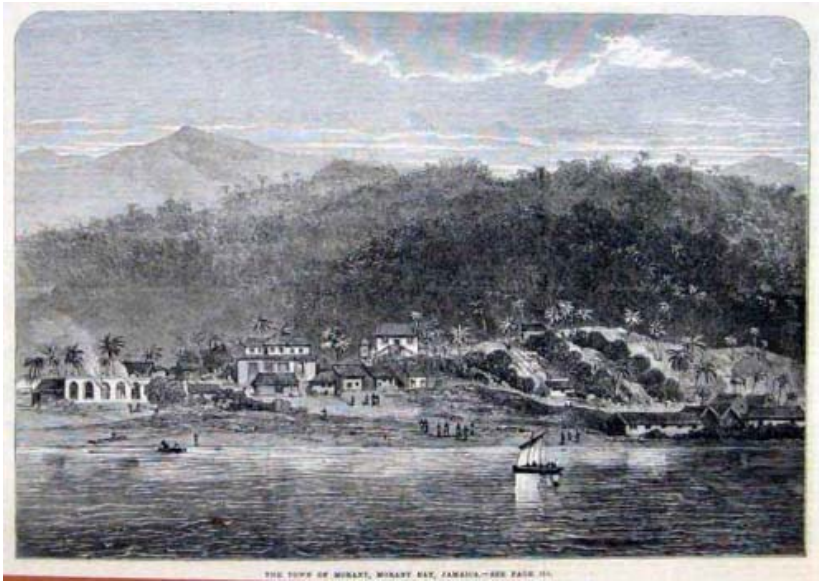

Image 1: "The Town of Morant, Morant Bay, Jamaica" in London Times, Nov 1865

On Wednesday October 11th, 1865, a group of malcontented men and women in Jamaica, a British colony, began a rebellion whose aftershocks echoed well beyond the confines of Morant Bay, the small town where it started. Although the initial rebellion lasted for just a few days, its brutal suppression and the implications that it held for the British Empire sparked a controversy that touched on some of the deepest fissures in British society at that time. At its heart, the rebellion highlighted the contested notions of power within the British imperial system. In Jamaica, disenfranchised local peasants rebelled to challenge a political system that excluded and oppressed them. The recently appointed governor of the island, Edward John Eyre, ordered a military force to decisively suppress the rebellion as a statement of his strength and as a testament to the power of the British government he saw himself representing. In both Britain and Jamaica, leading political figures used this event as touchstone to promote their personal

agendas and assert their authority, whether real or imagined, over their opponents. As these rival forces clashed around the events in Jamaica in 1865, they represented a maelstrom of competing forces which sought to claim power during a time when British hegemony was being tested.

By the mid nineteenth century, Britain's empire faced challenges that threatened its dominance over the far reaching territories that it held in its grasp. By mid-century it encompassed a highly diverse collection of peoples and lands who remained central in the discussions surrounding Britain's imperial and domestic policies. As such, the struggles for power that characterized the Morant Bay rebellion not only occurred within the realm of traditional politics, but also within discussions of race and gender which undergirded British thought during the nineteenth century. Therefore the uniquely racialized and gendered experiences of the men and women who took part in the rebellion firsthand, many of them former slaves, demonstrate the changing dynamics of power in Jamaica during this time. These contested bodies of black men and women, then, serve as the primary framework of this analysis. As these subjects attempted to upset accepted notions of dominance in their society, their experience in this rebellion affected ongoing discussions surrounding the notions of gender and race in the empire.

This project adds to the scholarship of the Morant Bay rebellion by examining the dynamics of power through the experience of the black and mixed-race men and women who faced the brunt of the rebellion's repercussions. Specifically, the focus on how their bodies were employed as sites of political and social dominance highlight Michele Foucault's argument that the body is the central locus of political control. In the case of the Morant Bay rebellion, the unique character of Jamaican society in the mid-nineteenth

century, one comprised predominantly of black and mixed race subjects controlled by a small white population, adds an important racial dimension to Foucault's framework of the body politic.[2] Additionally, the widespread participation of black and mixed race women in this rebellion, and their subsequent victimization under the period of harsh suppression that followed, offers a context to analyze this event through an often neglected gendered lens. This perspective then offers some insight into the complicated understandings of race and gender in the discourse of British society in the nineteenth century.

The significance of the Morant Bay rebellion is well documented as an event in its own right as well as a central part of the historiography of Jamaica and the British Empire. Bernard Semmel's book *Jamaica Blood and Victorian Conscience: The Governor Eyre Controversy* and Gad Heuman's *'The Killing Time': The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* remain the two seminal works on the subject and provide traditional narratives of the causes, actions, and aftermath of the rebellion. Thomas Holt's work, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832 – 1938*, also provides a detailed account of the rebellion while placing it within a broader framework of the political and economic conditions that shaped Jamaican society throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Like much of the scholarship surrounding the Morant Bay rebellion, Holt identifies the rebellion's importance through its role as a symbol that showed "ex-slaves' incapacity for responsible citizenship" which

[2] Ann Laura Stoler's work, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), analyzes the absence of race and imperial perspectives in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. In it, Stoler argues that "racism is not the subject of *The History of Sexuality*" (22) and that "Colonialism was clearly outside Foucault's analytic concern" (28).

subsequently led to the removal of self-government from the island and, according to Holt, "set a precedent soon followed in other parts of the colonial empire."[3] This understanding of the Morant Bay rebellion appears frequently in the scholarship of the British Empire during this nineteenth century and frames the discussion of this event within traditional paradigms of nineteenth century colonial rebellions.

Other studies of the Morant Bay rebellion, particularly in British history, center around two main topics: Edward Eyre and his legal trial in England and the implications of the rebellion on the future of the British Empire. After news of the rebellion spread, Edward Eyre found himself at the center of a controversy that became as much about his actions in Jamaica as it was about conventional domestic issues. With such a wealth of documentation, historians such as Catherine Hall and Julie Evans examine Governor Eyre as an individual and as part of a controversy whose inherent connection to British politics helps to shape the standard understanding of the British Empire during this time. R.W. Kostal's book, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law,* emphasizes the importance of the law and the effect of Eyre's implementation of martial law on Britain and its empire after 1865. In his analysis, Kostal claims that this incident "brought into question [whether] the same political shibboleth could be safely invoked in the nation's far-flung and racially diverse empire."[4] Additionally, Kostal argues that people in England made important correlations between the legal implications of Eyre's actions in Jamaica and their own legal standing at home. For example, Kostal asserts that

[3] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832 – 1938* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 307.
[4] R.W. Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 67.

"the Jamaica affair had been transformed from a narrative about the salvation of Jamaican colonists into a narrative about the destruction of the English constitution."[5] By drawing upon the rich legal documentation surrounding the case, Kostal places the case of Governor Eyre as a central part of the legal history of Britain and highlights its precedence for using martial law in Britain's imperial program thereafter.

The implications that the Eyre controversy, or the "Jamaica Affair" as it was known at the time, had on British understandings and practices of empire emerges as the second main theme in the literature on the Morant Bay rebellion. Bernard Semmel argues that Governor Eyre's legal battle became the first time that "the realities of a heavy-handed imperial rule were confronted by the growing acceptance of democracy in the homeland."[6] This conflict between increasingly popular liberal ideals of broadening political representation and the growing authoritarian power of the British Empire certainly appears prominently in the literature surrounding this event. Dating back to 1874 when John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* emphasized that the Morant Bay rebellion had ramifications for both Britain's domestic and imperial program. Mill wrote "There was much more at stake than only justice to the Negroes…The question was, whether the British dependencies, and eventually, perhaps, Great Britain itself, were to be under the government of law, or of military licence; whether the lives and persons of British subjects are at the mercy of any two or three officers however raw and inexperienced or reckless and brutal, whom a panic-stricken Governor, or other functionary, may assume

[5] Ibid, 37.
[6] Bernard Semmel, *Jamaica Blood and Victorian Conscience: The Governor Eyre Controversy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1962), 140.

the right to constitute into a so-called court-martial."[7] Indeed, this fear that Eyre's actions augured a shift in the increased power of the government, both at home and abroad, echoed what many scholars later affirmed: that the Morant Bay rebellion marked an important shift in understandings about the role that the British Empire would play in its colonies.

T.O. Lloyd noted that the Morant Bay rebellion "helped to change the way the British thought about their empire."[8] Similarly, K. Theodore Hoppen concluded that the rebellion thwarted "attempts to loosen colonial ties by introducing responsible government and cutting military costs…by uncovering one of the deepest fault lines bisecting the educated classes, and indeed society as a whole, [the rebellion] rapidly assumed an importance running well beyond the confines of Jamaica in particular or the idea of colonialism in general."[9] Specifically, in West Indian colonies Denis Judd argued that the rebellion in Jamaica dramatically transformed the very notion of colonial governance. He claimed, that it "produced an important shift in British colonial policy. It provided the government with the excuse to move against, and sweep away, the anachronistic colonial constitutions in the West Indies."[10] These studies of the Morant Bay rebellion elevate this event as a key moment when colony and metropole were intrinsically intertwined. While this project will add to these studies through a deeper analysis of the gendered and racial character of the suppression, the centrality of British

[7] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Henry Holt and Company, 1874), 297.
[8] T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire, 1558-1995, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 179
[9] K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 224.
[10] Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 191.

domestic politics stands as a critical framework to understand how the rebellion was understood in British society.

Britain and its Empire

By mid-century, changes throughout the British Empire added to an already transformative time in British history. By the 1860s, England stood as the world's most powerful economic force, which, according to Ronald Hyam, accounted "for more than one-third of the world's entire output of manufactured goods."[11] England's industrialization during the nineteenth century, along with European events like the Crimean War, coincided with popular campaigns to promote middle class values through education reform, political representation, and a government "of practical management and technological know-how."[12] As news about the Morant Bay rebellion reached England and the controversy surrounding Governor Eyre intensified, these events joined the political debates in Britain at that time.[13]

Events in Jamaica also came at a time when substantial social tensions emerged within British society. Thomas Holt argues that events in Jamaica and the legal battle Eyre faced in England occurred "against the backdrop of bread riots in the eastern end of London and Fenian uprisings in Ireland and England…. [and a] renewed, militant

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[11] Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815 – 1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion, Third Edition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 21.
[12] Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 179.
[13] It is worth noting that Parliament was not in session until months after the Morant Bay rebellion occurred. Steven Koss points out that "Elected in July 1865, the new Parliament was not called into session until 6 February 1866. In the intervening months, the government attended to Jamaican affairs and slowly drafted its reform proposals. Delay inevitably increased apprehensions on both sides." (Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 169).

agitation for universal suffrage."[14] Similarly, Richard Price asserts that the Morant Bay rebellion and its aftermath "tumbled into a debate about social authority."[15] He explains that women's suffrage challenged domestic norms, volatile Fenian uprisings served as "a reminder that England itself was not immune to violence," and violence by trade unions "suggested that not all working men had supped the elixir of 'respectability'."[16] Collectively, Price argues that "a succession of 'others'" highlighted the dangers of democracy and were "all in their different ways variants of Carlyle's 'nigger question'."[17] Hence Price, like Holt, concludes that colonial events such as the Morant Bay rebellion "provided metaphors for the treatment of whites."[18] Both Price and Holt highlight the intrinsic connections that many in Britain made between the actions of the British government in its colonies and at home. For some, it seemed, the decisions surrounding Governor Eyre's legal case and the treatment of British subjects throughout the empire held an important message for the subjects in England.

While many saw this time as one of potential change in British society, many hoped the structures of political and economic power would remain the same. Thus Julie Evans argues that the British government had to weigh the calls for reform with the need to defend the interests of those in power. She contends that "widespread agitation in the countryside and cities challenged the exploitation of the many for the privilege of the few…While the enduring nature of the unrest elicited certain concessions, vulnerable

[14] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 306.
[15] Richard Price, *British Society, 1680-1880: Dynamism, Containment, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 281.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 306.

governments also demonstrated their preparedness to enforce their authority."[19] This balance was achieved primarily through the work of Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister from 1855 to 1865, and to some "the most prominent mid-Victorian politician" of his age.[20] According to Jonathan Parry, Lord Palmerston's success derived from his ability to maintain "an image as a defender of British interests, liberal values and restrained economy" while managing competing forces in Parliament.[21] In Parliament, Parry asserts that Palmerston succeeded because he represented a feasible balance between liberal and conservative camps: "He was Liberal enough for most Liberals but also offered Conservatives stronger and less destabilizing government than could their own leaders."[22] This balance was lost when Lord Palmerston fell ill on October 12th 1865, and died just days after the Morant Bay rebellion began.

The death of Lord Palmerston marked an important shift in the political debates that engulfed British political discourse during the years of the Jamaica Affair. Stephen Koss avers that Palmerston's death, along with the much disputed elections of 1865, "plunged parliamentary politics deeper and deeper into disarray…His removal, however, put an abrupt end to any notions of maintaining, let alone institutionalizing, a system of inter-party compromise. The tacit arrangements that he had superintended for the better part of a quarter-century were broken up. The forces of polarization, which he had so long held firmly in check, were suddenly released."[23] Therefore, the Morant Bay

[19] Julie Evans, *Edward Eyre: Race and Colonial Governance* (Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press, 2005), 99.
[20] Frank W. Thackeray and John E.Findling, eds., *Events That Changed Great Britain since 1689* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 58.
[21] Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 189.
[22] Ibid, 192.
[23] Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, 167.

rebellion occurred during a time of political volatility as the Liberals who had steadily gained prominence by the 1850s, lost the leader who, according to William Gladstone the Liberal prime minister of 1868, had "bound together the 'great bundle of sticks' that comprised the Liberal party and made it the supreme political force of the nineteenth century."[24]

The success of the Liberal party up to that point had rested in its ability to convince the political powers that it "had become the natural, respectable ruling force in Britain. It had reassured the bulk of propertied opinion that it could administer affairs responsibly and defend national interests forcefully."[25] As the debates between Liberals and Conservatives intensified in the 1860s, they often revolved around a series of reform bills that had the potential to broaden the franchise in Britain. Despite the heated debates, however, Richard Price argues that both parties were strikingly similar as they did not promote male suffrage or intend to create a truly democratic society.[26] Instead, their debates centered on specific property qualifications and other measures that ultimately did not expand the electorate as quickly as some may have hoped.[27] To prominent liberal proponents like John Stuart Mill, the Conservative party, which he described as "the silliest party," represented "those who already had power, wealth, and influence – those

[24] Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government*, 194.
[25] Ibid, 167.
[26] Price, *British Society*, 280.
[27] Jonathan Parry describes the effect of the Reform Bill of 1867 in changing the electorate but not the dominant power structure of the British government. Parry explains that "the English borough electorate rose from 500,000 to 1.25 million between 1866 and 1871. This seemed a revolutionary change…The borough franchise revolution of 1867 – 9 had a profound effect. In particular, it increased the political weight of the electorate. In a great novelty, governments defeated at the polls in 1868, 1874 and 1880 resigned without meeting parliament. Power to select and dismiss ministries moved from Westminster to the constituencies." (Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government,* 217, 221).

who had a vested interest in preserving the nation's established institutions."[28] In contrast, Mill saw the Liberal party as "the party of reform, progress, and movement. Its function – in the broadest sense – was to attack political, religious, and economic privilege, and to foster a political and social environment favorable to the full development of the individual's moral and intellectual capabilities."[29] While this characterization of both parties may not capture the many intricacies of British politics in the nineteenth century, it nonetheless highlights the basic differences within the debates surrounding the actions of Governor Eyre during the events in Morant Bay. Indeed, R.W. Kostal argues that the division between these two parties helped make the Jamaica Affair a prominent feature in Britain's political discourse at the time. Kostal contends that "Liberals and Radicals were attracted to the Jamaica case because they saw the suppression, and more particularly the unwillingness of conservatives to condemn the suppression, as evidence of a resurgent authoritarianism in English politics. In these circles, the agitation surrounding the Second Reform Bill (introduced to Parliament by the Liberals in 1866) and the Jamaica affair were of a piece: both were attempts to introduce or reinforce the accountability of political actors to law and law-makers; both were sites for contesting the fundamental questions of English political jurisprudence."[30] Thus the Jamaica Affair served as an important feature in the political debates of the era. In issues related to both domestic policies and Britain's imperial program, this event became a critical part of the political milieu in Britain.

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[28] Bruce L. Kinzer, *J.S. Mill Revisited: Biographical and Political Explorations* (New York: NY, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2007), 166.
[29] Ibid, 167.
[30] Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power*, 16.

Within the context of Britain's imperial growth, the incidents in Jamaica further fueled debates about the function of empire. Decisions about whether Britain should paternalistically civilize its foreign subjects or assertively protect global dominance through coercive force emerged as central issues within the discussions surrounding Jamaica. Indeed, the Eyre controversy caused many to probe the role of the Empire and the purpose it served the mother country. T.O. Lloyd suggests that "Britain's interest in her colonies was unusually low in the mid-nineteenth century. Occasionally it was suggested that it might be a prudent, or at least a thrifty, step to give them up."[31] While few realistically entertained the notion that Britain should give up all of its colonies, the burden of its colonies and the potential dangers that it posed, both politically and economically, kept the question of how best to deal with them at the forefront of discussions about incidents like the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica.

Historically, Jamaica held a prominent place among Britain's colonies. Taken from the Spanish in 1655, Jamaica developed into one of the most profitable and successful colonies within the British Empire by the end of the eighteenth century. According to Francisco A. Scarano, the Caribbean's peak occurred around 1790 as demand for commodities like sugar, coffee, and tobacco reached its height. Scarano argues "never before had the Caribbean plantation trade been so voluminous or so significant a branch of commerce within the European colonial system."[32] Within this economic structure, the control of labor, and therefore the control of bodies to perform

[31] Lloyd, *The British Empire*, 171.
[32] Francisco A. Scarano, "Labor and Society in the Nineteenth Century" in *The Modern Caribbean*, Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, eds. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 51.

the grueling agricultural processes of producing profitable tropical commodities, stood as Britain's main foundation of power. Imperialism in Jamaica, then, began with the understanding that British sovereignty rested with the ability to control the predominantly black bodies who were enslaved to maintain the island's thriving plantation economy. As the nineteenth century began changing economic trends and influential abolitionist campaigns modified the system of power in Britain's West Indian colonies and forced the British government to readdress its method of maintaining sovereignty in its West Indian territories.

The system that was once based on the legal subjugation of bodies in British West Indian colonies like Jamaica had to be transformed after emancipation in the 1830s in a way that, at least in the eyes of the British government, maintained British hegemony. This transformation broached the issue of race and profoundly impacted the discourse surrounding it in British society. Catherine Hall argues that "It was through the lens of the Caribbean, and particularly Jamaica, that the English first debated 'the African', slavery and anti-slavery, emancipation and the meanings of freedom; and Jamaica occupied a special place in the English imagination between the 1780s and 1860s on these grounds."[33] As the events in Morant Bay unfolded in Britain, race became central to the program of maintaining power in a society whose economic status had declined significantly.[34] According to Julie Evans, the "quest to control labour in the plantation

[33] Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830 – 1867* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 11.
[34] Francisco A. Scarano claims that just a century after the Caribbean's dominance in 1790, by the end of the nineteenth century it had lost most of its economic potential. He states "One hundred years later, the social and economic panorama of the Caribbean had been profoundly transformed. The slave trade, which dwindled in the 1840s and ceased altogether in the mid-1860s, was by the 1890s a fading memory…. the

colonies was supported by domestic discourses of race, class and gender," and as emancipation came to the island in the mid-nineteenth century these discussions of race, class and gender, also included questions of political representation and the rights of newly freed slaves.[35] While one of Morant Bay's lasting impacts seemed to be the realization that "black men were not fit for political power,"[36] Jamaica's history in the nineteenth century reflected the tumultuous shift towards that realization and the context in which the Morant Bay rebellion occurred.

The Rebellion

The events that led to the Morant Bay Rebellion stemmed directly from the economic and political challenges in Jamaica after emancipation. In the early nineteenth century Britain's move toward more laissez-fare economic policies, coupled with vocal cries against slavery from key abolitionist movements, helped to support its transition from slave economies in some of its West Indian colonies like Jamaica. In 1807 Britain outlawed the slave trade and in 1834 banned slavery in its colonies (with full emancipation occurring in 1838 after the system of apprenticeship in the British West Indies). For Jamaica, a colony whose central economic and social tenets revolved around the system of slavery, the emancipation of the island's roughly 300,000 slaves in 1838 brought about a severe crisis.[37] By 1865, the dwindling economic position of the island's

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Caribbean had by the 1890s lost much of its former preeminence in international commerce." (Scarano, "Labor and Society in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Modern Caribbean*, 51)

[35] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 95.

[36] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 155.

[37] Michael Tadman, "The Demographic Cost of Sugar: Debates on Slave Societies and Natural Increase in the Americas," *The American Historical Review*, 105, no. 5 (December 2000), 1534 – 1575.

Image 2: "Revolté des negres a la Jamaique - assassinat de Baron von Ketelhodt", L'Univers Illustre, 25 November 1865.

once thriving plantation system exacerbated the growing social tensions within Jamaican society.

Leading the island through this difficult time was a legislature made up primarily of a small group of white government officials, primarily drawn from the island's "planter oligarchy", who ruled over Jamaica's majority black population.[38] This colonial government, however, proved unable to rectify the problems facing the island and failed to address the growing resentment among its marginalized populace. Jamaica's 1861 census recorded that of the island's total population of 441,248, 3.1 percent were "white", 18.3 percent were "brown" and 78.5 percent were "black."[39] The island's "brown" population, referred to as mixed race, creole or colored, represented a critical portion of Jamaican society. Anita Rupprecht argues that Jamaica's colored population, the largest

[38] Bernard Semmel, *Jamaica Blood and Victorian Conscience: The Governor Eyre Controversy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1962), 34.
[39] PP, 1864 [3304] The reports made for the year 1862 to the Secretary of State having the Department of the Colonies, 6.

in the British colonies, "were denied basic civil and political rights" yet over time developed into the elite non-white segment of Jamaican society.[40] While whites made up the majority of the island's government, in the 1865 Legislative Session of the Jamaica Assembly, black and brown (overwhelmingly brown) members constituted roughly 19 percent of the Assembly but did not represent a cohesive, racially conscious voting group. Instead they reflected a class conscious aggregation concerned with acquiring greater political and economic success for themselves.[41] Such an Assembly became extremely difficult to manage and to implement effective change for its population. Julie Evans argues that after emancipation, the Jamaican Assembly "reflected the parochial interests of the local elite but to an Assembly under the influence of Coloured and Black representatives who, despite their possible middle-class aspirations, had indeterminate links to the mass of the population."[42] As the black majority of Jamaica's population would quickly learn, this type of legislature offered few solutions to fix their troubles. While Ronald Hyam emphasizes that most West Indian blacks at this time "were under privileged rather than openly oppressed," he contends that the local governments on most

[40] Anita Rupprecht, "*Wonderful adventures of Mrs Seacole in many lands* (1857): Colonial Identity and the Geographical Imagination," in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*, David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182.

[41] Thomas Holt's analysis of the Jamaica Assembly includes specific statistical data of the ethnic make up of the Assembly from 1837 to 1865. Data for the Assembly during that period made a distinction between "whites" and "Jews" and Holt specifies four categories in his data: Blacks, Browns, Jews and Whites. The 20 percent noted above derives from Holt's estimation that in the 1861 Legislative Session, the total for both main parties, the Planter Party and the Town Party, was 59 members (18 and 41 respectively). Of those, the 12 "Afro-Jamaicans" recorded in that session amounted to 20 percent of the members during that session. On average, Holt's data suggest that "Afro-Jamaicans" constituted roughly 24 percent of the Legislative Sessions between 1854 and 1865 (Holt 226 – 227).

[42] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 117.

of the islands, like Jamaica, were "amateurish, inefficient and deteriorating" and unable to meet the challenges their societies faced in the nineteenth century.[43]

In the years and months leading up to the Morant Bay Rebellion, it seems clear that many of the dilemmas that caused Jamaica's worsening condition remained outside the control of the island's colonial government. Indeed, Jamaica's declining economic and social condition derived primarily from a steadily diminishing sugar industry which decreased significantly after 1849 with Parliament's decision to remove subsidies for West Indian sugar. This move, according to Miles Taylor, caused the economies of colonies like Jamaica to experience "acute financial distress which developed into a full-blown constitutional crisis."[44] As was the case for many of the major changes that impacted the island, the decision to equalize sugar tariffs occurred despite the efforts of planter lobbies in England. Calls to maintain such tariffs, which presumably benefitted the colonies more than Britain itself, could not compete with the argument that such mercantilist policies came "at the expense of the domestic working-class consumer, who suffered high prices and adulterated food as a result."[45] For Jamaica, however, the removal of this subsidy caused economic and social conditions to deteriorate.

Jamaica's failing economy had many consequences that directly impacted the population and led to the rebellion in October 1865. In particular, Miles Taylor argues that the financial crisis caused Jamaica's colonial government to cut and later suspend

[43] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 150.
[44] Miles Taylor, "The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire," *Past & Present*, no. 166 (Feb., 2000), 166.
[45]Ibid, 158.

public expenditures on the island.[46] Additionally, lack of government support combined with lower wages, high rents, and decreasing opportunities for civic redress seemed to bring the island's inhabitants to a breaking point. Thomas Holt contends that 1865 "marked the end of a decade in which the island had been beset by an almost biblical onslaught of plagues: cholera, smallpox, drought and floods" and asserts that "as the Jamaican economy fell into ever-deepening distress, both estate workers and peasants were hard-pressed in a grim struggle for survival."[47] Although such harsh conditions negatively impacted the entire island, it was clear that the majority non-landowning black and colored population felt the brunt of its problems. R. W. Kostal notes that by 1864, Jamaica's population of roughly 440,000 was comprised of more than 350,000 former slaves or their descendants, 80,000 colonists of mixed race, and less than 14,000 whites.[48] Of these groups, Kostal asserts that overwhelmingly the "black and coloured Jamaicans were desperately poor" and suffered the most from Jamaica's deepening hardships.[49]

After years of adversity, the plight of Jamaican society, particularly its non-white residents, came to light with what contemporaries referred to as the "Underhill Letter." Dr. Edward Bean Underhill was a missionary and advocate for the rights of native peoples in many of Britain's colonies. On January 5th, 1865, Dr. Underhill wrote a letter to Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to report that the conditions in Jamaica would cause "the entire failure of the Island, and the destruction of the hopes that the Legislature and people of Great Britain have cherished with regard to the well-being

[46] Ibid, 152.
[47] Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832 – 1938* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 263.
[48] R.W. Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.
[49] Ibid.

of its emancipated population."[50] In his letter, Underhill admonished the local legislature's "denial of political rights to the emancipated negroes" and cited the rising incidents of theft, heavy taxes, insufficient employment, and widespread starvation that caused the general "sufferings of [Jamaica's] coloured population" as evidence that the colony was in distress .[51] As Thomas Holt asserts, Dr. Underhill's letter was unique in that "he forcefully linked the evident social deterioration, not to impersonal economic forces, but to failed and misguided policies of the Jamaican and home governments."[52] Significantly, Underhill's accusation that Jamaica's government produced the island's crisis emboldened Jamaica's marginalized population to direct their indictments against the government which in turn brought about a vocal defense from the island's governor and other officials.[53]

Inspired by Underhill's recognition of the plight they faced, many black and brown leaders on the island began to organize "Underhill Meetings" to air grievances and implement plans to redress their troubles.[54] For the island's large property owners and their supporters in Britain, these meetings portended a coming storm that they could not contain. Unsurprisingly, after the Morant Bay Rebellion occurred Eyre and his supporters overwhelmingly repudiated Underhill's letter and the meetings that arose afterwards as

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[50] Parliamentary Papers, 1866, [3595] [3749], Papers relative to the affairs of Jamaica, 2.
[51] Ibid, 3.
[52] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 270.
[53] Julie Evans argues that it was Eyre who inadvertently spread Underhill's letter and caused the agitation of his letter. Evans states "The letter was addressed to Cardwell, who had, in turn, forwarded it to Eyre, requesting a report on its contents. Rather than choosing to forward his personal assessment of Underhill's letter to the Colonial Office, Eyre sought to refute the allegations by soliciting reports….Eyre's decision to circulate what was to become known as 'the Underhill letter' had the opposite effect to the one he expected…Instead of stemming possible controversy, pushing the Underhill letter so confidently into the public realm promoted an open debate that rapidly escaped his control" (Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 124).
[54] Semmel, *Jamaica Blood*, 42.

the chief cause of the rebellion. Indeed, in his testimony to the Royal Commission investigating the Morant Bay Rebellion, Governor Eyre accused Underhill's letter as being "the primary origin of the agitation."[55] In an earlier correspondence to Edward Cardwell, Eyre imputed that in the meetings "the people were told that they were tyranized over and ill treated, were over-taxed, were denied political rights… and where, in fact, language of the most exciting and seditious kind was constantly used, and the people told plainly to right themselves … to do as the Haytiens had done, and other similar advice."[56] Here Eyre, evoking the image of Haiti as many others would do throughout the aftermath of the rebellion, highlighted the prevaricating cover that local officials used to deflect blame and justify their actions after the rebellion. By doing so, he missed, or perhaps ignored, the deeply political nature of the uprising in St. Thomas-in-the-East which centered on the desire of its citizens to attain greater rights and freedoms.

Fundamentally, the Morant Bay Rebellion amounted to a demonstration for political rights in a society wrought with fear and tension and between those with power and those without. Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson conclude that the Morant Bay Rebellion was the climax of an ongoing struggle "to translate the legal freedom won by the slaves into the language of equality – social, political and economic – and to share the same civil rights and privileges that white inhabitants of the island had always enjoyed."[57] Moore and Johnson add that this struggle amounted to practical desires for voting rights, better wages, land rights, education for social advancement and "an equal

[55] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. Report, 83.
[56] PP, 1866 [3594-I] Papers relating to the disturbances in Jamaica. Part I, 7
[57] Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven: Contesting British Cultural Imperialism in Jamaica, 1865-1920* (Kingston, JA: University Press of the West Indies, 2004), 1.

voice in the affairs of the country; and for social respectability as free and equal subjects of Her Majesty."[58] Thus when a crowd of free citizens initially congregated at the courthouse in Morant Bay on Saturday October 7th, 1865 to witness a case brought against Lewis Miller, a local man, for trespassing, they gathered primarily as political actors participating, albeit somewhat forcefully, in the political process of their local judiciary.[59]

The official case against Lewis Miller ended on Saturday October 7th with little fanfare. He was found guilty of trespassing which caused a minor outcry from the crowd, after which one of the leaders, a preacher from a nearby Native Baptist Church named Paul Bogle, posted the bail.[60] On Monday October 9th, parish officials brought arrest warrants against Paul Bogle and others who were in the crowd days before. Bogle refused to comply and shortly afterwards composed a formal written complaint to the governor, from "Her Majesty's loyal subjects," regarding the unwarranted attack against their innocence.[61] By Wednesday October 11th, Bogle led his makeshift civilian force of almost six hundred men and women armed with rudimentary weapons to the courthouse where they met Baron von Ketelhodt, *Custos* of the Parish, and his men in a confrontation.[62] For the next three days, the rioters committed acts of violence in the

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 296.
[60] Thomas C. Holt describes the Native Baptist Church as an important venue for resistance among black Jamaicans. He describes the denomination saying "The Native Baptist church nourished the island's most explicit expressions of the syncretic blending of Christian forms and rituals with African beliefs and values….At the heart of their value scheme was the subordination and control of individual desire and greed to the needs of the community. Here religion provided a vehicle for cultural resistance, giving moral authority to an alternative world-view. In Bogle's church at Stony Gut a religious world-view melded with an emerging political consciousness." (Ibid, 291).
[61] Ibid, 297.
[62] In Jamaica, the *custos*, short for custodian, was the chief official of a parish. As the rebels gathered at Morant Bay, Baron von Ketelhodt, as Custos of the Parish, summoned the Volunteers of the district, wrote

areas immediately surrounding the courthouse. As Bogle's force of men and women gathered outside of town, they raided the police station for weapons before parading in front of the courthouse and engaging with the small militia gathered to stop them. They then plundered and burned minor government property, stores and private estates over the next three days.[63] Targeting, according to Thomas Holt, "men clothed with political or religious authority," this disturbance was not a race war against all whites on the island, as many contemporaries would report, but rather an uprising of political actors who attempted to avenge the apparent wrongs done against them.[64] Holt estimates that at its height, the short-lived rebellion had at most two thousand participants whose main grievances of attaining better wages, working conditions, land prospects and lower taxes appealed to a broad spectrum of the local peasantry.[65] More acutely, however, Brian L. Moore and Michele A. Johnson argue that the confrontation between the Stony Gut rebels and the local government forces represented an underlying conflict between whites and blacks, in essence a "showdown between the two Jamaicas, both equally intransigent and standing their ground."[66] Within this framework, then, this event amounted to a struggle for power founded on a mixture of racial, economic, and political factors that erupted in rebellion.

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to the Governor for military aid, read the Riot Act, and gave the authority to fire on the crowd assembled at the Court House (PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. Report, 11).

[63] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 298 – 300.

[64] Ibid, 299.

[65] Ibid, 300.

[66] Moore and Johnson states that "two Jamaicas" signifies "the diametrically opposed interests of the two primary "race" groups: the dominant whites and the ex-slaves, who were mainly black" (Moore and Johnson 2).

Within days of the outbreak in St. Thomas-in-the-East, Governor Eyre met with an urgently summoned council of war and declared Martial Law to amass a force of soldiers to stop the rebels. On October 14th, *The Morning Journal,* a conservative daily paper published in Kingston, Jamaica, reprinted Eyre's Proclamation of Martial Law which declared "that Our Military Forces, shall have all power of exercising the rights of Belligerents against such of the Inhabitants of the said Country."[67] As the proclamation suggests, the next stage of the rebellion turned to the suppression of the rebels using all of the power and might of the governor's forces who exacted the brutal punishments ordered by Eyre over the rebels in St. Thomas-in-the-East.

The men who comprised Eyre's forces in the suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion came from the island's local volunteers, the 1st and 6th West India Regiments, and a contingent of Maroons, descendants of runaway slaves living, mostly, independently in the mountains of Jamaica. The volunteers were the first force called to respond to the initial gathering at the courthouse in Morant Bay. During Eyre's tenure as governor, he supported the creation of volunteer groups throughout the island with the intent that they "could at any time be called out in aid of the civil power to suppress any riot or disturbance."[68] The first group, called from the town of Bath just thirteen miles from Morant Bay, initially stood with a force of only 22 men against Bogle's troop at the Morant Bay courthouse.[69] As events continued, however, the numbers of Jamaica's volunteer militias grew and many took part in the month-long retribution that followed the initial rebellion. While the volunteers were plenty and described as "a most willing

[67] "To All Our Loving Subjects!," *The Morning Journal*, (Kingston, JA) October 14th, 1865
[68] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 120.
[69] PP, 1866 [3594-I] Papers relating to the disturbances in Jamaica. Part I, 19.

body of men," supplying them with proper arms proved to be one of the main problems for these forces.[70] For instance, the Custos of Westmorland Parish wrote "I have an offer of the services of some fifty or sixty extra volunteers, but there is not a single stand of arms at the disposal of myself or the officer commanding the volunteers."[71] Luckily for Eyre, however, he relied not just on the forces of the island's local militia, but primarily on the contingents of the West India Regiments.

The West India Regiments were established in 1795 to aid the British in defending, and at times acquiring, colonial lands. By the middle of the nineteenth century, British forces were stationed throughout the world and faced the difficult task of safeguarding the empire and the West India Regiments, mostly composed of regiments made entirely of African or African descended troops, played a key role in this endeavor.[72] Often stationed in regions whose climate, prevailing scholarship espoused, best suited their constitutions, these forces served throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century as a critical part of Britain's imperial program.[73] Brian Dyde summarizes that the West India Regiments consisted of "black soldiers in a white man's army…as colonial subjects, in preserving and enlarging Britain's colonial empire in the Westindies [sic] and West Africa."[74] In the case of the Morant Bay rebellion, the first

[70] Ibid, 142.
[71] Ibid, 107.
[72] Brian Dyde states that Jamaica, Barbadoes, and Trinidad,, were the only British West Indian colonies with detachments of white troops in the 1860s (Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (Antigua, WI: Hansib Caribbean, 1997), 173).
[73] For a fuller discussion of the idea of British understandings of climate and racial difference see Philip D. Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a history of the West India Regiments throughout this period, see Brian Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve: The story of the West India Regiments of the British Army* (Antigua, WI: Hansib Caribbean, 1997).
[74] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 9.

body of troops to respond to Eyre's call for military support came from "one hundred men of the 1st West India Regiment…and twenty of the Royal Artillery."[75] Despite the fact that these regiments were manned by black troops, it is important to note that they did not constitute a homogenous group that would automatically side with the men and women in St. Thomas-in-the-East. Many of the soldiers of the West India Regiment serving in Jamaica at the time of the Morant Bay rebellion were comprised of West Africans on regular tours in the West Indies.[76] Additionally, the officers who commanded these forces were white commissioned officers and they, more than the soldiers under their command, held the power to sanction and commit brutal acts against those who tested the authority of the British government.

The officers leading the forces during the Morant Bay rebellion were, in many cases, seasoned army officers who brought with them experiences of their times in the colonies. Eyre himself had served for years in Australia and New Zealand, and briefly in St. Vincent and Antigua, before serving as governor of Jamaica. Colonel Fyfe, "led the Maroons in helping to suppress the 1831-2 slave rebellion," and in 1865 again commanded the Maroons in helping the British government to suppress uprisings on the island.[77] An Irish officer, Smyth O'Connor, spent his career in the West Indies and in Africa where he served for a time as Governor of Gambia. In Jamaica O'Connor acted as the commanding general of the island's forces during the time of the Morant Bay rebellion.[78] Brigadier-General Abercrombie Nelson had also served in Afghanistan and

[75] Heuman, *The Killing Time,* 114.
[76] PP, 1866 [3730] Army Medical Department. Statistical, sanitary, and medical reports. Volume VI, 72.
[77] Heuman, *The Killing Time,* 131.
[78] Ibid, 114.

India. He, like many of the white troops in Jamaica, had served in India during the recent uprising there and they undoubtedly carried with them indelible images of those atrocities. Denis Judd argues that "The fact that some of the regular troops drafted in to restore order had seen service during the Indian Mutiny may to a certain extent explain the ferocity of the white reaction" during the Morant Bay rebellion.[79] Similarly, Gad Hueman argues that "some of the British troops were veterans of the mutiny" and "even those who had not served in India had absorbed the hardening racial attitudes of the mid-nineteenth century and, as in the suppression of the Indian mutiny, were intent on 'a war of racial revenge'."[80] Hence, it is impossible to ignore the influences that shaped many of the troops who served in Jamaica during the rebellion. While the personal stories and individual motivations of many of the soldiers remain unknown, the officers who commanded them and, as Eyre did, ordered that "the most prompt measures" should be used against the rebels, were chiefly responsible for the brutal of the rebellion.

In the weeks that followed the initial violence on October 11th, Governor Eyre's men brutally retaliated against the men and women of St. Thomas-in-the-East and thus dramatically shaped future discussions of British imperial power and the implementation of martial law both at home and abroad. For many scholars like Denis Judd, the suppression of the rebellion represented "one of the most shameful chapters in British colonial history."[81] The Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission concluded that the government's repression following the uprising included 439 deaths, 1,000 houses

[79] Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience*, 83.
[80] Heuman, *The Killing Time,* 115.
[81] Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 82.

burned, and over 600 men and women flogged.[82] Indeed, it is the brutal suppression after the rebellion that highlighted the deep emotions and political implications imbedded in the struggle for power within Jamaican society during this time. In the severe and callous actions that came after what was by most accounts a minor "peasant war," it seems the traditional analysis that describes the social, political, and economic origins of the rebellion fall short of explaining the dynamic realities that caused its bloody aftermath.[83]

Framing the Suppression

News of the rebellion traveled quickly throughout Jamaica and appeared in most major publications in Britain by November 1865.[84] Through British mail steamers that regularly carried mail between Britain and the West Indies since the 1820s, sensationalized stories of the rebellion in St. Thomas-in-the-East, few coming directly from individuals who actually witnessed any of the events, reached a responsive audience in Britain. While the uprising itself lasted only a few days, the brutal aftermath endorsed by Governor Eyre's declaration of Martial Law lasted for weeks and became the heart of the controversy that gripped Britain for the next two years. Eyre's sanctioned thirty day period of suppression, what R.W. Kostal describes as "a 'hell-like saturnalia' of retaliatory violence," represented an overt expression of the desire to reassert power over a populace that tried to seize it for themselves.[85] Indeed, the Report of the Royal Commission, which ultimately praised Eyre for his "vigour" in ending the rebellion,

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[82] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I, 25.
[83] Regarding the Morant Bay Rebellion, Thomas Holt asserts that "at its core this was a peasant war." (Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, 299).
[84] Semmel, *Jamaica Blood*, 15.
[85] R.W. Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005, 13.

concluded that the punishments inflicted upon the people in that region were excessive. The report stated: "(1) That the punishment of death was unnecessarily frequent; (2) That the floggings were reckless, and at Bath positively barbarous; (3) That the burning of 1,000 houses was wanton and cruel."[86] Yet through these violent acts, it seems clear that Governor Eyre and the soldiers who quelled the violence in St. Thomas-in-the-East served as the physical manifestation of Britain's imperial arm whose objective was to maintain power at all costs. In doing so, these men acted in defense of both the Empire at large and the mostly white elites who ruled over the majority black and brown ex-slave population of the island. The frenzied, bloody aftermath that ensued, then, serves as a telling representation of the deeply embedded fears of weakness and vulnerability that undergirded Britain's imperial program in Jamaica and the compelling need to affirm British dominance over its subjects.

British sovereignty in Jamaica was manifested in Governor Edward Eyre. He was the face of the British government on the island and according to Julie Evans his career in the mid nineteenth century served as a symbol for the changes taking place in the British Empire, both at home and abroad.[87] Particularly as the Morant Bay came to be understood, Evans argues that "both the contemporary response to Eyre's administration in Jamaica and the subsequent historiography have tended to understand his use of state force in the suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion in terms of the extraordinary actions of a specific individual."[88] Perhaps more instructive than his legacy and official role as the representative of the state, Julie Evans argues that Eyre truly saw himself as the

[86] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. 41
[87] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 10.
[88] Ibid, 12.

embodiment of the British government and linked his strength as governor with the power of the British on the island. Julie Evans cites Ramachandra Guha saying that "the particular relations of power that obtained in colonial communities underscores the extent to which Eyre, not just as an Englishman but as a representative of the Crown, saw himself *as* the state in the colonies."[89] Evans adds that Governor Eyre's "propensity to identify himself *as* the state in the colonies complicated his reaction to what he saw as challenges to the state's authority" and exacerbated the intensity of his response to the rebellion.[90] The pressure Eyre must have felt in his role as governor, the sole arbiter of British sovereignty in Jamaica, also came with anxieties over his "middling status" as a colonial official.[91] The need to gain favor and present himself as a strong administrator capable of securing British power framed his reaction to the rebels in Morant Bay whose actions not only seemed to jeopardize British dominance, but also Eyre's reputation and political future. In his response to such a threat, the desire to maintain British power became inextricably linked with Eyre's own desires to maintain control and assert his authority as the unquestioned leader in Jamaica.

Eyre's program of licensed terror against the island's subversive actors denoted a visceral need to assert British control over an inchoate body of political agitators. The carnal nature of the punitive acts themselves, particularly floggings and public executions, also signify an inherently personal and physical penalty for threatening the structure of power. These punishments did more than simply end an uprising of malcontents but rather sought to both physically and symbolically assert control over the

[89] Ibid, 105.
[90] Ibid, 115.
[91] Ibid, 116.

very bodies of dissent on the island. As Michele Foucault argues, the body rests at the heart of political action and subversion; it is unavoidably political. In his famous work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault states that the body is "directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."[92] In this sense, the physical bodies of black men and women, manifestations of the actors who rose up in defiance, became the ultimate site of political dominance. To assert Britain's power, Eyre sanctioned his men to use these bodies as symbols of their dominance and a bold reclamation of political agency on the island. In the sense that each flogged, mutilated, and hanged body represented what Allen Feldman characterizes as "a spatial unit of power," each act of castigation served as a step towards regaining supremacy for the aggressor.[93]

The practice of using subjected bodies as the principal sites of political dominance was common within colonial regimes, particularly in societies built on systems of racial slavery. Shani D'Cruze and Anupama Rao summarize Foucault in asserting that "the bio-political states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were racial regimes that exercised power upon individual bodies."[94] Within this framework, the brutality with which Eyre's forces subdued the rebellion highlighted a desperate need to assert the dominance of Britain's colonial state. Certainly the actions of the dissenting black men and women who participated in the rebellion showed that the mechanics of power that

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[92] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 25.
[93] Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 8.
[94] Shani D'Cruze and Anupama Rao, "Violence and the Vulnerabilities of Gender," *Gender & History*, 16, No.3 November 2004, 501.

had been so carefully guarded through years of violence under slavery were being dismantled. In Foucault's language, the image of "subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies" of the black men and women who had been so carefully disciplined and benevolently emancipated through British rule, had already crumbled.[95] Perhaps it was this realization that motivated Eyre's men to commit such brutal acts against hundreds of men and women in St. Thomas-in-the-East. If Allen Feldman's assertion that "the very act of violence invests the body with agency" holds true, then the agency that the rioters at the Morant Bay courthouse displayed was met by the reaffirmed agency of the British forces under Governor Eyre and his men.[96]

Ultimately, the brutal reprisal committed by Eyre and his men in the aftermath of the rebellion was not a reckless, unforeseeable response to the rebellion, but part of what Foucault describes as an assertion of a ruler's authority. Drawing his theory from early examples of European sovereignty, Foucault asserts that the act of punishment itself is a way for the prince to exert power over his subjects and uphold his rule of law within his domain. Within this context, Foucault claims that punishment served as "a way of exacting retribution that is both personal and public" and "an emphatic affirmation of power and of its intrinsic superiority."[97] In the case of the Morant Bay Rebellion, Governor Eyre acts as the "prince" whose law and authority had to be upheld. In this sense, Foucault's image of the prince's personal connection to reasserting his rule through punishment corresponded with the role that Eyre played in the rebellion's aftermath. Particularly in a state of Martial Law where Eyre claimed absolute power in

[95] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.
[96] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 2.
[97] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, *48 – 49.*

ruling the island, Foucault's conceptualization of a prince's personal connection to maintaining his rule holds true. Foucault claimed that the punishment enforced by the prince sought to assert the authority and "physical strength of the sovereign beating down upon the body of his adversary and mastering it; by breaking the law, the offender has touched the very person of the prince; and it is the prince - or at least those to whom he has delegated his force - who seizes upon the body of the condemned man and displays it marked, beaten, broken."[98] Within this framework, Governor Eyre, the evident prince under Martial Law, faced an obvious affront from the offenders who seemed to threaten his authority. As the embodiment of the British crown in Jamaica, the type of subversion that this rebellion seemed to exhibit also, therefore, warranted a reaction that, as Foucault says, "seizes upon the body of the condemned man and displays it marked, beaten, broken."[99]

Of the acts of retribution committed by Eyre's forces during October 1865, the practice of flogging epitomized the torturous subjugation of rebels. Flogging refers to the act of administering blows using a whip, rod, or other instrument for the purpose of punishment. As Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao aver, in practice, particularly in the colonial setting, it was "visibly brutal" and stood unwaveringly as "a species of bodily violation."[100] Indeed, when in parts of Europe by the nineteenth century the "gloomy festival of punishment was dying out," the colonies offered an alternative setting to carry

[98] Ibid, 49.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao, *Discipline and the Other Body: Correction, Corporeality, Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 190 – 191.

on such displays of violence.[101] In Jamaica, the issue of flogging as a coercive form of control received considerable attention as abolitionists publicized the cruelties of slavery.[102] In the years preceding the outbreak in Morant Bay, discussions surrounding corporal punishment played an important role in the creation of Jamaica's post-emancipation colonial state.[103] By 1865 Jamaica's penitentiaries used a specific instrument for their floggings known as the "cat of nine tails" (often shortened to "the cat"). Diana Paton quotes H.B. Shaw, Jamaica's general inspector of the prisons in 1865, in describing that the standard cat used at the time weighed "nine ounces…. Its nine cord tails, on each of which were three knots, were thirty-three inches long, while the handle measured nineteen and three-quarter inches."[104] Although modifications to this blueprint of the cat abounded in the fury of action during Eyre's suppression, this instrument remained the primary weapon used in the attack on individuals caught in the rebellion's aftermath.[105]

In practice, the deed of flogging proved to have inherent problems and contradictions. Primarily, its administration was difficult to regulate and control. The act

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[101] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 8.
[102] The issue of flogging was also significant in England throughout the nineteenth century as debates surrounding its use in Britain's army occupied considerable space in the discourse of the time. For a full discussion of those debates, see J. R. Dinwiddy, "The Early Nineteenth-Century Campaign against Flogging in the Army," *The English Historical Review*, 97, No. 383 (Apr., 1982), pp. 308-331.
[103] For a full discussion on the role of corporal punishment in Jamaica see Diana Paton's *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780 – 1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).
[104] Diana Paton's *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780 – 1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 144.
[105] The cat was often tailored to better suit the needs of the punisher or the victim. In one instance, *The Birmingham Daily Post* reported that Peter Bruce, a soldier responsible for flogging hundreds during the suppression of the rebellion, in the course of his work "made the cats only of whipcord, but these were objected to by one of the magistrates as being too light, and he was directed to make them of wire. Piano-forte wire was suggested to him for the purpose, and he mixed it up with the strands of whipcord." ("Flogging with Wire Cats," *Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham, England), Monday, March 5, 1866).

itself is an imprecise physical clash of bodies and the infliction of blows could vary considerably based on the strength of the flogger, the specifications of the cat, the reaction of the victim, and, at times, the very mood of the person in charge. Additionally, Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao insist that "the visceral effect of flogging as spectacle" undermined the idea of colonialism as a civilizing, humanitarian endeavor.[106] Although Pierce and Rao speak specifically of British colonial Africa, the image they depict certainly conformed to the challenges that Eyre and his men faced when reports of their actions reached Britain and other places. As Pierce and Rao argue, the inherent problem with flogging in the imperial context was that "even if a flogging were entirely legal and carried out with scrupulous attention to approved (or, at least, justifiable) procedure, it nonetheless *appeared* brutal and degrading."[107] In this respect, one writer in the London *Daily News* asked "how can we fulfill our duty to them by giving them of our religion and our civilization, if we teach only by wholesale hangings, and prove our Christian faith by the slaughter of prisoners, [and] by the flogging of men whom we cannot prove guilty."[108] Hence flogging within the colonial context, particularly in the liberal understandings of the civilizing mission of empire, proved to be a uniquely destructive form of punishment that brutally subjugated its victims and weakened the very foundation upon which the colonial enterprise was built.

The second chief method of punishment inflicted upon the bodies of hundreds of black men and women after the rebellion came through executions. While public executions still occurred throughout Europe and in its colonies in the 1860s (although

[106] Pierce and Rao, *Discipline and the Other Body*, 190.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Printed in *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), December 22nd, 1865.

outlawed in Britain in 1868), the scale and seemingly indiscriminate pattern of executions in the aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion signaled a unique instance of castigation. Many papers at the time referenced the case of George Marshall, a twenty-five year old "brown man," who "on receiving 47 lashes, ground his teeth, and gave a ferocious look of defiance at the Provost Marshal [and] was immediately ordered to be taken from the gun and hanged. No time was lost, and he was accordingly strung up in the presence of the insurrectionists."[109] Incidents such as these typified the pattern of retribution that Eyre and his men became known for in the weeks following the rebellion. In most cases, the executions they administered were founded on little evidence and at times were subject to the whims of the officers in charge.

These condemned men and women symbolized the extermination of the bodies that threatened the power structure that Eyre and his associates were called to defend. Taking those lives, particularly with such casualness, also offered the soldiers an opportunity to emphasize their dominance over a group of people who seemed marked as their natural subjects. The hardening of racial attitudes during the mid-nineteenth century, as Ronald Hyam describes them, caused "the whole concept of 'race' [to take] on a more categorical meaning" and placed the non-white rebels in Morant Bay within a worldview where all people were "assigned to a place on the ladder of progress."[110] In a similar fashion, Stacey Hynd argues that the black victims of capital punishment in British West Africa during the early twentieth century had to be "created as dangerously 'Other',

[109] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), October 23rd, 1865.
[110] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 159; 76.

something violent, uncivilized and less than fully human."[111] Through the language that emerged from Eyre and his supporters in defense of their actions, to the indiscriminate nature of the acts themselves, it is clear that the callous treatment of the victims of the executions in Jamaica also symbolized the "violent, uncivilized and less than fully human" Other that had to be duly chastised back into their place. Hynd also asserts that the main goal of exacting this ultimate price of death on individuals "was a didactic measure seeking to deter others from challenging colonial order."[112] As such, the violence that Eyre's forces exacted against the victims in Jamaica amounted to "the stripping of humanity and life" from the black British subjects who represented the most deviant of threats against the dominant power structure in the island.[113] By doing so, Eyre undoubtedly hoped to warn others against challenging his power and articulated his absolute dominance over the fractious black inhabitants of Jamaica.

The Suppression in Context

Providing an explanation for the brutal punishments that followed the Morant Bay Rebellion is both intrinsically simple and profoundly complex. On the most superficial level, to the extent that Governor Eyre should hold most of the blame for the aftermath, uncovering the motives that may have guided his decisions to act (or not act) during the suppression is an essential step in examining this event. Secondly, the actions of the white soldiers, volunteers and officers in Jamaica who committed the offenses they did

[111] Stacey Hynd, "Killing the Condemned: The Practice and Process of Capital Punishment in British Africa, 1900–1950s," *Journal of African History*, 49 (2008), 405.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid, 404.

must be understood as part of a broader feeling of apprehension within the predominantly white power structure in Jamaica and throughout the colonized world during this time. Particularly for officials within the British Empire, this period in the mid-nineteenth century seemed wrought with uncertainty which played an instrumental role in the reactions to the rebellion. Finally, the root of this fear stemmed from the underpinning nexus of illusory categories of race and gender upon which the dominant power structures on the island were based. A seemingly desperate need to maintain, assert and strengthen these categories played out in the stories that emerged from the brutal suppression of this rebellion. At the end of the suppression, then, it seemed that its underlying goal had been addressed as the symbol of the black savage in Jamaica was reinforced, the docile female was affirmed, and the image of a British masculine identity was upheld. Implicitly, however, the suppression itself seemed to acknowledge that these three notions were in danger and thus stood as the true source of the underlying fear that drove the actions of the British forces in Jamaica during the aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion.

Eyre and the Colonial Government

To the first point, the reason for the extreme reaction to the rebellion was that the powers in charge, notably Governor Eyre and the soldiers called to suppress the rebellion, feared that an uprising of black peasants would spread throughout the island and cause irrevocable damage to their rule. Underneath this rationale, however, lies an awareness of

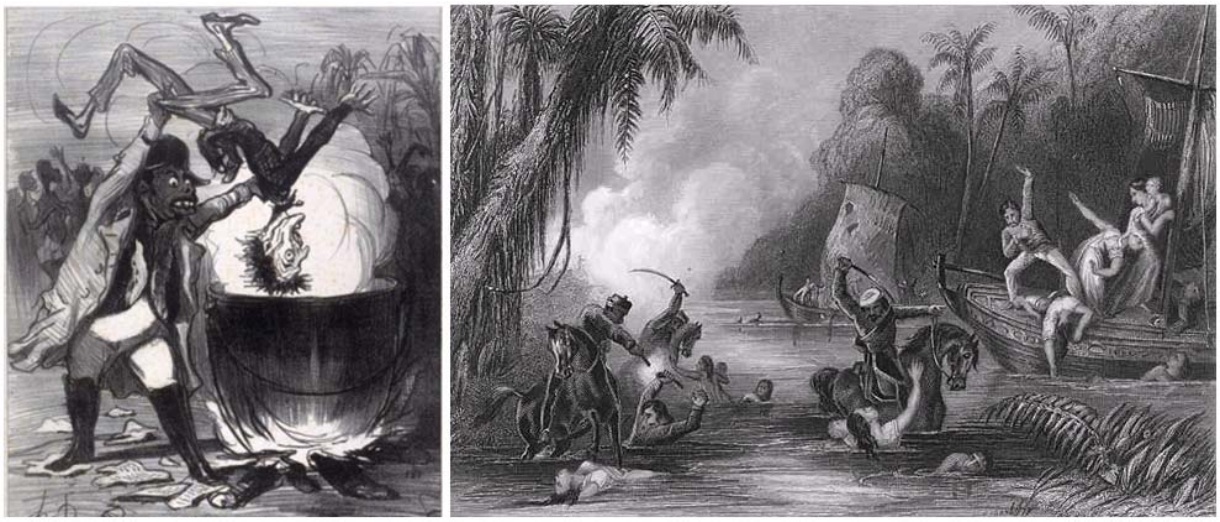

Image 3: (L) Daumier, "Soulouque" ("The emperor Souloque, having learned that a European journalist was allowed to criticize some acts of his administration, stopped the guilty and plunged him in a heater full of burning tar"), 1850.
Image 4: (R) & Charles Ball, "Massacre off the boats at Cawnpore," from *The History of the Indian Mutiny* (1858)

the fear that came from the vision of such an uprising and a desire to reassert the power of the British government on the island. Julie Evans argues that Eyre came to Jamaica with a deeply authoritarian view of his role as governor and a strong "insistence on enforcing British authority in even the most minor matters…to prevent the masses from both demonstrating and witnessing their own power."[114] While the motivation and specific desires of the soldiers who carried out these acts in the name of the crown may never be known, the explicit commands and documented correspondences between the Colonial Office, Governor Eyre, and commissioned white, British officers, record some of the underlying factors that led to the rebellion's aftermath. Indeed, Brian Dyde condemns Eyre and the military officers for the atrocities committed in the aftermath of the Morant Bay rebellion, arguing that despite accounts of soldiers operating "more or

[114] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 112.

less where and how they pleased" and generally "out of proper control" in the weeks following the rebellion, it was unfathomable that the leading authority on the island, primarily Governor Eyre, did not attempt to end the atrocities.[115] Dyde claims, "Such actions denote either an almost total loss of military discipline, or equally complete condonation of such behavior by those who were supposed to be in charge."[116] At the head of "those who were supposed to be in charge" stood Governor Eyre. He, therefore, remains the central actor of the events following the Morant Bay rebellion, and understanding the context in which he operated as the leading representative of the British government in Jamaica helps to demonstrate the dynamics that surrounded the event's aftermath.

Governor Eyre's position as the recently appointed governor of Jamaica made his role during the rebellion uniquely important. Both at the time and in much of the scholarship surrounding the rebellion, Governor Eyre was held responsible as the individual who "had personally sanctioned and supervised a campaign of brutal (and *illegal*) retaliatory violence against the black people of St. Thomas-in-the-East."[117] His direct culpability notwithstanding, by his own account his decision to institute Martial Law and order the brutal reprisals after the initial fighting had stopped came from his fear that the island was on the verge of a revolution. In an early letter to Edward Caldwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Eyre announced "that a most serious and alarming insurrection of the negro population has taken place in this colony."[118] Almost

[115] Dyde, *The Empty Sleeve*, 179.
[116] Ibid, 181.
[117] Kostal, *Jurisprudence of Power*, 14.
[118] PP, 1866 [3594-I] Papers relating to the disturbances in Jamaica. Part I, 1.

immediately after hearing news of the initial disturbance at the courthouse in Morant Bay, Eyre warned in a letter to one of his generals of the need to stop the rebellion while in its early stages in order to "prevent these smouldering embers bursting into flame." [119] Months later as Eyre undoubtedly began to mount a defense of his actions in public opinion, he wrote to Caldwell highlighting the demographic disadvantage of the white population on the island and saying that punishments for actions committed during the rebellion "should be prompt, certain, and severe."[120] This argument that punishments should be "prompt, certain, and severe" not only confirmed Eyre's influence in promoting a spirit of uncompromising brutality but it also demonstrated the severity with which he approached these rebels. For Eyre, it seemed that the cost of losing this fight was too great while the price for victory, the lives of hundreds of black Jamaicans, a steal.

Certainly Eyre, like most British governors in his position, took the threat of such an uprising seriously; the possibility of losing a colony to black rebels would surely have been detrimental to his career in the Empire. But Eyre faced additional pressures to succeed in this situation. According to Thomas Holt, Eyre's new position as governor, having only been appointed in 1864 and conflicts with local officials made his position particularly tenuous by the time of the rebellion. Indeed, Holt argues that "controversial circumstances surrounding his appointment and tenure possibly contributed to Eyre's determination to see no distress on the island."[121] Additionally, Denis Judd avers that

[119] Ibid, 13.
[120] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 1.
[121] Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, 271.

Eyre being "subordinated to the demands and blandishments of white plantation-owners and settlers, determined to obtain the protection of their own economic needs rather than to accede to the just treatment of their workers," weighed his decisions regarding the rebellion.[122] Eyre's decisions, therefore, reflected his need to support these powerful constituents in Jamaica and negotiate a balance between competing factions vying for power in island and the Empire by 1865.

In Jamaica, political authority rested primarily with two competing bodies: the colonial assembly and the government in Britain. As Catherine Hall describes, this shared power was built on ongoing compromises of divisions between "metropole and colony: civilisation here, barbarism/savagery there."[123] Eyre's role as governor made him the intermediary between these two sides. This position proved to be a delicate one that only added to the uneasiness affecting Eyre's actions. Julie Evans argues that although Jamaica had a long history of self-government, "the finer delineations of power were a persistent source of tension underlying the already complex relations between the British government and the colony in the mid-nineteenth century."[124] Furthermore, she continues, Governor Eyre "was inevitably caught in the middle. He was both head of the local Executive and the representative of the ultimate, external authority."[125] Even before the rebellion, tensions surrounding Eyre's position between the Crown and the island's government officials grew and framed his response to the events in Morant Bay. Additionally, Evans claims that in the months before October 1865, the local Jamaican

[122] Judd, *Empire*, 86.
[123] Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*, 10.
[124] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 117.
[125] Ibid.

press, mostly controlled by conservative powers of the island's elite, attacked his apparent attempts to seize power from them.[126] She argues that as Eyre received more and more criticism from the press, the Colonial Office repeatedly "assured him of its support" as tensions continued to mount between the competing interests in Jamaican politics.[127] Therefore, when Eyre decided to institute martial law days after the rebellion began, the island's elite understood this act as part of his aim of eradicating the island's governing body and a symbol of the political maneuvering that, they believed, characterized Eyre's role as governor.

The conservative Jamaican paper, *The Morning Journal*, claimed that Eyre's decision to institute martial law, and the subsequent actions to make the island a Crown Colony, were part of a "long-contemplated scheme of destroying the present legislative."[128] The writer of this article lamented that Eyre "having thus quickly discovered the cause of the rebellion, he has quickly provided a remedy against a like occurrence again, namely, the abolition of our free constitution … and the substitution of a despotism."[129] *The Morning Journal* later concluded that these actions were "the emanation of a brain excited by fear," thus blaming the "hasty measures" that allowed despotism to reign in the island on the fear that overcame members of the Assembly duped by Eyre's actions.[130]

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[126] According to Julie Evans, Eyre indeed attempted to take power from the island's legislature. She argues that "In the weeks following the rebellion, legislation was passed to restrict the franchise, to elect only half the Executive Council members, and to abolish the Assembly. Eyre pressed for even tighter control." (Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 143).
[127] Ibid, 130.
[128] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 18th, 1865.
[129] Ibid.
[130] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), December 1st, 1865.

These articles thus highlight the precarious position that Eyre held as governor of the island. While he claimed that his decision to enact martial law and decisively quell the rebellion protected Britain and those with vested interests in the island, its implementation antagonized the island's political authorities by providing a justification to circumvent their authority. As a writer in *The Morning Journal* would argue, the ability of the governor to proclaim martial law at any time presented a dangerous model for Jamaica's future. The writer insisted "If the long-established authority for the proclamation of martial law could have been found practicable during the late emergency…how much more practicable would it not be in the future when insurrections cannot by any possibility take us unawares?"[131] This question demonstrated both the anxiety of the island's elites and the fragile hold Eyre had on their loyalty. The growing tensions between Eyre and local authorities around 1865 thus played an important role in qualifying Eyre's response to the rebellion and in contextualizing the reactions of many prominent figures connected to the island.

When Eyre arrived as Jamaica's governor, he did so after a short stint in St. Vincent and Antigua, then came to Jamaica as the temporary Lieutenant-Governor before finally receiving his permanent commission in April 1864.[132] As governor, Ronald Hyam summarizes that Eyre "was not popular" and almost immediately upon arriving in Jamaica encountered opposition from leaders like George William Gordon, the main figure of Eyre's trial in England.[133] Julie Evans argues that Eyre came to Jamaica with strong anxieties about the ability colonial governments had to enforce their authority. For

[131] Ibid.
[132] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 113.
[133] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 151.

Governor Eyre, Evans argues that particularly in Caribbean colonies where the elites in power were so vastly outnumbered, "Only rigid adherence to British law and order, the faithful observance of British respectability and civility, and, most importantly, the permanent presence of European troops, could begin to assuage his fears."[134] Julie Evans affirms that fear played a central role in Eyre's actions as governor. His "uncompromising manner" and desperate need to maintain a "strong stable government" in Jamaica undoubtedly contextualized the approach he took in defending his position and the colony as the rebellion began.[135]

Beyond Jamaica

Whether by genuine fear of an island-wide rebellion or through a cautious preemptive plan to protect special interests, the message that seemed to resonate most with Eyre's supporters was the question of what if. Eyre asked, "what would have been thought or said of me had I lost the Colony or occasioned the massacre of thousands"?[136] What if the punishments did not scare the rebels and their sympathizers into submission? Eyre challenged, they "may be willing to run the risk of another rebellion if they are led to believe that the sympathies of England are with them, and that they are not to meet with the punishment justly due to so heinous a crime should they prove unsuccessful."[137] Most poignantly for those in power and those in Britain most connected to Jamaica, vivid representations of those what ifs stood within sight. From India, to Haiti, to New Zealand

[134] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 107.
[135] Ibid, 113; 143.
[136] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 3.
[137] Ibid, 19.

and the United States, the world surrounding Britain's Jamaican colony teemed with potential outcomes to the rebellion in Morant Bay. These examples of how far such disturbances could go in disrupting, or even overturning, dominant power structures certainly added to the fear that plagued many white or privileged onlookers of Jamaica's rebellion. As one reporter in the *Examiner* noted, "the whole white population as well as that of mixed blood were thrown into a panic by the wholesale and savage massacre of Morant Bay. There seem to have been present to their imaginations the bloody revolution of Hayti, which gave sovereignty to the black man, the triumph of the race in the Southern States of America, its recent victory over the Spaniards in Hispaniola, and perhaps even the Sepoy Rebellion. They determined, therefore, to crush the peril at once."[138] It seemed that examples of undesired terror by the hands of black or colored upstarts were everywhere.

Bernard Semmel asserts that the "kindly view of the native races" that dominated the early part of the century, had been "whittled away by the apparently ceaseless wars which Britain was waging against coloured peoples."[139] Particularly in places like New Zealand where native wars had been raging since 1860, Semmel argues, the " 'natives' came to be thought of as bloodthirsty savages rather than peaceful children of nature."[140] Indeed, in 1864 former Commissioner of the Waikato District, New Zealand, J.E. Gorst, described the natives there as being part of an uncivilized, "savage and warlike race."[141] The Maori, the native people in New Zealand in the nineteenth century, resisted British

[138] Quoted in "The Riot in Jamaica," *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), January 20th, 1866.
[139] Semmel, *Jamaica Blood and Victorian Conscience*, 20.
[140] Ibid.
[141] J.E. Gorst, *The Maori King: or, The Study of Our Quarrel with the Natives of New Zealand* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1864), 41.

attempts to "civilize" them and led a series of wars throughout the 1860s: the Taranaki War (1860–1861), the Waikato War (1863–1864), and the Pai Marire and Ringatu campaigns (1865–1872).[142] These conflicts engaged more than 12,000 British troops by 1865 and occupied considerable attention from the British government and within the popular press of the time.[143] Ultimately, however, events in New Zealand added to the image that Britain faced difficult challenges from its non-white colonial subjects. Even in events outside of the empire, it seemed that the supremacy of white rule was in flux.

While New Zealand served as an important example of non-white subjects alarmingly rising up against British rule, it was Civil War in the United States that seemed the most dangerous to British onlookers. Indeed, Ronald Hyam argues that "Events in New Zealand, however annoying and disturbing, were not so dangerous to civilisation as the American Civil War."[144] Hence, for those concerned with the outcome of events in the United States, recently out of a protracted Civil War that was profoundly tied to the issue of slavery and just beginning the difficult period of Reconstruction, the events in Jamaica seemed inextricably connected to a broader struggle to maintain white power structures. While scholars like Frank Thackeray and John E.Findling claim that "British public opinion was sharply divided" along class lines regarding the American War, the implicit racial connection between these two events seemed unavoidable.[145] Particularly, the small population of mostly white men who held power in Jamaica must

[142] Daniel B. Thorp, "New Zealand and the American Civil War," *Pacific Historical Review*, 80, No. 1 (February 2011), 101.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 147.
[145] Frank W. Thackeray and John E.Findling, eds., *Events That Changed Great Britain since 1689* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 59.

have feared what could come from a war that attempted to unearth traditional systems of power for the advantage of a lesser race.

If the case of the American Civil War stood as the most relevant example of the dangers that the leaders of Jamaica and their allies in Britain had to fear, Haiti was undoubtedly the most alarming and provocative example. Haiti became the first former slave colony to attain independence and the only black nation in the Western Hemisphere by 1865. The image of this island nation ruled by former slaves, and failing in many respects to thrive since its independence in 1804, stood as the ultimate symbol of failure for the rest of the colonies in the Caribbean. Mimi Sheller argues that through the nineteenth century, "the 'spectre of Haiti' was deeply ingrained in the British public imagination and continued to exercise its influence."[146] For the British, the prospect of being overthrown by black former slaves, as the French had in Haiti, was deplorable. For Jamaica's white inhabitants and investors back in Britain, the loss of life and money that Haiti represented was even worse. For those elites, the awful memory of the revolution at the beginning of the century was worsened by the events of recent years when leaders like Emperor Faustin Soulouque (1847 – 1856), whose actions as emperor were blamed on his affinity for Voodoo and "the savage African nature [that] had by this time conquered all [his] gentler instincts," further undermined Haiti's image in the eyes of the white world.[147]

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[146] Mimi Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 82.

[147] "The Late Emperor Soulouque," *Chambers Journal of Popular Literature*, Saturday March 5th, 1859, no. 270, 152.

With visions of Haiti in mind, Eyre spoke to this fear in his letter to Caldwell in January 1866 when he admonished, "However wild and visionary such a scheme may appear to Englishmen, it must be borne in mind that the success which attended the efforts of the Haytians against the French …afforded examples and encouragement which from the vicinity of those republics to Jamaica, were constantly before the peasantry of this country; and these examples lost none of their force from the presence of many Haytians."[148] The connection between Jamaica and Haiti, though unfounded in most historical evidence, remained an important trope in the language and thought of the elite circles in Jamaica. In the House of Commons in February 1866, Lord Frederick Cavendish, a twenty-nine year old Liberal member of Parliament, announced that the governor and white inhabitants in Jamaica believed that the island was "part of a widely extended conspiracy, such that nothing but the most severe measures could prevent Jamaica from becoming a second Hayti."[149] Indeed, Sheller argues that "the Haitian example was a powerful 'story line' in elite views on popular organizations and political movements in Jamaica" that amplified the angst of events like that seen in Morant Bay.[150]

Like Haiti, the recent memory of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 also played heavily on the minds of those connected to Jamaica's colonial rule. Catherine Hall asserts "the double spectres of Haiti (where the blacks had driven out all the whites), and of the Indian Mutiny (when, according to the collective English myth, the Indians had brutally massacred, in the most treacherous circumstances, English men, women and children)

[148] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 3.
[149] "Address to Her Majesty on Her Most Gracious Speech," *House of Commons Debate 6 February 1866, vol 181* cc 107-87107, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 1803 - 2005*. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/ (accessed March 12, 2011).
[150] Sheller, *Democracy After Slavery*, 227.

were ever present in both the Jamaican and English consciousness, shaping expectations and raising hopes and fears."[151] These fears must have seemed palpable, particularly for the whites in Jamaica who recalled accounts of what Bernard Semmel describes as "stories of massacres of British women and children, of gruesome oriental tortures and mutilations, of assaults on the virtue and honour of English women."[152] In India, news of massacres of white women and children sparked horrific retributions against the population. Denis Judd claims that British troops "went to unpalatable lengths to revenge their nation and their people…the British indulged in an orgy of vengeance, culminating in Brigadier-General Neill's order that Indian prisoners should be made to clean up a small portion of the bloodstains, forced by the lash if necessary, and that those who objected should be made to lick up part of it with their tongues."[153] Such was the violent imagery that colored the memories of that uprising. In India, both sides committed vile acts against each other and against humanity itself.

For some in Britain, the years following the Mutiny held what Ronald Hyam describes as a "post-Mutiny guilt" that bemoaned the horrors of what British soldiers did in the name of their country.[154] This guilt, Hyam argues, played an important role in supporting the initial attacks against Eyre when news of the atrocities in Jamaica emerged. Simultaneously, many in Britain saw India as a warning against the threat that any disgruntled subjects could pose to the empire. Denis Judd avers that "The Indian Rebellion of 1857 inflicted a deep wound upon the Victorian psyche. It was a challenge

[151] Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 282.
[152] Semmel, *Jamaica Blood*, 21.
[153] Judd, *Empire*, 73.
[154] Hyam, Britain's Imperial Century, 154.

flung in the face of the comfortable British assumption that sound and efficient administration was enough to keep imperial subjects content, or at least uncomplaining … it also provided an uncomfortable reminder that the disenfranchised masses at home … might rise in revolt against property and privilege and the virtual monopoly of state power."[155] Judd adds that the British interpreted the Indian uprising "as an unwarranted and destructive rejection of British reforming benevolence, and an assault on the very notion of progress" which justified their authoritarian rule and strict control.[156] Thus, if Judd is correct in asserting that events in India "inflicted a deep wound upon the Victorian psyche" and framed British understandings of both its colonial mission and its security at home, then it seems clear that British officials like Edward Eyre also contextualized the news of rebellion in Jamaica's eastern parish as a potentially grievous occurrence.

With such a foundation in place, Eyre's charge that the rebels intended to "kill all the white men" and "reserve [the white ladies] for themselves" must have resonated with a white British and Jamaican population still reeling from the events in India just eight years earlier.[157] Indeed, Thomas Holt posits that Eyre must have been relieved to discover that because of recent events in India and ongoing wars against non-white natives in other parts of the empire, his "racist fears found a receptive public in Britain."[158] Decidedly, the racial and colonial power struggle of recent years amplified the fears that allowed for such a drastic reaction in Morant Bay. Although compared to the United States, Haiti,

[155] Judd, *Empire*, 66.
[156] Ibid, 67.
[157] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 15.
[158] Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, 305.

and India, the Morant Bay rebellion was almost insignificant, the brutal reaction of the soldiers to this minor uprising spoke to the weight that they must have carried from India, Haiti, and elsewhere. As such, the urgency with which they approached the task of destroying any vestige of dissent and maintaining the system of power at all costs seems abundantly clear.

Stories of Suppression

The reports of the widespread punishments that took place after the Morant Bay Rebellion began to surface in the Jamaican press within days, and in Britain within weeks. After the initial scare of the uprising had subsided, however, the public came to learn that the substantive issues of the event lay in the reality that "the people of the eastern parish of the island had been subjected to a prolonged and ruthless regime of martial law."[159] Thomas Holt summarizes, "sympathy aroused by the first vague, exaggerated reports of rebel atrocities soon turned to revulsion against the military terror that followed."[160] The stories that emerged (although at times sensationalized and often used for the specific motives of individual witnesses, victims, or political actors) stand as a testimony to the ways in which Eyre's forces set out to maintain order and assert their dominance over the island. They also offer important insights into the contentious nature of British politics as its press overflowed with accounts of the events in Jamaica and the controversy surrounding Governor Eyre's trial afterwards.

[159] Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power*, 14.
[160] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 302.

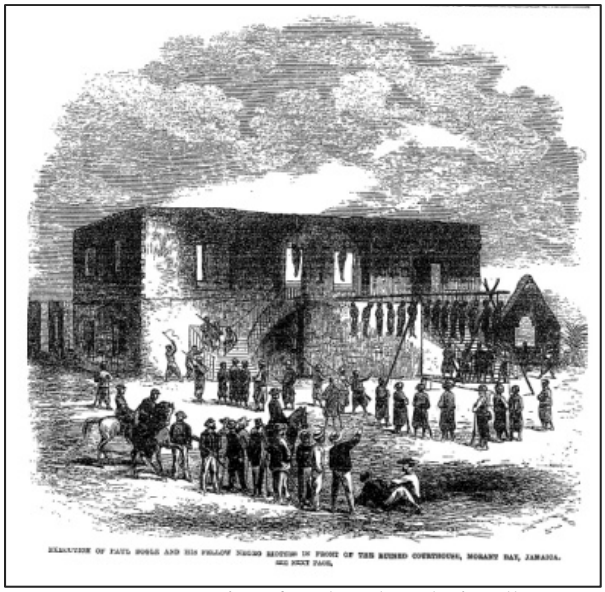

Image 5: "Execution of Paul Bogle and His Fellow Negro Rioters...," *Penny Illustrated Paper,* 9 December 1865

The stories that arose from the Morant Bay rebellion appeared prominently in Britain's growing political press. In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century*, Stephen Koss argues that the repeal of the taxes on advertisements in 1853, on stamps in 1855, and on paper in 1861, "created a new forum for national debate by according newspapers a vastly enlarged readership and, consequently, an enhanced potential for political influence."[161] Jonathan Parry also states that the revocation of these duties caused a "massive increase in the circulation of political intelligence" and marked an exuberant growth of provincial newspapers: from 234 in 1851 to 394 in 1858, 743 in 1860 and 916 in 1874.[162] This growth in Britain's press therefore reflected the political dynamics surrounding the Jamaica Affair. As Stephen Koss contends, Britain's press "operated as an active force in the history of

[161] Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain,* 1.
[162] Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain,* 169.

British politics" and ultimately served as a central tool in the political maneuvering of the day.[163] Hence, Koss argues that "during the Victorian heyday, partisanship was the dominant characteristic of newspapers, recognized not only as their right, but also as their obligation. Freedom of the press …[was] construed as the freedom to make a political choice."[164] As a result, political leaders and various factions used the press to portray events like the Jamaica Affair as one of many ways to manipulate public opinion in their favor. Koss avers that in this context, political factions "considered it imperative to secure prominent, sympathetic, and reasonably accurate publicity for its views…Then, as now, newspapers provided the cheapest, most effective, and most convenient outlet for information."[165] Thus the Jamaica Affair appeared as yet another opportunity for political groups to use the press as a venue to present their side to the British reading public on the issues that stemmed from the controversy over the Jamaican atrocities.

The general picture of the punishments exacted during the weeks following the rebellion described an unyielding bloodbath of torture, humiliation and executions of many kinds. In an almost poetic description of condemned rebels, dehumanized in such a way as to assuage the offense that was about to overcome them, a report in Jamaica's conservative *Morning Journal* expressed:

> The sun sets! And it is the last sun that seven men – if men they be – shall ever look upon! On the north stands the ruins of the late Court House, like a huge spectre, as a witness against its sad despoilers, and before it is the mean – and the crutched supports – and the ropes for so many necks! Immediately in front of

[163] Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, 2.
[164] Ibid, 3.
[165] Ibid, 9.

> these their faces towards them, and their backs to the South, are the doomed rebels.[166]

Similarly, in England *The Liverpool Mercury* reported that "flogging is going on from morning to night… Many women and children detected as robbers are catted and let go daily. The greater criminals are sent on to Morant Bay to be hanged or shot."[167] Other stories from publications like *The Leeds Mercury* proclaimed "Between two and four hundred were thus murdered in cold blood, not as a punishment for any offence they had committed… but out of a spirit of savage revenge on account of the provoked slaughter in hot blood of less than a twentieth part the number of whites."[168] Prejudicial language such as this, "murdered in cold blood" and "slaughter in hot blood," seemed to speak more to the paper's political leanings than the objective reporting of truth, yet the message was clear that the actions committed by the representatives of the Crown in Jamaica should horrify the British public. The stories themselves reiterated the violent suppression that characterized the rebellion's aftermath and also marked the political divisions in British politics at that time.

News of the atrocities in Jamaica became a central part of the rhetoric of two distinct camps in British political discourse at the time. These two factions adopted clearly defined lines not only regarding the news of horrific punishments at the hand of the British in Jamaica, but also relating to the deeper issues that emerged from the discussion of these events. In her article "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and the Case of Governor Eyre," Catherine Hall aptly describes

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[166] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 7th, 1865.
[167] "Further Details of the Insurrection in Jamaica", Liverpool Merc. Etc. (Liverpool, England), November 18, 1865.
[168] "White v. Black in Jamaica", *The Leeds Mercury* (Leeds, England), November 21, 1865.

the roles of Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill in this debate showing how this affair signaled important shifts in British society. Hall argues that the Jamaica Committee, led by figures such as Thomas Hughes, Charles Buxton, and John Stuart Mill, came at a time when the political climate seemed receptive to the issues they raised and the accusations they brought against Governor Eyre. Hall avers that with the Tories coming to power in 1866, "the Radicals were much less worried about embarrassing the government and prepared to press the issue of prosecutions hard."[169] Thus the Jamaica Committee and other sympathetic, liberal groups in British society had initial approval to forcefully attack Eyre's actions in Jamaica and promote a narrative of wholesale violence against the people of Jamaica.

Leading this narrative was John Stuart Mill. Like Catherine Hall, Bruce L. Kinzer also notes that the power shift in the British Parliament in 1866 gave Mill and his supporters the opportunity to promote their cause against Eyre, and other liberal agendas, in new ways. Kinzer argues that "The resignation of the Liberal government in June 1866 …gave Mill ample latitude for taking up unequivocally radical positions on the Jamaica question, women's suffrage, and Irish land."[170] With this freedom, John Stuart Mill and the Jamaica Committee focused their case around the issue of the rule of law, in particular "the issue of the impartiality of the law irrespective of race," and "the question of England's relation to her foreign dependencies."[171] As Catherine Hall claims that both Mill and Carlyle "used every ounce of public prestige which [they] possessed to maximal

[169] Catherine Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and the Case of Governor Eyre," *Cultural Critique*, No. 12, (Spring,1989), 183, JSTOR http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354327
[170] Kinzer, *J.S. Mill Revisited*, 172.
[171] Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige," 186; 185.

advantage in [their] search for publicity and support for [their] cause" throughout Eyre's three year trial, they mounted a powerful campaign that placed the events of the Morant Bay rebellion at the center of public discourse of the time.[172] The resulting stories of the punishments that came in the aftermath of the rebellion, and undoubtedly central themes in the controversy that played out in England through Eyre's trial, then stand as a testimony to the complicated struggles for power that became associated with this rebellion. In the narrative repudiating Eyre and his actions in Jamaica, the accounts circulating both in Jamaica and in Britain that chronicled the punishments in the rebellion's aftermath attempted to create a picture of careless, widespread, terror against overwhelmingly innocent victims in the eastern part of the island. They highlighted cases of vivid horror, emphasized the sheer number of floggings and executions, and told stories of named individuals who experienced hardship under the period of martial law. To emphasize the scale of the punishments, many papers lamented the "continual scene of hanging day by day" and printed letters from soldiers who told of their "Hard work from morning to night" hanging rebels which one summarized as a "horrible sight, and a horrid set of wretches."[173] Other reports illustrated the impulsive sentencing that characterized much of the punishment, such as this quotation from *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*: "The Provost-Marshal this morning visited the hotbed of the rebellion, Stony Gut. During his tour he fell in with a straggler, who could give no satisfactory account of himself. He was at once given in charge of the police, conducted to the station, and fifty

[172] Ibid, 184.
[173] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 3rd, 1865; "Further Details of the Insurrection in Jamaica", *Liverpool Mercury* Etc. (Liverpool, England), November, 18, 1865.

lashes with the cat administered to him 'by way of caution'."[174] Collectively, these types of stories articulated the initial admonishing coverage of the rebellion's suppression by Eyre and his men, and they supported the narrative that Mill and his allies promoted.

On April 9th 1866, the Report of the Royal Commission sent to investigate the events surrounding the rebellion was complete. Its importance, aside from representing the important step of Britain investigating the events on the island, lay in its use as one of the primary sources for stories detailing the tales of Jamaican horror that circulated in Britain.[175] The Report was instrumental in producing direct testimonies and full correspondences related to the events. In one example, the Report printed a letter from Captain Henry Ford, "in command of the St. Thomas in the East Irregular Troop," written on October 22nd 1865 from his temporary military headquarters in Golden Grove, depicting a seemingly typical day for the soldiers charged with restoring order in the island. Captain Ford, whom Brian Dyde describes as "the white Jamaican roughneck in command,"[176] wrote:

> On our march from Morant Bay we shot 2 prisoners, and catted 5 or 6 and released them… This morning we made raid with 30 men, all mounted, and got back to head-quarters at 4 P.M., bringing in a few prisoners, and having flogged 9 men and burned 3 negro houses, and then had a court-martial on the prisoners, who amounted to about 50 or 60. Several were flogged without court-martial, from a simple examination. One man, John Anderson, a kind of parson and schoolmaster, got 50 lashes; 9 were convicted by court-martial; one of them to 100 lashes, which he got at once; the other eight to be hanged or shot; but it was then quite dark, so their execution is postponed till morning… the black troops …shot about 160 people on their march from Port Antonio to Manchioneal,

[174] "The Jamaica Massacres," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 13, No. 12 (December 1, 1865), 288.
[175] Semmel, *Jamaica Blood*, 67.
[176] Dyde, *Empty Sleeve*, 179.

> hanged 7 in Manchioneal, and shot 3 on their way here. This is a picture of martial law; the soldiers enjoy it, the inhabitants have to dread it.[177]

The Report also singled out Bath, a town in St. Thomas parish near Morant Bay, as a site of particular horrors during the suppression. The Commission's Report noted:

> The mode of inflicting the punishment at Bath calls for special notice. It was ordered by a local magistrate, after a very slight investigation, and frequently at the instance of book-keepers and others smarting under the sense of recent injury. At first an ordinary cat was used, but afterwards, for the punishment of men, wires were twisted around the cords, and the different tails so constructed were knotted. Some of these were produced before us, and it was painful to think that any man should have used such an instrument for the torturing of his fellow creatures.[178]

Indeed, the stories of Bath became the touchstone for much of the indignation against Eyre and his forces. In July 1866, for example, Charles Buxton, a leader within the Jamaica Committee and vocal opponent of Governor Eyre throughout the controversy, bemoaned the actions of Robert Kirkland, Senior Magistrate of Bath, who oversaw the deplorable actions that took place there. Buxton declared:

> At Bath alone a multitude of men and women were flogged, 'after a very slight investigations and frequently at the instance of book-keepers and others, smarting under a sense of recent injury'. What, then, could be thought of the atrocious ruffian, Mr. Kirkland, who was not content with that intense agony? He …[twisted] strong pianoforte wire with the cords, sometimes with twelve, sometimes with more lashes, and then tie them up in knots, so as to cause the utmost conceivable amount of agony, and with these infernal instruments some hundreds of persons were flogged until the ground was soaked with gore, some of them having received as much as 100 lashes each. All this was notorious at the time, yet not a finger did Mr. Eyre move to punish this ruffian?[179]

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[177] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. Report, 399.
[178] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. Report, 25.
[179] "Disturbances in Jamaica," *House of Commons Debate 31 July 1866, vol 184* cc1763-840, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates, 1803 - 2005*. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/ (accessed January 30, 2011).

Taken together, these stories provide vivid examples of the horror that circulated during the rebellion's aftermath. Although many are admittedly colored by the specific biases of their authors, they nonetheless demonstrate the callous, physical nature of the crimes against the, mostly innocent, black men and women in St. Thomas-in-the-East. In the image portrayed by Charles Buxton, for example, the depiction of a sadistic local magistrate who caused "the utmost conceivable amount of agony… until the ground was soaked with gore," underscores the characterization of the British soldiers and leaders in Jamaica who allowed such atrocities to take place. Ultimately, however, it was this type of British leader that led the assault against the rebel bodies on the island and added to the image promoted by Mill and his allies of the horrors associated with authoritarian rule.

This initial approval of the Jamaica Committee's repudiation of Eyre soon dissipated and support for Eyre grew. Led by Thomas Carlyle and his supporters, Catherine Hall claims that the "sympathy for the wronged British Governor…linked with the growing fears amongst the middle class of working-class activity centered around the issue of reform. The dangers of democracy seemed all too imminent, and anxieties about potential anarchy at home suffused the conservative discourses on the heroic Eyre who had saved the beleaguered whites."[180] Indeed, Hall adds that as events in Britain unfolded, Carlyle's cause successfully gained support among the upper and middle classes who feared the recent uprisings in Britain by the lower classes. Hall argues that "The famous events in Hyde Park and the passage of the 1867 Reform Act, together with the alarms over the Fenians, frightened many. The connections between events in

[180] Ibid, 184.

Jamaica and events in London began to appear much more dangerous."[181] Furthermore, Hall adds that the support for Mill's vision of an Empire based on liberal notions of education and the civilizing mission, one that seemed the antithesis of Eyre's implementation of martial law in Jamaica and his actions thereafter, also declined towards the end of the decade. Hall claims that this liberal optimism waned as figures like Benjamin Disraeli and Joseph Chamberlain "discursively constructed a new popular imperialism in the decades to follow and who secured a base for a politics rooted in that imperialism. They could build on the legacy of Carlyle, who, like Enoch Powell at a much later political moment, was central to the articulation of a new racism."[182] This new racism, as well as the changing notions of gender, that emerged in the debates surrounding the punishments sanctioned by Governor Eyre constitutes an important framework to examine the punishments that created the controversy in England. They highlight the critical use of subjected bodies as the most fundamental site in which the power of Britain's imperial strength in Jamaica was contested. Thus as Catherine Hall poignantly states, "The debate over Eyre became a site of struggle over the dignity, prestige, hierarchic and legal status of whole categories of people- blacks as opposed to whites, Jamaican whites as opposed to the English, the middle class as opposed to the working class, men as opposed to women."[183] As such, the complex racialized and gendered implications of the events in Jamaica prove critical to understanding the dynamics of power related to this event.

[181] Ibid, 193.
[182] Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige," 194.
[183] Ibid, 196.

Gendered Punishments

The important role that gender played in the aftermath of the Morant Bay Rebellion and in the broader context of the British Empire during the nineteenth century critically informs the analysis of this event. From the imperial perspective, Anne McClintock avers that "gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise."[184] In the spectacle of the rebellion's aftermath, these gender dynamics impacted the performance and reaction to the punishments inflicted upon the people of Jamaica. The "unnatural" treatment of black women through the course of these events seemed to highlight the manipulation of gender roles as a tool to assert power and dominance. Thus, the stories surrounding the punishments against women remained central in the heated debates about Eyre's actions and served as some of the most vivid examples of the brutal attacks against the bodies of accused rebels.

By 1866, stories about the atrocities of the rebellion were widespread. The Jamaica Committee that led the charge against Governor Eyre was already planning its attacks and the domestic debate surrounding his culpability began to consume many influential circles in Britain's political scene. Of these stories, some of the most distressing and controversial centered on the alleged horrors committed against the black women on the island. Women played a central role in the Morant Bay Rebellion.[185] Gad Heuman lists the acts of women who participated in the rebellion and several who were

[184] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.
[185] Verene A. Shepherd, *Women in Caribbean History: The British Colonised Territories* (Kingston, JA: Ian Randle Publishers), 1999, 154 – 156.

punished and served as witnesses in the Royal Commission's investigation following the rebellion. As a result of their participation in the rebellion, women in St. Thomas-in-the-East elicited a vehement reprisal since their actions represented a rejection of their gender, race, and class, and therefore stood as the most aberrant symbols of rebelliousness. To some in Britain, the harsh treatment of the women who suffered in Jamaica was justified since their acts of rebellion were far worse than their male counterparts and seemed to affirm the unfavorable characterization of their identity.[186]

The ideal woman during the nineteenth century in Britain was imagined as a white, docile, passive, companion to white men. Leonore Davidoff argues that Victorian values delineated that society could be understood as an organic whole made up of "hierarchically ordered but interdependent parts."[187] Within this framework, Davidoff claims that while men (of various classes) did the "brain work" and the "menial work" of society, "Middle-class women represented the emotions, the Heart, or sometimes the Soul, seat of morality and tenderness."[188] Within these conceptions of women's roles in this Victorian framework, Davidoff also contends that an important dichotomy existed between "ladies" and "women," between "Madonnas" and "Magdalenes," which mirrored other "polarities" within British thought: "white and black, familiar and foreign, home and empire."[189] Quoting Cleo McNelly, Davidoff argues that such binaries create important markers for the solidification of identity roles in understandings of empire. In a bifurcated notion of empire, one predicated on the notion of "here and there, home and

[186] "Women Flogging," *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (Sheffield, England), March 19, 1866.
[187] Leonore Davidoff, "Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (Spring, 1979), 89.
[188] Ibid, 89.
[189] Ibid, 91.

abroad," Cleo McNelly's theory of racialized feminine archetypes serves as a useful paradigm to understand the treatment of black women in Jamaica during the Morant Bay rebellion. In McNelly's theory there exists:

> the white woman at home and her polar opposite, the black woman abroad…The first of them, the white woman, is…gentle, courteous and endowed with the immortality of the gods…she tends to be sexless and familiar in every sense of the word. She is mother, sister or wife rather than mistress or friend. The second figure, the black woman, is her mirror image. She is the ever-present exogamous mate, the dark lady of the sonnets, savage, sexual and eternally other. At her best she is a "natural woman," sensuous, dignified and fruitful. At her worst she is a witch, representing loss of self, loss of consciousness and loss of meaning. In either case she is most emphatically not familiar.[190]

This paradigm which emphasizes an oppositional construction of white and black female identities characterizes the portrayals of black women involved in the Morant Bay rebellion. As stories emerged both of their role in the rebellion and of the punishments brought against them in its aftermath, these women were understood through the bifurcated lens that McNelly describes. Both the revulsion expressed at the notion that black women participated in the rebellion and the pity for the women reported to have undergone brutal punishments, fit within this paradigm of accepted Victorian norms. The rebel women embodied the black woman at her worst - "savage, sexual and eternally other." The sympathetic victimized women were the "natural woman," portrayed as the idealized "mother, sister or wife." In both cases, however, she could never quite reach the full image of the idealized woman, and remained "most emphatically not familiar" and distant from the ideal Victorian notions of white middle class womanhood.

[190] Ibid.

For Catherine Hall, central to the fears that lay at the foundation of Englishmen's understandings of race and sexuality were what she describes as "fears about unleashing the powers of black women."[191] This fear helped to position the women who took part in the rebellion as the worst specimens of their race and gender. Governor Eyre reported that the women who participated in the rebellion, "as usual on such occasions, were even more brutal and barbarous than the men."[192] Similarly, Jamaica's *Morning Journal*, described the actions of one woman who took part in the rebellion, Elizabeth Fidd, and characterized her as the "witch" Cleo McNelly conceived as the image for a black woman at her worst. The writer in *The Morning Journal* stated:

> Elizabeth Fidd, the young Hecate, who with cutlass in hand swore vengeance against the volunteers because they had shot her paramour…and against all white and coloured men indiscriminately, was captured to-day. This same she-devil was among the crowd of those who, on the night of the insurrection, compelled Mr. Kirkland's clerks to open the store and supply them with what they wanted, and while she was in the store demanded no end of things…. looking at her, without knowing anything of her horrible doings in the late insurrection, one would take her for anything but what she really is.[193]

This characterization of Elizabeth Fidd as a "hectate," a Greek goddess associated with witchcraft and the underworld, and a "she-devil," certainly shows the hostility directed towards this woman who countered the accepted norms of her gender. In the case of the rebellion, such deviations seemed to warrant stern discipline.

The alleged actions of ruthless, murderous black women participating in the rebellion elicited a harsh response to their deviant behavior. For instance, *The Morning Journal* told another story of Mary Ward "a short, sambo girl, of about 25 years old, who

[191] Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige," 192.
[192] PP, 1866 [3594-I] Papers relating to the disturbances in Jamaica. Part I, 3.
[193] "Rebel Elizabeth Fidd is captured," *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 7th, 1865.

it is alleged dealt the fatal blow to Mr. Charles A. Price amidst the cries for mercy and his request to be given five minutes for prayer."[194] In another example, "the infamous wretch" Jessy Taylor "sat on the late Mr. Price's chest on the evening of the insurrection, as he lay half dead, and finished him by repeated blows from a hatchet, which she held in her hands." [195] For these types of women, women whose assumed behavior placed them far outside the acceptable model of femininity, the *Journal* questioned "what mode of death could man devise to let her truly feel that a just retribution was being dealt out to her!"[196] To the issue of whether such "debased" specimens of the female sex should have received the punishments they did, one telegraph printed in several British papers in 1866 argued: "That any of the negresses should have been themselves subjected to the indignity of the lash is no doubt shocking to the sensibilities of people in England…but I should rather like to be informed how these women, many of whom deserved to be hanged or shot, could have been punished in any manner short of death, unless it were by the lash or the stick?"[197] In this respect, the writer argued that the physical castigation of these women, despite acknowledging that such acts were "shocking to the sensibilities of people in England," was the only appropriate punishment. By choosing to join the rebels, as armed combatants no less, these women threatened the version of womanhood to which they should aspire: the docile, white middle class woman. In the act of taking up arms for political redress, these women not only threatened the physical power structure on the island, but they questioned norms of male dominance. If these women could

[194] *The Morning Journal*, (Kingston, JA), October 21st, 1865 and November 7th, 1865.
[195] It is unclear whether Mary Ward and Jessy Taylor were accused and condemned for attacking the same Mr. Price as the reporting in *The Morning Journal* implies. (Ibid).
[196] Ibid, November 7th, 1865.
[197] "The Jamaica Outbreak: Women Flogging", *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (Sheffield, England), Monday, March 19, 1866.

embrace an image of femininity that permitted them to act as soldiers, activists, leaders, and even killers, what more could they do to disrupt the inherently gendered power structure upon which the empire was based. Therefore, the argument for such unusually harsh treatment of the rebellion's female participants defended what many may have seen as a threat to male dominance.

The depiction of the women in the rebellion is critical in understanding the harsh reprisal in the weeks following the initial events in Morant Bay and in underscoring the dominant gender norms of the time. Thus, the stories of atrocities committed against black women in the aftermath are both telling and profuse. *The Morning Journal* tells of Sarah Francis who "met death as cooly as possible" simply because she admitted to have known and attended meetings where Paul Bogle and his brother Moses were present.[198] The London *Daily News* reported of the seventy-five lashes "administered to a woman named Lenion, in batches of twenty-five each, in Paul Bogle's chapel, because she would not tell him where Paul Bogle was."[199] Anne Galleway's testimony against a defendant, James Codrington, a local planter, told of her own ordeal being flogged while pregnant on October 18th 1865:

> I was taken before James Codrington, and he ordered Biggerstaff to give me thirty-five lashes. He did not try me or examine me at all. Defendant made Biggerstaff drop my clothes, made me naked to the waist, tie me to a wain wheel, and he did so, and defendant told Biggerstaff to flog me, and Biggerstaff did so on my bare shoulders with a guava stick. Defendant was standing by. My back bled,

[198] "The Rebellion," *The Morning Journal*, (Kingston, JA), October 21st, 1865.
[199] Quoted in "The Special Correspondents in Jamaica", *Birmingham Daily Post* (Birmingham, England), Monday, March 5, 1866.

> and defendant washed it with salt pickle. It burned me. I was in the family way, and was sick for two months and two weeks after the flogging.[200]

Similarly, Eliza Collins reported that Christopher Codrington, a magistrate at Manchioneal, "ordered James Reid to tie me to a cocoa-nut tree. Reid tied my hands and feet to the cocoa-nut tree, and pulled down my clothes to my waist; and defendant ordered him to give me thirty lashes, which Reid did with a cat on my shoulders. I bled much, and was sick two weeks. I have the marks still."[201]

Another account relates the long torment of Mrs. Levinston whose husband was first apprehended before she fell victim to the whims of a handful of soldiers. John Gorrie, Barrister-at-Law of Jamaica and Counsel of the Jamaica Committee before the Royal Commission, reported Mrs. Levinston "was seized by Ramsay and thrown down upon her face and flogged by the policemen on the lower part of her person, to compel her to tell where Paul Bogle was. She said she did not know, and the flogging was repeated on three successive occasions, twenty-five lashes being given each time." [202] The *Caledonian Mercury* in Edinburgh, a radical Scotland paper supporting issues of social reform in the 1860s, told a similar (perhaps even the same) story of a woman whose punishment at the hand of George D. Ramsey, inspector of the police force in Jamaica, exemplifies the base treatment of black women during the rebellion.[203] According to this report, after an attack on her husband, one mother awoke to a nightmare of torture at the hands of Mr. Ramsay:

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[200] "Flogging Women in Jamaica" *The Dundee Courier & Argus* (Dundee, Scotland), Monday, June 10, 1867
[201] Ibid.
[202] John Gorrie, *Jamaica Papers No. VI, Illustrations of martial law in Jamaica: Compiled from the report of the Royal Commissioners, and Other Blue Books Laid Before Parliament.* London, 1867, 22.
[203] "Caledonian Mercury," *British Newspapers: 1800 - 1900*, The British Library. Web. 1 April 2011. <http://newspapers.bl.uk/blcs/dispBasicSearch.do?prodId=BLCS&userGroupName=blcsuser>.

> The mother herself was tied with rope… cast down with her face to the floor, stained with the freshly-shed blood of her husband, and in presence of her children received fifty lashes on her naked body. Her hands were then tied, and she was carried to Paul Bogle's chapel and fastened up outside while the constables and soldiers sheltered themselves inside from the pitiless pelting of the rain. Two days and night she was thus kept bound, the cords causing her the keenest pain, but, as she told the story, it was evidently not her physical sufferings which caused her most torment, but the thought of her poor wounded husband lying in the bush, as she thought, dying, without anyone to bind up his wound, and the agony of her children deprived at once of father and mother, and themselves exposed to the cruelty of the reckless desperadoes. After being thus kept fastened outside the building, and after again asking where Paul Bogle was, put a rope around her neck, and the end over a rafter, caused her to be lifted off the ground by the neck, literally half-hanging her. Finding all further efforts to extort by cruelty what the woman did not know to be fruitless, Ramsay unbound her and let her go home.[204]

Thus, the story of this unnamed wife and mother stands as a testimony to the multifaceted nature of the punishments of the rebellion, as well as the use of such reports by critics of Eyre and his allies. Here the writer sought to elicit sympathy for this woman who is identified as a mother and whose greatest “torment” was the thought of her husband laying “without anyone to bind up his wound” and her children losing their parents. This image of her as a selfless, devoted wife and mother was necessary to garner support from the sympathetic readers of this paper. It highlights the ways that this event supported the image of the wife and mother as the only type of woman that deserved the sympathy of the British public. The message held that this woman, whose selfless devotion to her family was repaid with cruel acts of violence, could never deserve the punishment she received. It also suggests that the men, the “reckless desperadoes” who tormented her, did not live up to the masculine ideal that protected such respectable women against harm.

[204] "The Reign of Terror in Jamaica," *The Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, Scotland), February 16, 1866.

Hence such stories exemplify the ways in which gender norms were used as political tools in this event as the portrayal of both the men and women in this incident reinforced accepted notions of gender during this time.

This episode with the unnamed wife also exemplifies that the manner of punishment instituted after the rebellion held entrenched meanings of how violence dehumanized this population of black individuals in order to maintain the prevailing system of power. In one sense, such incidents highlight Shani D'Cruze and Anupama Rao's point that "violence has been critical to the cultural and sexual 'othering' of colonial bodies."[205] This desire to assert dominance by "othering" one's victim was not unique to the British forces in Jamaica but rather had parallels throughout the colonial and racially bifurcated world. In particular, Cruze and Rao's assessment that violence played a role in the "sexual 'othering' of colonial bodies" seems to fit with the widespread use of physically debasing punishments like flogging throughout the rebellion's aftermath. Flogging, for example, causes the aggressor to penetrate foreign objects forcefully onto the bodies of his victim. In an examination of sexual violence during Reconstruction, Lisa Cardyn's analysis of the overtly sexual nature of whipping by the Ku Klux Klan, draws interesting parallels to flogging within the British colonies and to the story of this unnamed woman in Jamaica. Cardyn argues that whippings by the Klan were "indisputably sexualized" as they often involved "forcibly stripping victims prior to or during a klan offensive."[206] She adds that such practices, held over from

[205] Cruze and Rao, "Violence and the Vulnerabilities of Gender," 496.
[206] Lisa Cardyn, *Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence: Outraging the Body Politic in the Reconstruction South*, Ph.D. Candidate (anticipated 2002), Yale University, 709.

slavery, were meant to "shame a threatening 'other' into abject submission."[207] Within the context of this woman's story, then, the shaming of "a threatening 'other' into abject submission" seems to explain the agonizing ordeal she underwent. Additionally, the notion that those committing such acts were "desperate to maintain control" over the black population speaks to the fears of powerlessness that may have driven the ferocious reaction to the rebellion.

For the unnamed woman in the story above, central to the form of torture that helped to establish her as an "other" was also the vitiation of her position as a woman. Although the sympathetic writers of the article attempted to highlight this woman's compliance with dominant feminine norms of motherhood by highlighting her inclination to care for her husband and children, the aggressors clearly sought to undermine it. The image of her "cast down with her face to the floor" and flogged repeatedly while naked certainly denoted an experience that most British believed no decent woman should ever have to undergo. As she was then tied and left, presumably still naked, outside the symbolic origin of the rebellion, Paul Bogle's chapel, the soldiers "sheltered themselves inside" and left her exposed and unprotected. Given the growing Victorian message that women, docile and fragile creatures, had to be protected at all costs, the treatment of this woman, flogged, exposed, and hanged in sight of her male aggressors, set her outside the realm of acceptable femininity. Thus the torturous ordeal that this wife and mother underwent signifies the necessary process of othering that underscored the rebellion's suppression and supports Foucault's notion that violence against the body served as one of the most effective methods of domination. In the case of the Morant Bay rebellion the

[207] Ibid, 710.

act of flogging played an important role in the subjugation of the black women in St. Thomas-in-the-East.

Diana Paton argues that by the nineteenth century, the practice of flogging women had been discouraged in colonial policy and outlawed in places like Jamaica. In Jamaica, Paton contends that the argument behind such a move was to restore "proper" gender norms in a post-slavery society. She claimed that proponents of the ban on female flogging hoped that it would "strengthen slaves' sense of gender difference, 'raising' slaves 'generally" and instill a "feminine 'sense of shame' [which] was a common theme in both abolitionist and official discussions of the punishment of women."[208] If this truly served as the solution to restoring gender norms in Jamaican society after slavery, then it seems clear that the frequent floggings of women in the rebellion's aftermath served to reverse such gender norms. Essentially, the rampant flogging of black women during the suppression must have signified to those committing the acts that they were not truly female.

At its core, flogging presented an inherent challenge to feminine norms and ultimately contradicted the notions of the British civilizing mission. Primarily the practice is harsh, physical, and often includes an unavoidable display of flesh. Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao avow that "the spectacular problems of men victimized by the lash emerged with doubled force when the victims were women, since any practice that brutalized men was even worse when its victims were delicate women."[209] This concern with female delicacy appeared frequently in much of the press that decried Eyre's actions

[208] Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, 7.
[209] Pierce and Rao, *Discipline and the Other Body*, 199.

in Jamaica. In one editorial in the *Reynolds's Newspaper*, the author challenges his male and female readers in Britain to honor their own gender roles in rejecting the abhorrent flogging of black women in Jamaica. The writer declares "if there is a man in the United Kingdom that attempts to justify such a beastly and barbarous procedure as that here described in a Jamaica paper, we unhesitatingly pronounce him a contemptible coward and a fellow beneath the level of a cur…. No extremity can justify such a punishment being inflicted upon the weaker sex. Only cowards would sanction its infliction."[210] The writer continues to say that the English officers who allowed such an abomination to occur could not truly be called "men," suggesting that their masculinity was directly related to their protection of women. Where the British soldiers in Jamaica undoubtedly found ways to diminish the feminine qualities of the women they punished, the British press that sought to convict Eyre for his actions inherently sought to enhance these feminine qualities.

For many who abhorred the notion of female flogging, the idea that the delicacy of the female victim was compromised also related to the anxiety that surrounded the indecent display of these black bodies during the act. As Steven Pierce and Anupama Rao describe it, "with women the spectacle itself became problematic, as a flogging uncovered flesh that the demands of modesty required to remain concealed. Either a woman's back had to be uncovered for the whipping or her wrapper might be dislodged under the whip's onslaught."[211] In practice, the stories of black women being flogged often emphasized their nakedness. These incidents told of women who were "flogged on

[210] "Have Englishmen Become Women-Floggers" *Reynolds's Newspapers* (London, England), January 21, 1866
[211] Pierce and Rao, *Discipline and the Other Body*, 199 – 200.

her bare person" or described crimes in which "the shooting and flogging of naked women" must be addressed.[212] One article in the *Daily News* in London announced:

> The English public are entitled to know something more about this flogging of women to enable them fully to comprehend the enormity of the transaction. It must, therefore, be understood that flogging women in Jamaica means flogging naked women. Men are flogged on their bare backs and shoulders. It is otherwise with women – they are flogged, according to Jamaica fashion, on their naked posteriors. However shocking this may be to mention, it is not the less necessary that the fact should be known. The person of a woman flogged is publicly and indecently exposed in shameful nakedness… I am altogether at a loss to conceive that, under any possible circumstances of insurrection or warfare, it could be necessary to resort to this abominable and ferocious punishment of women…The subject is quite unfit for a woman to think of, but it is absolutely necessary for the ends of justice, and a due regard for outraged humanity, that these things should be known to the women of England.[213]

This excerpt from the *Daily News*, clearly seeking to gain support for "the ends of justice," emphasized the indecent nature of female flogging and the outcry that it should elicit in response. Indeed, for these writers, the "enormity of the transaction" did not rest with the sheer brutality of the action or the harsh, unwanted torture it implied, but rather the indecent exposure that it entailed. It seems clear that such an objection spoke not just to the "shameful nakedness" to which the woman was subjected, but also the impact that such immodesty may have on the men who witnessed such a spectacle. Additionally, during slavery when female flogging became a central issue in the abolitionist fight, Henrice Altink claims that abolitionists argued the exposed slave woman's body

[212] "Have Englishmen Become Women-Floggers," *Reynolds's Newspapers* (London, England) January 21, 1866; "The Illegality of Governor Eyre's Atrocities," *Reynolds's Newspapers* (London, England) Sun. Jan. 21, 1866.
[213] "The Flogging of Women", *Daily News* (London, England), Saturday, January 6, 1866.

"prevented her from attaining the level of 'purity'."[214] By raising this traditional abolitionist theme, the writer of this passage from the *Daily News* hoped to shame its reading public, specifically "the women of England," to decrying the actions committed against the women in Jamaica through an understanding that it was their nakedness, an unacceptable form of humiliation, that ultimately stripped these female victims of their humanity.

Throughout the aftermath of the rebellion, the tendency for the officers, soldiers, and volunteers to dehumanize the suspected rebels in St. Thomas-in-the-East came in many forms that often involved central act of flogging. Although presumably not sanctioned by commanding officers, Gad Heuman reports that many flogging victims faced additional punishments after their lashes. Heuman writes that "after having been whipped, prisoners had to run a gauntlet of soldiers armed with stones or sticks. As the prisoners ran through the line of soldiers, they were stoned and often clubbed. To make matters worse, the sentry at the end of the line sometimes beat the prisoners with the butt end of their rifles."[215] While these incidents may have been limited to male prisoners, the brutal acts against women in other context suggest that they too may have been subject to such maltreatment. A black woman named Peggy White, for example, was required to commit two months of forced labor as part of her punishment.[216] The physical punishments that these women endured further removed them from the accepted norms of femininity and therefore displaced them into a netherworld of their distinct otherness.

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[214] Henrice Altink, "'An Outrage on all Decency': Abolitionist Reactions to Flogging Jamaican Slave Women, 1780 - 1834," *Slavery & Abolition*, 23, no. 2, (2002), 110.
[215] Heuman, *The Killing Time*, 138.
[216] PP, 1866 [3683-I] Jamaica. Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission, 1866. Part I. Report, 528.

While brutal physical punishments belittled these punished women in ways unseen since the years of slavery, the men leading the rebellion's aftermath also sought to inflict other forms of humiliation on their victims as a means to restore order. One black woman, Elizabeth M'Intosh, reported that she was punished for speaking inappropriately to Miss Fowles, presumably a woman to whom Elizabeth M'Intosh should have shown greater respect, on the first day of the rebellion. Because of her alleged insult, Elizabeth M'Intosh reported that the constables had her bound, stripped, and shaved on her head before they, according to M'Intosh, "put a piece of string round my head, and stuck fowls feathers in it, all round… they mix up a pudding with some lime, and some fat, and put it on my head."[217] In this condition, the soldiers brought her to Miss Fowles "to beg her pardon" for her insolence. Elizabeth M'Intosh's humiliation presumably served to reassert the proper order between these two women. Her words alone could not grant forgiveness nor could they restore the balance that her apparent actions disrupted; rather, the visible degradation of her body became the ostensible penance for her acts. Instructively, it was the male officers, noted as "Mr. Laseelles and Captain Field, and Mr. Hobbs," who felt compelled to restore the proper balance in the world of these women. They demanded that Elizabeth M'Intosh seek forgiveness from Miss Fowles by eliminating any vestige of her femininity and human dignity: bound (a reminder of her social enslavement), stripped (removing the markers of feminine decency), shaved (erasing the traditional symbol of a woman's beauty), and grotesquely crowned (a mockery of the autonomy claimed through her supposed insolence). In this state she

[217] Ibid, 939.

asked forgiveness and, through the authority of the men guiding her actions, seemingly restored the balance of power.

Whether by characterizing women as mothers or she-devils, performing physical tortures or visible humiliation, or simply employing petty insults such as those against Paul Bogle's wife, who was described as "a wrinkled yellow face, a half decrepit piece of humanity," the bodies of black female victims were treated in such a way that attacked their identities as women and as human beings.[218] Ultimately, it was through the brutal subjugation, manipulation, or denigration of these female bodies that order was to be restored in St. Thomas-in-the-East. In Britain, the portrayal of these women's punishments fit within the notions of womanhood that existed in Victorian society. As black women, they became tools to further political causes and support ideals of womanhood at that time. In Jamaica, the brutal reprisal against these women expressed a visceral desire to maintain order through gendered notions of masculine authority. Thus the treatment of the women who suffered at the hands of the men charged with suppressing the Morant Bay rebellion represented a particularly gendered response to affirm the island's male dominant power structures.

Race

In Jamaica, the system of power that threatened to unravel if the rebellion progressed emanated from the slave system upon which Jamaican society was built. Consequently, race endured as a fundamental framework to understand how power and punishment was understood at the time. According to Ronald Hyam, even W.E. Foster,

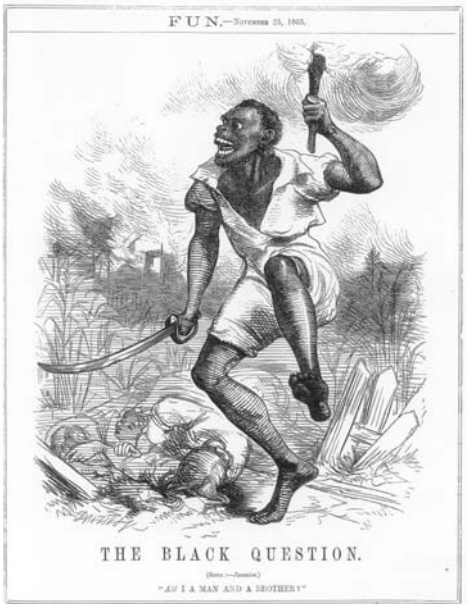
[218] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 7th, 1865

the Under Secretary of State, declared that the brutal excesses of the rebellion's aftermath occurred because "British officers were not free from racial feeling, contempt for inferior blacks."[219] In Jamaica, these officers answered to the minority white population and some of their colored allies

who felt most threatened when news of the rebellion occurred.[220] Their power had been built on the subjugation of black bodies first through enslavement, then through legal measures that attempted to control their former slaves in similar ways. For this constituency in Jamaican society, the rebellion served as an opportunity to affirm the racial dominance they experienced during slavery, the time of their greatest supremacy. The insecurities that had arisen from the economic downturn, the growing impotence of the island's legislature, and the recognition of their own weakness against a population that dramatically outnumbered them, all added to their fear of what this rebellion could do to their authority. In this context, the appearance of a racial uprising heightened anxieties which justified the most severe retribution against the black inhabitants who threatened their power.

According to Denis Judd, Jamaica's white population inherited "a powerful and abiding fear of black insurrection" as a legacy of slavery.[221] In Judd's analysis, the Morant Bay rebellion "was the fulfillment of the most horrifying, terrible and, in a strange way, predictable of white fantasies… and the methods used to crush it formed part of an almost respectable tradition of panicky European reaction followed by the

[219] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 153 – 154.
[220] PP, 1864 [3304] The reports made for the year 1862 to the Secretary of State having the Department of the Colonies, 6.
[221] Judd, *Empire*, 89.



Images 6 & 7: In November 1865, *Punch* published image on the right, "The Black Question," as a parody of the famous seal of the eighteenth century Society of the Abolition of Slavery. The eighteenth century abolitionist caption, "AM I NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER?" was rewritten as "*AM* I A MAN AND A BROTHER?" in the nineteenth century.

violent reassertion of white control."[222] This desire to reassert white control came from the fear of a black takeover and losing power in a post-slavery society. Ronald Hyam quotes historian J.A. Froude saying that with the end of slavery, "The forced equality of the races before the law made more difficult the growth of any kindly feeling…the law refusing to recognise a difference, the social line was drawn the harder'."[223] Hyam adds that this in turn increased "the apprehensions of the white oligarchies" and thus forced these white power structures to affirm their authority through force.[224] Julie Evans also states that "fear played a major role in determining the specific nature of the correlation between race, resistance and repression that unfolded around events at Morant Bay."[225]

[222] Ibid, 90.
[223] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 155.
[224] Ibid.
[225] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 140.

The prospect of this rebellion, then, was not simply a potential overthrow of the political structure, but an attack on the understandings of racial dominance that stemmed from Jamaica's history of slavery. As such, the rebels who had acted in response to conventional political and economic grievances did so within an environment that used race to interpret any attempted disruption or threat. Within this contest, the racial legacies of slavery added to the fears that played an instrumental role in shaping the brutal repression that followed.

The evidence of this fear appears clearly in the publications of the time. On the island, the press, controlled by the mostly white governing bodies, articulated these fears through their support of the harsh actions against the rebels. In one article on December 27th 1865, the conservative *Morning Journal* defended the Governor's actions, already under attack in Britain, stating that he operated "on good grounds that the colony might be wrested from his grasp by insurrection" and thus ordered his officers "to prevent at any cost the massacre of the whole white population … even at the cost of some innocent lives."[226] This notion that innocent (black) lives were worth the cost of saving the island and its white inhabitants signified the dehumanization that was necessary to commit such atrocities against the black population on the island. What was paramount, as this quotation suggests, was the preservation of white power. The justification for the violence that characterized the rebellion's aftermath stemmed from the belief, and a popular fear of white settler populations, that the true goal of the uprising was the wholesale slaughter of white people and the reappropriation of their land for black use. In truth, scholars today, and Eyre's opponents at the time, rejected claims of such motives.

[226] *Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), December 27th, 1865.

One paper published in Chester, England argued that they could "find nothing to suggest the idea of a general insurrection, except the distorted imagination of those whose judgment had been warped by fear and thirst of vengeance."[227] Nevertheless, the writings published in the conservative papers in Jamaica demonstrate that this fear of a Haiti-like takeover galvanized the white population to defend their power in a most physical and convincing way.

Within days of the outbreak *The Morning Journal* warned "the outrages committed by them in St. Thomas in the East, was the massacre of all who are in authority. The design was to emulate the deeds that have been done in Haiti, to kill off all the white and coloured inhabitants and then make themselves masters of all property in the country."[228] Similarly, another Jamaican paper, *The Falmouth Post*, reported that the rebels "have been scheming and plotting for the overthrow of legitimate government and for the creation of a government of terror like that of the monster Souloque, in the once-important, but now ruined colony of Saint Domingo."[229] As these excerpts indicate, the whites in Jamaica saw this event not as a cry to address failing political and economic grievances, but rather as a race war: black against white. In Eyre's writings he repeatedly underscored the racial fears of the whites who ruled in Jamaica or had a vested interest in the maintenance of white rule. He likened the actions of the black agitators to "a reign of terror" that threatened to destroy the rule of law in the island at the expense of any who

[227] "Riot and Massacre in Jamaica", *Cheshire Observer and Chester, Birkenhead, Crewe and North Wales Times* (Chester, England), November 25, 1865
[228] *Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), October 16th, 1865.
[229] *Falmouth Post and Jamaica General Advertizer*, Falmouth, JA, Tuesday October 30th, 1865

stood in their way.[230] Eyre proposed that the black rebels, even those who could be mistaken as respectable elements of their race, "had a feeling of confidence in each other and in their unity, under their war cry of 'colour for colour'." [231] Thus, by Eyre's assessment, the blacks seemed to possess a profound loyalty to their race and an inclination towards brutality. Eyre quotes the alleged words of David Fuller, "a yellow-skin black man," who claimed that the black population on the island had no need for white overlords anymore as they could "read and write now and manage the estates, they would cut the canes and make sugar themselves, and get what they wanted by ships from England."[232] Cries to cut "the throats of all whites," that "white inhabitants must be destroyed," and promises that blacks would "lay every white man on the ground" all emphasize the inherently racial character that Eyre and others attached to this event.[233]

Scholars agree that race was central in understanding the rebellion and the power dynamics that undergirded the actions of the soldiers that suppressed it so harshly. In England, the mid-nineteenth century brought about important transformations in understandings of race and the language of racial difference throughout the empire. Catherine Hall avers that the 1850s heralded an important shift when "a more racist discourse became increasingly legitimate."[234] Ronald Hyam argues that the change in racial attitudes between the 1850s and 1860s was profound and lasting. He claims, "It seldom occurred to early Victorians that human characteristics might be the result of inherited rather than environmental influences. If there was inferiority it might easily be

[230] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 2.
[231] Ibid, 6.
[232] Ibid
[233] Ibid, 16.
[234] Hall, "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige," 182.

removed. Not until the 1860s did the sympathetic and optimistic fundamental belief in the equality and perfectibility of mankind disappear."[235] According to Hyam, this change came through the emergence of scientific writings that argued racial differences were biologically immutable, the popular anthropological categorization of the world, and even the "increasing popularity in the 1850s and 1860s of 'black-and-white minstrel shows'."[236] These developments all helped to support the belief that non-white peoples constituted "lesser breeds" of humanity whose inferiority came at birth and could not be changed.

One individual in particular seemed to guide the changing attitudes of race, particularly in Britain and its colonies in the Caribbean, Thomas Carlyle, an author and political actor heavily involved in the Eyre Controversy. One of Carlyle's most influential works on the discourse surrounding black people, was "Discourses on the Nigger Question," published first in 1849. In his essay, Carlyle sardonically characterizes his vision of blacks in the post-emancipation West Indies. He offers that freedom for blacks amounted to them "Sitting yonder with their beautiful muzzles up to the ears in pumpkins, imbibing sweet pulps and juices; the grinder and incisor teeth ready for ever new work, and the pumpkins cheap as grass in those rich climates: while the sugar-crops rot round them uncut, because labour cannot be hired."[237] Such an openly derogatory view of black people characterized them as lazy, incompetent, useless specimens of

[235] Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century*, 76.
[236] Ibid, 155.
[237] "The Nigger Question" in *The Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Thomas Carlyle, ed. (London: Robson and Sons, 1864), 3.

humanity. As a result, this language describing black people, particularly in the Caribbean, drastically changed their image in British thought.[238]

In Carlyle's writings we see the language that helped to frame the dilemmas facing British colonies in the West Indies, and his vitriolic attack on the blacks there undoubtedly helped to guide, or at least subsequently justify, the inhumane actions against that black population. According to Catherine Hall, Carlyle argued that Governor Eyre's actions "had maintained the real and natural laws against the lawlessness of the black rebels."[239] Carlyle saw the atrocities committed against Jamaica's black population as a necessary, and perhaps worthy, cost to maintain the racial and political hierarchy of the island. In a letter, Carlyle wrote "If Eyre had shot the whole Nigger population and flung them into the sea, would it probably not have been much harm to them, not to speak of us."[240] This vocal disregard for the lives of the black inhabitants in Jamaica highlighted one of the central divisions in the discourse surrounding the Jamaica Affair as well as the shift in racial attitudes at this time. Catherine Hall summarizes that while individuals like John Stuart Mill and his cohort in the Jamaica Committee argued that "negroes belonged to the same human family as the whites," Carlyle and his supporters claimed "whites and negroes were not the same species."[241]

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[238] Catherine Hall offers a useful analysis of the combined role of gender and race in Carlyle's writings. She argues that "Carlyle's hostility to black men, who he claimed he did not hate, was linked to his feminization of them. They were not real men" (179). She adds that his writings emphasized "an underlying fear of black sexuality and its power…Women should know their place and not attempt to step out of it. A man must be lord in his house just as he should be the master of his servant" (180). Thus, Catherine Hall illustrates the important mixture of race, gender and sexuality in understanding the complexities of British discourse of the nineteenth century.
[239] Ibid, 190.
[240] Quoted from Jane Welsh Carlyle, Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, ed. James Anthony Froude (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883), 381. (Ibid, 191).
[241] Ibid, 189.

Catherine Hall argues that Carlyle's Discourse was "an extremely significant moment in the movement of public opinion away from anti-slavery as the respectable orthodoxy and towards more overt forms of racism."[242] Thomas Holt claims that Carlyle's "extreme rhetoric shifted the terms for *public* discourse on race and public policy," marking the decline of the paternalistically benevolent abolitionist tone that characterized Britain in the early part of the century for a more hostile, dominating racial framework by the time of the Morant Bay Rebellion.[243] This belief in a biologically immutable division along racial lines also reached Jamaica and pervaded the language surrounding the rebellion. In the months after the rebellion, for example, the Jamaican *Morning Journal* reprinted an article from one of England's leading conservative newspapers, *The Morning Post*, which claimed "We have done all that could be done for the negroes in our colonies; we cannot change and raise their nature from Africans to Englishmen, and as Africans we must deal with them."[244] The article continues: "The cause is inherent in the nature of things, and consists in the fact that whites are the more intelligent race of the two, and therefore the prizes of life fall to their share …. whatever laws the negroes might make for themselves, there is little doubt – judging from their recent conduct – that the first law they would make, had they the power would be one for the extermination of the white man and the appropriate of his property."[245] Here, the writer of this article not only affirms the belief that blacks, or "Africans," could not be changed but also uses the recent rebellion in Jamaica as evidence that if given the

[242] Ibid, 182.
[243] Holt, *Problem of Freedom*, 283.
[244] *Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), December 22nd, 1865.
[245] Ibid.

opportunity, blacks would call for "the extermination of the white man and the appropriate of his property." This logic therefore assumes that blacks intrinsically sought to exterminate white people and take their property; they could not be reformed of this inclination, nor could they be expected to grow out of it through any means of civilization. In this respect, they were believed incapable of grasping respectable notions of civilization, and therefore had to be forced into submission. Such a belief held that where their minds could not be enhanced, their bodies could be tamed. This powerful narrative of the black race certainly shaped the feelings towards the black rebels who rose up in Morant Bay and, for those who supported Governor Eyre, justified his actions against them.

By 1865, the image of Africans, their descendants, and of most of the non-white populace under colonial rule had transformed significantly in the course of one generation. Such a profound change, according to Denis Judd, "helps to explain the ferocity and intemperance of the white reaction to the so-called Jamaica Rebellion of 1865."[246] The growing acceptance of "harsh racial attitudes" not only helped to produce a "new contempt for blacks in colonial lands," as K. Theodore Hoppen argues, but also

[246] Judd, *Empire*, 88; Judd explained this change during the twenty-five years prior to the rebellion saying "Between 1840 and the Jamaica Rebellion of 1865, however, there was a significant shift in perception. Or, at least, racist views gained currency and popularity. One of the main reasons for this was that, in various ways, indigenous people as well as emancipated slaves were causing trouble. In New Zealand the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 had predictably not established a lasting peace between the Maoris and land-hungry British settlers, and in 1860 a decade of serious conflict, known by contemporaries as the Maori Wars, had begun; there had been a lengthy sequence of violent frontier clashes over territory and cattle in Cape Colony, conveniently dismissed as 'the Kaffir Wars'; finally, there had been the bloody and embarrassing Indian uprising of 1857 to 1858. Each of these confrontations had thrown down a threatening challenge to white supremacy and had, in the process, given full rein to destructive European fantasies. Within a few decades, the comfortable and homely image of dependable, hard-working 'black Sambo', and of the highly disciplined, selfsacrificing Indian sepoy, was unceremoniously ditched." (Ibid, 86.)

confirmed the apparent insurmountable divergence between races.[247] Catherine Hall explains this trend, saying that by the 1850s and 1860s "The assumption that black men and women were part of the same universal family as white people, an assumption that many did not share but few would openly debate in the high moment of abolitionism, no longer held a position of hegemonic power."[248] Such a potent change in the image of black people undoubtedly helped the aggressors during the rebellion's suppression justify their actions. Blacks, they could suppose, were not fully human. Their lives did not carry the same value as whites, they could argue. And their bodies, they believed, offered the most basic and fundamental site for marking their inhumanity in profound ways.

Governor Eyre's views about race and the image he held of black people mirrored the changes that took place in British society during that time. Julie Evans argues that throughout his career, Eyre shifted his understandings of race based on the context in which he operated. During his expeditions in Australia (1833 – 1845) and as lieutenant-governor of New Zealand (1846 – 1853), Eyre was remembered as a champion of aboriginal rights and spoke of class as the primary category impacting the people of these lands. By the time he reached Jamaica in the 1860s, however, Julie Evans argues that "the interaction between race, resistance and repression intensified as he gradually began to speak of freedpeople less as an emergent peasant *class*, with the potential for full civil rights, and more in terms of a Negro *race*, who caused and deserved their poverty and

[247] K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 225.
[248] Catherine Hall, "The Nation within and without" in *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867*, Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, Jane Rendall, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 197.

distress."[249] The belief that Jamaica's black population constituted "a *race* of people whose allegedly innate inferiority rendered them susceptible to repression" reflected the shift in racial attitudes taking place in Britain as well.[250] For Eyre, this belief in the inferiority of his black Jamaican subjects reflected a racial discourse that justified his overbearing use of power against them. Since this group of rebels could not be reformed, they must be forcibly put down and their suppression must serve as a lesson for all who would seek to question British authority in the island.

By the time the rebellion occurred in October 1865, Edward Eyre had fully adopted the language of inflexible racial difference that came to dominate Britain by the late nineteenth century. In his letter to Edward Cardwell in January 1866, Governor Eyre argued that "the negroes from a low state of civilization and being under the influence of superstitious feelings could not properly be dealt with in the same manner as might the peasantry of a European country" and therefore required actions deserving of their primitive position.[251] Additionally, Eyre's presupposition that "as a race the negroes are most excitable and impulsive," led him to argue that the very nature of the black and colored population in Jamaica caused them to rebellion and violence.[252] Eyre explains that "such is the want of moral stamina in negro character, that had the tide of rebellion flowed in his neighbourhood, he must inevitably gone with the stream, although in his heart cursing the seditious movement."[253] This racist rationalization of his actions

[249] Evans, *Edward Eyre*, 97.
[250] Ibid, 101.
[251] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 1.
[252] Ibid, 1.
[253] Ibid, 7.

certainly mirrored the dominant images of black people at this time.[254] Eyre's language reflected an image of the black man, as uncontrollable and childlike in his faculties. He was unable to resist the call for rebellion and therefore had to be forced to submit to what he knew to be a "seditious movement." In this respect, his heart and mind could only be controlled by the physical dominance of his body. This framework was by no means new for it epitomized much of the paternalistic language of slavery and colonialism within the British Empire. Particularly in the context of Jamaica's post-emancipation society, the language that described the character of black people and the punishment necessary to control them stressed a turn towards harsher, dehumanized understandings of black people.

Perhaps the most salient characterization of blacks in the nineteenth century, particularly in colonial societies predicated on racial dominance, was the image of the "black savage." In Jamaica, the elites quickly connected the actions of the rebels in St. Thomas-in-the-East with tropes of black savagery that prevailed in much of the discourse of the time. In an article on October 16th, 1865, *The Morning Journal* proclaimed that the rebels:

[254] Thomas C. Holt uses many of these excerpts in characterizing Eyre's own defense of his action. Holt argues "His was essentially a racist defense: the defective moral character of black people required strong measures because the rebels intended "to exterminate the white and coloured classes, and obtain possession of the country for themselves." He recognized that this might seem "wild and visionary" to Englishmen, but the foreboding example of Haiti and the fact that Haitians were in Kingston "living in wealth and idleness" made it credible to Jamaicans. The brutality of the suppression was necessitated by the fact that "the negroes from a low state of civilization and being under the influence of superstitious feelings could not properly be dealt with in the same manner as might the peasantry of a European country." Punishment needed to be "prompt, certain, and severe." Effective suppression as necessary because "as a race the negroes are most excitable and impulsive, and any seditious or rebellious action as sure to be taken up and extended among the large majority of those with whom it came in contact." (Holt, *Problem of Freedom,* 305)

> have shown themselves capable of atrocities which the most untutoured savages could not out do. They have shown themselves capable of wholesale cold-blooded murder – murder, in that form, too, committed only by the most irreclaimable savages. Disemboweling and decapitating unarmed men, mackling and trampling upon their dead bodies, are acts which never could have been expected of people who have been brought within the pale of Christian teaching. Our confidence in their loyalty and humanity has been altogether shaken.[255]

Like *The Morning Journal*, other papers in Jamaica and Britain repeatedly used language such as this to describe the individuals who rose up on the island. One paper blamed "the savage miscreants by whom atrocious murders were committed" and another cited that the actions of the rebels demonstrated that they had "almost gone back to their savage state."[256] Not surprisingly, Eyre's descriptions of the rebels also spoke of their savagery and their distance from the indicators of civilization that would warrant their treatment as human beings. He asked "Can it be wondered at that an ignorant, uncivilized, and grossly superstitious people, knowing the isolated and unprotected condition of the few families scattered amongst them, should be tempted to rebel or should imagine that they could obtain possession of the country for themselves?"[257] Although contradictory (these rebels are ignorant and uncivilized yet enlightened enough to allegedly demand their own sovereignty) this image of blacks as savage, uncivilized, debased members of Jamaican society laid the foundation for, and the argument in defense of, the brutal punishments that they faced.

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[255] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), October 16th, 1865.
[256] *The Falmouth Post and Jamaica General Advertizer* (Microfilm – Serial 3492), Falmouth, JA, Tuesday October 30th, 1865; "The Insurrection in Jamaica," *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Thursday, November 16, 1865
[257] PP, 1866 [3682] Jamaica disturbances. Papers laid before the Royal Commission of Inquiry by Governor, 18 – 19.

Inherent in the image of the black race as savage, primitive members of humanity was also the sexual undertone that often buttressed this image. Diana Paton argues that throughout Jamaica's history this notion of blacks as uncivilized savages driven by primordial drives of sexual desire tied directly to the widespread use of corporal punishment against them. She argues that "This dehumanizing racism fit easily with the idea that African Jamaicans were especially prone to crimes against the sexual order. The ability to control one's sexual urges was assumed to be a mark of high level of civilization. Thus, Jamaican men's apparent failure to control their 'passions' demonstrated that their bodies were not properly subject to control by their minds and therefore that punishment should be addressed to the body rather than the mind."[258] In the case of the Morant Bay Rebellion, it is clear that many imagined that the rebels, seemingly unleashed from the bounds of civilization with their uprising, were likely to commit sexual crimes, particularly against white women. *The Pall Mall Gazette* in London reported that news reached England of the "atrocities perpetrated on the white inhabitants of Jamaica by the negroes, of plantations destroyed, and of white women carried away by black monsters in human shape."[259] Although the author of this article believed that such stories represented the lies perpetrated by Governor Eyre as a justification of his actions, there were many accounts that reiterated this popular trope of the threat of black men against white women. It affirms Ronald Hyam's assessment that such "sexual worries are 'the ultimate basis of racial antagonism'."[260] In the course of the

[258] Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, 142.
[259] *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Monday, November 27, 1865.
[260] Ronald Hyam, *Empire and sexuality: The British Experience* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 204.

rebellion's suppression, however, it was clear that the punishments the British soldiers enforced were undoubtedly racialized, gendered, and sexualized manifestations of the feelings of fear and animosity towards the black people of the island.

The punishments authorized by Governor Eyre during the rebellion's aftermath serve as examples of how racist attitudes were reified through explicit acts against the bodies of black men and women. Flogging, for example, stood as a unique form of punishment that physically subdued the power of the victim under that of the punisher. Although this act was not unique to the Morant Bay rebellion, its legacy from Jamaica's history as a slave society tied it to a unique conception of racial power in society. Slavery instituted a legacy of physical punishment as the primary means of solidifying state authority. Of those punishments, the act of flogging was paramount. Diana Paton's study of crime and punishment in eighteenth century Jamaica highlights this fact and distinguishes the legacy of flogging (and other forms of corporal punishment) in slave societies like Jamaica from those in England. In Jamaica, Diana Paton argues that the number of lashes, the public understanding of its administration, and the underlying purpose of the punishment distinguished the practice as uniquely distinct from that which appeared in English society. To the first point, Paton argues that in England during the eighteenth century, the number of lashes ordered in civil society (not in the military) ranged primarily "from two to twelve lashes or sentences of whipping 'until the blood comes'."[261] In Jamaica, Paton claims that the number of lashes averaged around seventy-

[261] Diana Paton, "Punishment, Crime, and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *Journal of Social History*, 34, no. 4 (Summer, 2001), 938.

six and ranged from nine to three hundred.[262] Secondly, Paton claims that in both England and Jamaica, "flogging was considered disgraceful."[263] In Jamaica, however, flogging became associated with slaves and the overwhelming physical mutilation of enslaved bodies attached important societal meanings to the practice. Finally, flogging emerged as a distinct form of punishment in Jamaica because of its underlying purpose as a form of intimidation and a testimony of state power. In England, floggings were part of a tradition of public corporal punishments designed to reaffirm "the moral boundaries of society" through shame and active communal participation.[264] Diana Paton argues that "While in European punishments of display the watching crowd was supposed to be both participating in the infliction of and being intimidated by the punishment, for watching slaves the expectation was that punishment served purely as intimidation."[265] Furthermore, Paton avers that since slaves were outside the bounds of the community they could not accept the state's power being displayed but rather could only fear it. While floggings were most often public, slaves were forced to watch and not participate; as a result, such practices "were less about gaining assent to the power of the state than they were about emphasizing the extent of that power."[266] Taken together, these three distinct qualities of the practice of flogging in Jamaica made its use in this context inseparable from the institution of racial slavery that informed its practice. Being only one generation removed from the institution of slavery and these understandings, it seems

[262] Ibid, 937.
[263] Ibid, 938.
[264] Ibid, 944.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid.

clear that the individuals who participated in such acts understood the intrinsic racial and hegemonic practice of flogging in this society.

For many reasons, the practice of flogging represented a particular "spectacle of suffering" that served as a "manifestation of authority" throughout history.[267] In the context of Jamaica, the racialized legacy of corporal punishment stood as a testament to the power of the state. Through the repression of the Morant Bay rebellion, floggings became a permanent reminder of the state's power and the consequences of rebelling against it. The act itself left permanent scars marking the experience of subjugation and branded the victim for life. Normally, it was a punishment relegated to heinous crimes or for particularly base segments of human society whose very nature demanded such harsh discipline. In the case of the black rebels who rose up, their crime indicated a severe treachery against the state as well as the white power structure that it represented for many of the freed people who participated in the events. Diana Paton asserts that Jamaica's post-emancipation discussions regarding the use of corporal punishment and specifically the act of flogging demonstrates "harshly racist language about the nature of the people who would be subjected to the punishment…. that crimes [that deserved flogging] were confined to one class of the community, who are the most base and barbarous of savage race; and indeed the very outpourings of the refuse of even 'African humanity'."[268] In this vein, the examples of torture that surfaced after the rebellion seemed to prove that punishments were indeed destined for "the most base and barbarous

[267] Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the evolution of repression: From a preindustrial metropolis to the European experience*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 202.
[268] Paton, *No Bond but the Law*, 141.

of savage race," whose rebelliousness had to be repaid with brutal and uncompromising force.

Conclusion

On November 18th, 1865, Jamaica's *Morning Journal* reported "The rebellion has been quelled, martial law has ceased, and her Majesty's subjects in this island are enabled once more to breathe freely."[269] This welcomed respite came after more than a month of some of the gravest brutalities against Jamaica's freed population. As Thomas Holt indicates, "people were flogged with whips made of twisted, knotted wires, and scores were shot or hung after drumhead court-martials. Commanders were quite explicit about the objective of official violence: they intended to instill terror."[270] At its heart, the rebellion stemmed from the desire of ex-slaves to get the rights their emancipation promised. What these freed people received instead, however, was a declaration of white, male, British power through the callous subjugation of the bodies of black men and women who attempted to claim their sovereignty. The British response, represented by Governor Edward Eyre, mirrored a pattern of colonial governance that would continue throughout the Victorian Era: one particularly suited for "lesser races." This practice of empire supported by Greg Kennedy's argument that "the British extracted obedience by trading on their reputation for invincibility ….. where their rule was threatened by serious revolt, they could act ruthlessly to reassert their domination. The idea that swift and decisive military action was the only practical response to outright rebellion was

[269] *The Morning Journal*, Kingston, JA, November 18th, 1865.
[270] Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*, 302.

embedded in British colonial thought."[271] Particularly for Britain's non-white subjects, the verdict of innocence that Eyre received after his trial seemed to support the belief that the biological inferiority of black subjects warranted a distinctly physical response to their acts of treasons. As the events of this rebellion underscored, the rebel bodies served as one of the central sites of asserting power and authority over a dissident population.

The impassioned uprising of men and women at the Morant Bay courthouse set in motion a violent chain of reactions that reasserted white male power. In his study of violence in Northern Ireland, Allen Feldman argues that "The very act of violence invests the body with agency. The body, altered by violence, reenacts other altered bodies dispersed in time and space; it also reenacts political discourse and even the movement of history itself."[272] In Jamaica, the initial act of violence by the rebels in Morant Bay announced the agency of the former slaves who sought to claim political and economic rights. That agency, then, threatened the dominant power structures on many levels. For Governor Eyre, these rebels questioned both his personal authority as governor and that of the British government itself. For the white and colored elites on the island, it augured a social and political reality in which the majority black population could seize control for themselves. For the rebellion's male participants and onlookers, the extensive involvement of black women marked a disruption in a staunchly guarded structure of gender dominance that these women dared to contest. Finally, the perception that this rebellion amounted to a race war, true or not, played into the prevalent fear that black subjects sought to kill their white rulers and claim power for themselves. Such a notion

[271] Greg Kennedy, ed. *Imperial Defence, The old world order 1856 – 1956* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 100.
[272] Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 7.

played directly into the hardening racial attitudes of the time and ultimately justified the violent reaction against the bodies whose acts of violence signaled a dangerous claim to power.

The reprisal against the rebels in Morant Bay came as an unquestioned statement of power by the officers, soldiers and volunteers who answered the British governor's call for retribution. The brutal punishments that ensued represented the desire for unquestioned submission from these black subjects. The punishments were designed to intimidate the population and warn onlookers against committing similar acts of treason. As the *Morning Journal* suggested, "the pressing fear of a universal massacre in Jamaica [justified] this attempt to paralyze the vast numerical majority of the population by striking a sudden terror into them."[273] This fear played an important role in justifying and perhaps galvanizing the men who committed such brutal acts in the name of the British crown. Certainly, the events in Jamaica seemed to confirm Michele Foucault's conclusion that "the ceremony of punishment, then, is an exercise of 'terror'."[274] Through acts of humiliation, torturous spectacles of flogging, and the casual execution of over four hundred individuals, the process of intimidation seemed complete and the dominant power structure on the island was preserved.

The most significant political consequence of this rebellion was Jamaica's transformation into a Crown Colony with power placed directly into the hands of the British government. T.O. Lloyd argued that after the rebellion, many saw "the empire's black and brown subjects as natural inferiors -- the mere fact that they had been

[273] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), December 27th, 1865.
[274] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 49.

conquered showed that they were inferior at least in terms of efficient government and military organization."[275] Similarly, Brian Moore and Michelle Johnson claim that this rebellion taught those in the imperial government, white and colored elites in Jamaica, and "even some socially aspiring blacks [that] ex-slaves and their descendants (mainly black) had hardly advanced as civilized beings" and could not be allowed full political rights.[276] Instructively, the *Morning Journal* reported that "by their devilish proceedings in St. Thomas in the East, the negroes have done harm not only to those of their race in Jamaica who have been over a quarter of a century in the enjoyment of freedom, but they will do harm to those who have just been emancipated in America, as well as those who are looking forward to freedom in the Spanish colonies. The blacks in Jamaica have shown themselves unworthy of the privileges they have enjoyed, and none of their race elsewhere will ever be entrusted with like privileges."[277] As this article suggests, the rebellion's validation of black inferiority had profound implications for the treatment of the black population around the world in the nineteenth century and also impacted the discourse surrounding race in the British Empire and beyond. Catherine Hall avers that the rebellion "shattered the missionary dream and marked the moment at which the language of racial difference, always inflected with classed and gendered meanings was powerfully re-articulated in Britain. Jamaican black people were no longer 'domesticated Others' who could learn to be 'like us'. Rather they were expelled to the realm of 'absolute other', to be controlled and mastered rather than educated and regulated within

[275] Lloyd, *The British Empire*, 180.
[276] Moore and Johnson, *Neither Led nor Driven*, 3.
[277] *The Morning Journal* (Kingston, JA), November 25th, 1865.

a paternalist regime."[278] In this "realm of 'absolute other'," the memory of the rebels in Morant Bay lived on to inform the understandings of power, race, and gender throughout the British Empire.

[278] Catherine Hall, "Gender Politics and Imperial Politics: Rethinking the Histories of Empire," in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, Shepherd, Verene, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, eds (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 57.

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