"The essence of the contract:" The Articulation of Race, Gender, and Political Economy in British Emancipation Policy, 1838-1866

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> As the question now stands a race has been freed but a society has not been formed.
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> ---Governor Harris of Trinidad, 1848

During the last full year of apprenticeship, Lord Glenelg, Britain's Colonial Secretary, urged the governors of its West Indian colonies to amend all laws left over from the slavery period, taking special note of those that made "innumerable distinctions of the most invidious nature in favor of Europeans and their descendants, and to the prejudice of persons of African birth or origin." Not only should all these be abolished, Glenelg insisted, but all "disguised references" should be struck from colonial laws. Writing in late 1837, Glenelg, a former liberal Tory who had converted to Whiggery, offered a definition of the meaning of freedom that was much more detailed and far-reaching than had been suggested just four years earlier, during discussions of slavery abolition. "The great cardinal principle of the law for the abolition of slavery is, that the apprenticeship of the emancipated slaves is to be immediately succeeded by personal freedom, in that full and unlimited sense of the term in which it is used in reference to the other subjects of the British Crown."[1]

He ordered that the governors and their attorneys general should survey colonial laws and report on them to his office with regard to access to the elective franchise, schools, churches, the militia, and other publicly supported institutions. They should note any restraints on such occupations

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[1] Glenelg to Governors of the West India Colonies, 6 Nov. 1837, in "Papers in Explanation of the Measures Adopted For Giving Effect to the Act For the Abolition of Slavery," Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers 1837--38 (154-I), 49:9--11. [Parliamentary Papers cited hereafter as PP.]

as peddler, porter, and boatman. They should study the administration of poor relief, vagrancy laws, the tax system, road maintenance, Crown land sales, and prison discipline. All these should be reviewed to ensure that they did not involve any racial discrimination. This, he pointed out, was "the essence of the contract between Great Britain and the colonies."

Glenelg's tenure as colonial secretary lasted just over a year longer, but his doctrine of civil and political equality continued to inform the policies of his successors until about a decade later. In 1849, Earl Grey, one of Glenelg's successors as colonial secretary, wrote a private and confidential letter to his cousin, Charles, who happened to be governor of Jamaica. In it Grey expressed mounting concern about what political democracy for ex-slaves might portend in managing colonial affairs.

> Looking to the comparative numbers of the black & white inhabitants of Jamaica, & to the absence of any real impediment to the acquisit'n of the elective franchise by the former, it seems impossible to doubt that at no very distant period they must acquire a paramount influence in the legislature [and use their power] with little regard to the interests of the planters or even to justice, & that therefore if the planters were wise they wd. use the authority they now possess, not to break down the power of the Crown but...to strengthen it,...[2]

Grey's letter signaled the beginnings of a dramatic policy shift at the Colonial Office. By mid-century Glenelg's confident embrace of political democracy had given way to mounting anxiety that black political power would in fact be used in black people's political interests. Consequently, from that point forward colonial officials sought ways to blunt the impact of black political participation, first, through changes in Jamaica's governmental structures in 1854, then through what amounted to a poll tax requirement for voting in 1859, and finally by abolishing Jamaican self-government altogether in 1865.

The brief interlude that separates these moments in Jamaican

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[2] Earl Grey to Charles Grey, 16 March 1849, Richard Hart Collection, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.

emancipation--an interlude not dissimilar to the American Reconstruction 30 years later--helps frame the political problem that emancipation posed for the British in particular and in general for societies espousing liberal democratic values.[3] Glenelg's proposal to make, in Frank Tannenbaum's terms, citizens of ex-slaves poses two questions: first, why should equality and personal freedom have been considered "the essence of the contract between Great Britain and the colonies"? And, two, why was that policy so quickly abandoned? Answering the second question is largely determined by the solution of the first, which is in many respects the more puzzling. It is not enough, for example, to say simply that Glenelg's policy was an expression of contemporary idealism. As we have learned from studies of abolitionism, idealism is not temporally transcendent but rooted in social life that is historically specific.[4] Idealism, too, must be historicized.

The idealism of Glenelg's doctrine does not appear to be rooted in the prior antislavery campaign. Although some individual abolitionists may have espoused political democracy for ex-slaves, nothing in the abolitionist campaign as such or in the debates before Parliament suggested that full political rights for blacks would follow as a consequence of emancipation. Indeed, it is more likely that an undemocratic dictation of colonial legislation by the home government (over which abolitionists might have expected to exercise more influence than in the colonies) would have been satisfactory to the abolitionist movement as a whole. In fact, abolitionists raised no noticeable outcry in 1839 when the Colonial Office debated proposals

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[3] Although the British West Indies have been compared unfavorably with the U. S. with respect to political rights of freedmen, we must be careful not to exaggerate the differences by taking the cases out of their respective contexts. After all, universal suffrage for white males was only just beginning to be broached in North America at the time of British emancipation. In many ways their histories are actually comparable from a policy perspective. Cf. Eric Foner, Nothing but Freedom (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1982).

[4] This point has been established most persuasively by David Brion Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

that envisaged elimination of democratic governance in the colonies altogether; nor did they oppose the Crown colony system where it already existed. Indeed, as I will discuss below, some colonial bureaucrats argued that contraction, not expansion, of democracy would better serve their efforts to manage the transition from slavery to free labor.

The colonial policy actually pursued, therefore, was not dictated by abolitionist pressure, nor was it an effort by colonial bureaucrats to checkmate planters by cultivating a competing power bloc in their midst--or at least not consistently so.[5] Although the Colonial Office did not attempt to liberalize the franchise appreciably, neither did it accede to the planter's efforts to restrict it. There were property, salary, or tax prerequisites for voting, but given similar restrictions on the electorate in Britain, even a democratically-minded contemporary would not have thought them unreasonable. Indeed, the main complaint at the time was that the Jamaican franchise was too liberal. The franchise did in fact augur a potential electoral majority of black peasant freeholders; by mid-century its potential would appear real enough to British policymakers that they began scurrying for legal ways to curtail or constrain it.[6]

I will argue that Glenelg's doctrine could become British policy (and apparently without significant opposition) because it articulated with the regnant ideology of liberal democracy and was rooted in the social transformation that produced that ideology. Classical liberalism had served colonial policymakers as an essential guide to the transition from slavery to free labor. Abolitionism and emancipation were in large part the product of

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[5] In Jamaica Governor Sligo, with Glenelg's approval, did encourage colored representatives in the Assembly to organize as an incipient government party, but that policy was embraced reluctantly, pursued inconsistently, and lasted for only a brief time. See Thomas C. Holt, The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), chap. 7.

[6] Ibid.

that ideology, achieved their greatest success at precisely the moment it became hegemonic in Britain's public discourse, politics, and bureaucracy, and faced their severest crisis as that ideology underwent significant revision and retrenchment.[7] Not only was the fate of emancipation closely tied to the fate of liberalism, however; the emancipation experiment exposed many of its central contradictions and thus was part of its retrenchment and reformulation. In other words, the transition from slave to citizen tested the political tenets of liberal democratic thought in much the same manner as the transition from slavery to wage labor tested its economic tenets. In this sense, then, the debates over the political and economic policies appropriate to the newly emancipated societies lay bare issues relevant to other human societies that otherwise might have remained unarticulated.

Politics and Society in Classical Liberal Theory

Classical liberal ideology posited a model of social order in which there were basic and functional divisions between state and civil society, between public and private life.[8] It was a model that allocated human activity among overlapping but different spheres: the administrative and policing activities of the state; the private (in the sense of non-state) activities which governed and reproduced economic and social life; the public

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[7] The general point here has been established beyond cavil by Davis, The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution; Seymour Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

[8] There is an extensive literature on this subject, but I have drawn most heavily on Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. Thomas Burger (reprint of 1962 edition, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), chaps. 1-15; and on the incisive critique of Habermas by Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," in Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 113-43. I am also indebted to C. B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); and idem, Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973).

arena (distinct from both civil society and the state) where democratic, collective rule or norm-making transpired; and finally the intimate sphere of the home, the patriarchal and conjugal family, where emotional life was nurtured. A key innovation in this theory of social relations was that civil society constituted a private sphere, independent of the state, animated by autonomous, individual men rather than feudal estates, and that, in principle, these men each possessed equal access to and control of their persons, resources, and powers. Theoretically each person (though actually each male) possessed equal standing before the law, was capable of accumulating goods and resources in unlimited quantity, and was free therefore to maximize his gains so as to satisfy innate materialist appetites. Given this premise, all relevant social interaction could be modeled on exchange relations, and as such were both self-actuated and self-regulating. In short, individual self-interest, uninhibited by state regulation, was expected to inspire greater effort and productivity, thereby enriching society as a whole. Thus public virtue would be generated out of private vices.

But the notion that a social order could cohere around human greed was not unproblematic, either logically or as a basis for actual social policy.[9] Theoretically at least, the new order of relations in the marketplace had to be linked to a new moral basis for political relations. The state could not just disappear; it had to be reformulated and repositioned. Thus the political counterpart of the competitive, self-regulating economic marketplace was the public sphere, the marketplace of opinion. It was a sphere that was part of but distinct from civil society; within it private, educated, and propertied men exercised influence over both the state (law-making) and civil life (the various systems of exchange--economic and social--between individuals). Moreover, political and economic relations were not simply

[9] See Joyce Appleby, "Ideology and Theory: The Tension between Political and Economic Liberalism in Seventeenth-Century England," AHR 81 (June 1976): 499-513.

complementary, in the sense that both were conceptualized as exchanges between autonomous subjects, they were functionally linked because the privatized economic and the intimate household spheres were both crucial realms for fashioning those individual subjects who would enter the public sphere. The economic/civil realm produced men of property; the household produced reflective men capable of civilized discourse and norm-governed interactions.

This process of man/citizen-making is sketched out by Jürgen Habermas who suggests that it was within "the interiority of the conjugal family" that there developed the subjectivity necessary for men to enter the public sphere as autonomous individuals. "For the experiences about which a public passionately concerned with itself sought agreement and enlightenment through the rational-critical public debate of private persons with one another flowed from the well-spring of a specific subjectivity. The latter had its home, literally, in the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family."[10] To wit, the subjectivity of independent, reflecting men, fashioned in the intimacy of the home, produced the civil "opinions" that were exchanged like goods in this market of critical-rationale argument. Out of such exchanges came a collective "public opinion," a concept emerging in both Britain and on the continent in the late eighteenth century, making it, temporally and instrumentally, precursor to the political revolutions in France and America, to the industrial takeoff in Britain, and to the abolitionist movement."[11] In many respects public opinion was visualized as a regulator in politics, comparable to the role Adam Smith's "invisible hand" played in economic life. The legitimacy and authority of public opinion was dependent, however, on

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[10] Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, pp. 43-51, quote on pp. 43 and 51.

[11] On the timing of the emergence of the public sphere, see ibid., pp. 24-26. Consideration of the timing and impact of this invention of "publicity" would give new meaning to Seymour Drescher's evidence about the timing and character of abolitionist mobilization (see Capitalism and Antislavery, especially chap. 4).

there being a process of open and free exchange, ie., democracy.

But the unstated precondition for this democratic exchange was harmony in the basic purposes and assumptions of the auditors, which could arise in turn only from the compatibility of each subject's relation to the whole. Thus an essential condition for admission to the rule-making public sphere at the outset was that one be an educated man of property (in skills or in land); this would ensured a like commitment to preserving a social order that guaranteed property. Also essential to this liberal discourse was the assumption that such citizens must be the progeny of an intimate sphere, the patriarchal, conjugal family, for it was there that innate desires and ambitions for self-aggrandizement were somehow rendered compatible or, quite literally, domesticated.

In sum, then, the "free" and open exchanges in the public sphere presumed a homogeneity of participants, a mutuality of fundamental interests, and thereby the discussability of differences.[12] Consequently political life (and democratic practice) was ultimately dependent on similarities in the citizens' location in and relation to the social order. In short, while, on the one hand, a democratic political order was required to protect the autonomous private sphere from encroachment by the state or antagonist feudal estates, on the other, systematic exclusions from the decision-making realm (the public sphere) were necessary to protect that same social order from challenges by the dispossessed.[13] Over time, the criteria for admission might be expanded, but the fundamental test or principle remained that the new admittees not threaten the social order.

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[12] In addition, as Fraser points out, it assumed a male subject and a masculine style discourse. "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" pp. 126-27, 129.

[13] In their different ways both Marx and John Stuart Mill recognized this paradox in liberal democracy. See Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, pp. 122-40; and Graeme Duncan, Marx and Mill: Two Views of Social Conflict and Social Harmony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

There was, of course, an apparent contradiction between the self-possession and autonomy implied by economic liberalism and the obviously selective dispossession inherent in the constitution of the political sphere. Every member of a society was not simply eligible for but compelled to participate in the economic exchanges in the civil sphere, but only educated and propertied men were eligible for admission to the public sphere which controlled the norm-making functions of the whole society. This contradiction could be negotiated in two ways: by defining, de jure, a system in which there was equality of opportunity for <u>eventual</u> inclusion; or by redrawing the boundaries of membership so that some persons or groups were defined, defacto, outside the public sphere, that is, by virtue of their deviance from those "natural" or innate human attributes that equipped one to earn eligibility. Historically, of course, boundaries were drawn so as to exclude whole social categories--racial, national, gender, and class--that were deemed "residual" elements of the social order.[14] At the time of emancipation, however, the operative assumption among the relevant elites was that all men were capable of taking advantage of putatively equal opportunities for acquiring the property, education, or skills that would admit them to the public sphere.

This secular faith notwithstanding, the transition from a slave to a free society eventually exposed contradictions in liberal ideology which found expression in the colonial bureaucracy's efforts to formulate emancipation policy. The formation of a free society required first the creation of bourgeois persons, which implied in turn state intrusions into the social sphere of totalitarian dimensions. But the policies actually pursued--

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[14] The "residuum" in England and the Irish Catholics are cases in point. See, respectively, Gareth Stedman Jones, <u>Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society</u> (New York: Pantheon, 1984); and L. Perry Curtis, Jr., <u>Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature</u> (Newton Abbot, England: Davis & Charles, 1971). Interesting contemporary linkages were made between race and class exclusions by London observer Henry Mayhew (see Cheryl Marguerit Cassidy, "Islands and Empires: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Governor Eyre Controversy, 1865-1867," [Ph.D. diss., U of Michigan, 1988], chap. 1).

involving reforms in education, taxation, and labor recruitment--employed indirect rather than direct means to achieve these ends; and, consistent with their ideological presumptions, policymakers undervalued the force of culture and class as factors shaping human desire and social relations. Secondly, there was a blatant contradiction between the notion that workers would imitate the bourgeois private sphere and the planters' demand that they control the labor of whole families. That is, to the extent freed people actually sought to establish the gendered division of labor proposed by bourgeois theory, the labor available to estates would be reduced. Such contradictions undercut British designs for a liberal democratic society. In the end they failed both to remake slaves into a contented proletariat or slaveowners into bourgeois employers. These failures encouraged racist reformulations of the founding liberal doctrine which elided its inherent contradictions. Therefore, in the process of trying to envision and legislate how--in Governor Harris' trenchant phrases--a society might be formed as well as a race freed, British policymakers exposed both the nature and the limits of their vision.

Liberal Democracy and Emancipation in Jamaica

Skepticism about applying, or at least about the mode of application, of liberal democratic theory to the problem of emancipation was a muted oppositional theme in Britain's colonial policy deliberations almost from the outset. Practically concurrent with Glenelg's policy declaration of "full equality" a former Jamaican governor, the Marquis of Sligo, pointed out the pitfalls in achieving a full social transformation in that island under such auspices.

> In truth, there is no justice in the general local institutions of Jamaica; because there is no public opinion to which an appeal can be made. Slavery has divided society into two classes; to one it has given power, but to the other it has not extended protection. One of these classes is above public opinion, and the other is below it; neither are, therefore, under its influence; and it is much to be feared, that owing to the want of sympathy between them, to the want of dependence and

> mutual confidence, to the poorer class being able to provide for the necessities of life without any application to the higher, there never will be in Jamaica, or in any other slave colony, a community of feeling on which public opinion can operate beneficially.[15]

That the aristocratic Sligo offered an analysis of the Jamaican social order replete with the dogma of classical liberalism suggests how hegemonic, even commonplace, such notions had become by the late 1830s. But his doubts about the practical applications of liberal doctrine under Jamaican social conditions exposes its general underlying contradictions as well. Sligo recognized that a disinterested public opinion was an essential arbiter among competing interests in a modern society. Such opinion depended, however, on the existence of a public sphere constituted by educated, propertied, private individuals who could engage in non-antagonistic, rational debate, the only avenue to truth and a sound, unbiased public policy. No such public sphere, and thus no "publicity," existed in Jamaica because slavery had produced a society divided into the powerful and the unprotected, the one dominating the public sphere, the other outside it. Consequently neither were reachable by reasoned opinion, and there was no social basis <u>within</u> the society for political legitimacy. It was a situation that imperiled any effort at locally authorized reform. Moreover, under Jamaican conditions (ie., the growth of its independent peasantry) there was not even the moderating effect of economic ties such as one might find in the rural areas of Britain, where one class was dependent on the other for subsistence and thus each subject to mutual influences. Instead two hostile classes with antagonistic interests confronted each other across a social void. The irony, of course, is that the fundamental contradiction that Sligo could see so clearly in Jamaica would soon rupture the self-confident facade of liberal discourse in the metropole as well.

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[15] [Sligo], <u>Jamaica under the Apprenticeship System</u> (London: J. Andrews, 1838), in Joseph Beldam Papers, MST321R, no. 28, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.

Almost simultaneous with Sligo's anonymous pamphlet, Henry Taylor, head of the West Indian division of the Colonial Office, wrote a very similar critique of Jamaican society--one aimed at persuading Glenelg to abandon his policy and impose crown colony rule throughout the West Indies. A veteran of the botched efforts to convince planters to ameliorate slave conditions during the 1820s as well as of the failure of the apprenticeship system to achieve a smooth transition from slavery to freedom, Taylor had concluded by 1838 that the West Indian assemblies were "by their constitution and the nature of the societies for which they legislated, absolutely incompetent and unfit to deal with the new state of things." With respect to the self-governing West Indian colonies there was an "inherent and permanent incongruity of the system [of free labor and political democracy] and the [actual] state of society." By state of society he meant its division into antagonist sections: a black, mostly ex-slave majority; a brown, mostly free-born plurality; and a white, planter-dominated minority. Like Sligo, Taylor thought Jamaica's racial pluralism deprived it of a public sphere adequate for democratic governance. Under a democratic system, the blacks should rule but were not enabled by education to do so; the browns could rule but were disqualified by alienation from the two other social sectors from doing so; the white oligarchy should not rule, but undoubtedly would.[16] Since the planters could not be convinced by argument to relent in obstructing the necessary transformation of the social order and creation of a civil society, the home government should exert "at once and conclusively, a power which shall overrule all opposition and set the question at rest."[17] Clearly Glenelg's doctrine in its political features was inappropriate in a society thus constituted, because "to force this social change, and yet to leave the political frame-work of the totally different

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[16] [Taylor], "Memorandum on the Course to be Taken with the West Indian Assemblies," 19 Jan. 1839, Colonial Office 884/II, Public Record Office, Kew, England.

[17] Henry Taylor, Autobiography, 1:246-49.

society the same as it was, would seem even in a mere theoretical view to be in the nature of a political solecism."[18]

Thus former Jamaican governor Sligo and colonial officer Taylor framed the limits of democratic reform in former slave societies. Sligo's analysis in particular couples the two core issues for British emancipation policy: on the one hand, the challenge that the transition from slavery to free labor posed to classical liberalism's well-developed economic theory; on the other, the challenge that transforming a slave hierarchy into a liberal democratic society presented to its more inchoate political doctrine. That these challenges were perceived to be interlinked suggests an answer for why Glenelg's policy in the first place; the fact that that linkage soon came to be seen as perilous to social order in general helps explain its eventual abandonment. But neither Taylor nor Sligo addressed--indeed they probably could not see--the contradiction inherent <u>generally</u> in seeking the legitimacy of democratic rule in a social order ultimately dependent on economic inequality, rather the "solecism" they saw was the coupling of these imperatives in former slave societies where the public sphere was as yet undeveloped.

Although these dissents from, or rather reservations about, Glenelg's doctrine remained muted themes that would not emerge full-blown until the end of the following decade, they framed a polarity that manifested itself as a tension in policymaking from the very outset. At every level officials charged with managing the transition from slavery to free labor and building a democratic society were conscious of the functional linkage between the diverse spheres of social relations. Even as Sligo was writing his pamphlet special magistrate Richard Chamberlaine, a native born Afro-Jamaican, was explaining classical liberal economic doctrine to the newly freed people of St. Thomas-in-the-East. Gathered on the first of August 1838 to celebrate

[18] Taylor, "Memorandum."

their emancipation and the ending of apprenticeship, Chamberlaine wanted them to understand the brave new world they were about to enter, especially the "duties and responsibilities of a rational and unfettered freedom" and their special obligation to prove "that black men are as susceptible of the value and responsibility of freedom as any other race of human beings."[19] Interestingly enough, in the course of this explanation, he made explicit the linkage between the functioning of the intimate sphere and the civil and public arenas.

In order to meet their responsibilities to enslaved blacks elsewhere, Chamberlaine argued, Jamaican freedmen must remain on the plantations, working diligently for their former masters. They would do this not because of slavish deference, however, nor simply because the survival of the sugar estates required it. Rather Chamberlaine was confident that their labor would be motivated by refinements in their tastes for and expansion of their desires for material goods. No longer content with the crude subsistence of the slave, "a pot of coco soup and herring tail," they would acquire new needs and desires, discovering in the process the iron law that bound the social world to the economic, and the market in goods to the market in labor.

> Your wives and your daughters will require their fine clothes for their chapels, churches, and holidays. You will visit your friends with your coat and your shoes, and you will require your dinners prepared for you with some respect to comfort and cleanliness; your soup will be seasoned with beef and pork; and in order to obtain these, the comforts and necessaries of civilized life, you will have to labour industriously---for the more work you do, the more money you must obtain, and the better will you be enabled to increase and extend your comforts.

What this passage also suggests is that it was not at all clear that one could appeal to autonomous individuals for ever-expanding expenditures of labor power solely on the basis of their ostensibly innate desires for self-aggrandizement; that labor beyond what was necessary to acquire a subsistence required other incentives than the mere material. Rather it was this circle

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[19] Morning Journal, 17 Aug. 1838.

of dependents, "wives and daughters," who moved men to labor beyond the minimum. At the heart of Chamberlaine's message, therefore, was a veritable word picture of an ideal bourgeois domestic scene.

> Your wives, hitherto accustomed to be partakers in your daily toils, running to the fields with you in the morning, and returning with you down-spirited and dejected at sun set day by day, bringing no alleviations, will be enabled to remain at home, to look after your clothes, and your children's clothes---your household affairs---your stock---your comfortable dinner, so that whilst you are at work at the field, as the day advances, instead of lagging in your work, you are more cheerful, more industrious, because moving in the certainty of finding every thing comfortable when you get home.

One of the boons of freedom, then, would be this newfound prospect of establishing gendered spheres of activity and authority. Freedmen should remain on the plantations working for wages to support freedwomen and children at home who in turn would be dependent and subservient. In the refuge of his home the working man was served, obeyed, and nurtured. By Chamberlaine's reckoning this domestic hierarchy and dependence was a key incentive for the freedman's willing acquiescence to the principles of a bourgeois social order: personal accumulation and deference to proper authority.

Furthermore, he argued, freedmen, though reputedly able to satisfy their basic needs by working just two days each week, should work the other four days as well in order to accumulate savings "for the winter of your days, when you will have no master's bounty or humanity to appeal to." And even as they foreswore paternal dependence on the propertied classes, they should affirm that men without masters must still defer to their betters. All were now "as free as the Queen," and no man was more "free than another," but still it was necessary "for the purposes of civilized society, that there should be gradations of rank in all communities." They must be civil, respectful, and obedient, not only to their masters but to all in authority over them. Thus did the claims of deference and authority extend from the domestic fireside to

the public sphere.[20]

What is assumed in Chamberlaine's address is, much as Habermas suggests, a very specific subjectivity: wage-earning men formed and motivated by the privileges, dependency, and emotional sustenance of the domestic hearth. Assumed also, as Fraser argues, is a thoroughly gendered notion of the respective roles of worker and consumer.[21] Although this vision was a replica of the on-going creation of European bourgeois society, its special force in the West Indies probably owed a great deal to that region's fearful counter example--the Haitian nightmare of ex-slaves succumbing to an African savagery. This was the image that Henry Taylor invoked in 1833 when he urged the Cabinet to implement emancipation gradually through an apprenticeship system designed to prepare slaves for wage labor. It was a recurring image in governors' correspondence and travellers' diaries. The fear, as James Anthony Froude phrased it in the late 1880s, was that "in a few generations they will peel off such civilisation as they have learnt as easily and as willingly as their coats and trousers."[22] What Chamberlaine described then was a process that, in both senses of the word, domesticated savage instincts.

The image of menacing "savagery" also lurked behind Colonial Secretary Glenelg's other major policy declaration of the late 1830s. Early in 1836, he forwarded to all the West Indian governors a dispatch addressing the problem anticipated with controlling land settlement by freed people after apprenticeship. He began by noting that during slavery, labor could be compelled to be applied wherever the owner desired. But, upon the end of apprenticeship, the laborer would apply himself only to those tasks that promised personal benefit. Therefore, if the cultivation of sugar and coffee

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[20] Holt, The Problem of Freedom, p. 78.

[21] Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" pp.124-25.

[22] The English in the West Indies, or The Bow of Ulysses (1888; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 286-87.

were to continue, "we must make it the immediate and apparent interest of the negro population to employ their labour in raising them." He was apprehensive about their ability to do this, repeating the now familiar Wakefieldian maxim that given the demographic patterns of former slave colonies such as Jamaica---"where there is land enough to yield an abundant subsistence to the whole population in return for slight labour"---blacks would not work for wages. Eventually, a proper equilibrium between land and labor would be established by the inexorable flywheel of natural forces that govern the social order, that is population growth; but the colonies could not afford the luxury of waiting.[23]

> Should things be left to their natural course, labour would not be attracted to the cultivation of exportable produce, until population began to press upon the means of subsistence, and the land failed (without a more assiduous and economical culture) to supply all its occupants with the necessaries of life. As soon as the natural labouring population should thus arise and the growing necessity of making the most of the land should ensure the proper application of their labour, it might be expected that the present staples would again be brought into cultivation. But the depreciation which would take place in property, and the rude state into which society would fall back in the mean time, make it desirable to adopt measures to check this apparently natural course.[24]

Having conceded that the freed people's prospective behavior, by Wakefieldian and Malthusian dicta, was natural, Glenelg went on to prescribe the means by which the government would interdict these <u>natural</u> proclivities: it was essential that the ex-slaves be prevented from obtaining land. While he was uncertain how to proceed with the land that was already in private hands, he recommended that persons without land titles be excluded from occupying Crown lands and that the price be raised so as to keep those lands "out of the reach of persons without capital." Following a policy successfully employed in Canada and Australia during this period, Glenelg recommended that a minimum price be set for all Crown land, that it be sold

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[23] Glenelg to Governors of the West India Colonies, 30 Jan. 1836, in <u>PP</u> 1836 (166), 48:58--60.

[24] Ibid.

only to the highest bidder, and that a 10 percent down payment be required for purchase. Furthermore, he recommended that an investigation be launched immediately into the means by which squatters could be prevented from occupying public land.

Lord Glenelg offered the following arguments justifying these extraordinary steps to constrain the free enterprise of the freed people. First, the prosperity of any society depended upon maintaining an appropriate balance between labor supply and demand. If that definition of social utility were accepted, then it followed that government intervention was justified to establish conditions for its realization. "In new countries, where the whole unoccupied territory belongs to the Crown, and settlers are continually flowing in, it is possible, by fixing the price of fresh land so high as to place it above the reach of the poorest class of settlers, to keep the labour market in its most prosperous state from the beginning." With this policy the government not only assured an adequate supply of landless laborers to the estates but boosted the value of land, which in turn would make "it more profitable to cultivate old land well than to purchase new."[25] But the ultimate goal of these economic maneuvers was moral: to domesticate "natural" desires and behavior, to hold safe the boundary between civilized life and a Hobbesian jungle.

> The natural tendency of the population to spread over the surface of the country, each man settling where he may, or roving from place to place in pursuit of virgin soil, is thus impeded. The territory, expanding only with the pressure of population, is commensurate with the actual wants of the entire community. Society, being thus kept together, is more open to civilizing influences, more directly under the control of Government, more full of the activity which is inspired by common wants, and the strength which is derived from the division of labour; and altogether is in a sound state, morally, politically and economically, than if left to pursue its natural course.

Thus Glenelg's policy was intended to prevent situations such as those Henry Taylor had conjured up in his 1833 memorandum---scattered villages

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[25] Ibid.

of former slaves descending steadily into "savage sloth"--and to foster domestic scenes like the one Chamberlaine described. Glenelg hastened to add, however, that the government's policy was not intended to favor one class over another. The object of the government was not to force the freed people to stay on the plantations by depriving them of alternative employment "but merely to condense and keep together the population in such a manner that it may always contain a due proportion of labourers." Since "the most profitable produce will always afford the highest wages, and the highest wages will always draw the largest supply of labour," the government should not discourage the cultivation of nonplantation crops. "But some security should if possible be taken, that all the territory which is cultivated at all shall be cultivated well. The minimum price of land, therefore, should be high enough to leave a considerable portion of the population unable to buy it until they have saved some capital out of the wages of their industry, and at the same time low enough to encourage such savings by making the possession of land a reasonable object of ambition to all." Thus men hungry for land would first have to be desirous of capital and anxious to accumulate it. Presumably such men would also be inclined to protect capital accumulation in general.

Clearly Glenelg was also searching for a way to reconcile, rhetorically at least, draconian state intervention with the requirements of the doctrine of full civil equality, which he would articulate just a few months later. His argument exposed, however, the necessary tension between elaborating policy according to the requirements of a liberal doctrine premised on ostensibly natural and innate human desires, for a social order premised on material inequality. Natural or not, such desires must be channeled if social order were to be preserved; this in turn required embracing the necessity for forceful intervention to fashion and reproduce the subjects that the new social order required. Like Magistrate Chamberlaine, Glenelg also envisioned a social order founded on a collectivity of bourgeois men; the role of the state was to foster the conditions and institutions that

would produce such men.

Fashioning Policies Appropriate to a Political Economy of Freedom

Glenelg's dilemma prefigured the policy conflicts of the first decade of emancipation. Over the decade both Conservative and Liberal administrations at the Colonial Office invoked the tenets, or at least the language, of bourgeois political economy. It was clear to all that bourgeois freedom could not have an immaculate conception; the state must plant and nurture its seed. In Jamaica the administration of Lord Elgin (1842--46), a Tory appointee, was perhaps the most exemplary of contemporary liberalism. Elgin arrived on the island convinced that the manner in which Britain shepherded its transformation from a slave to a free society would set an example for the world. There was a close connection "between the course of Policy which ought to be pursued here and the interests of Christian civilization both within the Island and beyond it."[26]

Unhesitatingly, therefore, Elgin took up Glenelg's doctrine that it was Britain's obligation to raise the emancipated slave morally, intellectually, and socially, as well as to obliterate racial animosities. Consistent with classical liberal theory, he saw material prosperity and moral progress as mutually interactive and inseparable. Recognizing the fundamental division of Jamaican society along class lines--between planters and their retainers on the one side and freed people and their supporters on the other--he argued that the main cause of the island's problem was the incomplete deprivation of the means of production from its potential working class. Or, as Sligo had put it, "the poorer class [was] able to provide for the necessities of life without any application to the higher."[27] In the fashion of a classic nineteenth-century liberal, however, Elgin contended that the

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[26] Elgin to Stanley, 5 Aug. 1845 (confidential), CO 137/284.

[27] Sligo, Jamaica under the Apprenticeship System.

interests of both classes were in fact compatible and mutual. The solution therefore was to find "common ground" and on this common ground to found "a scheme of policy sufficiently progressive to contribute towards the development of that new order of social relations into which the materials supplied by Emancipation were about to arrange themselves." The role of government was to get the conflicting parties to recognize their mutual interests, and this would assure prosperity. Thus, having acknowledged class, Elgin sought to deny the reality of divergent class interests.[28]

Repeating the standard formula of the day, Elgin insisted that "civilization" would stimulate tastes and habits in the black worker that could only be satisfied with a money income. Indeed, his very first tour of the island had convinced him that "civilization, the spread of knowledge, habits of greater expense in respect of living, dress and dwellings, will conspire to render a relapse to a former and lower condition distasteful and I trust improbable."[29] From this it followed that "the improvement of the negro is the first interest of the Planter."[30]

Planters would have to reform, too. They must be "weaned" away from the coercive management and wasteful cultivation techniques characteristic of slavery. Given an abundance of cheap land, it would be impossible to coerce labor by means of immigration or similar measures. Elgin was convinced that the adoption of scientific agricultural practices by the planters and industrial education for the blacks would make the mutual dependence of worker and employer self-evident. Innovation and scientific agricultural practices would call, in turn, for higher skills and intelligence from the laborer and "redeem the pursuits of the husbandman from the discredit into which they had fallen as the avocation of slaves, and thus enlist the hearty co-operation" of

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[28] Elgin to Stanley, 5 Aug. 1845 (confidential).

[29] Elgin to Stanley, 20 Apr. 1843, no. 112, CO 137/273.

[30] Elgin to Stanley, 5 Aug. 1845 (confidential).

the blacks' friends.[31]

Laborers resisted innovation because "they are in some quarters keenly alive to the effect which the proposed change of system may have in reducing the value of their labor."[32] Industrial schools would overcome their opposition by creating "a feeling favorable to the subject by presenting it to the Public in its most attractive guise as connected with questions of scientific and practical interest."[33] Such education would provide a practical "illustration of that coincidence between the material interests of one class and the moral interests of another, the recognition of which is an indispensable condition to social progress in these communities."[34]

Elgin's views were not without seconders among the planter class. Recently arrived from England to superintend his Jamaican properties, John Blagrove jotted into his diary an analysis not entirely dissimilar. He began, predictably, with the declaration that immigration was essential to create labor competition and thereby bring costs down. But he also recognized that the impact of immigration would not be evident for generations hence, after natural increase of the population and acculturation had done their work. "Upon this score---combined with religious & temporal instruction, the promotion of marriage, and increased desire of industrious habits---Jamaica I conceive will yet hold up its head. The present prospects are far from flattering however. Still I see no reason to dispair---by the [ ] assistance & desire of both black & white to conduce to the welfare of one & the other---to lay aside all recollection of Olden Times---& each & all to remember that as Human-beings we are dependent one on the other." Meanwhile,

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Elgin to Stanley, 20 Apr. 1843, no. 112.

[33] Elgin to Stanley, 5 Aug. 1845 (confidential).

[34] Elgin to Stanley, 23 Oct. 1844, no. 119, CO 137/280. Stanley expressed his hearty concurrence with Elgin's views (Stanley to Elgin, 24 Nov. 1844, no. 303, CO 137/280).

staple production would increase "in proportion [to] the ideas & wants of Jamaica's indigenous 'habitants." Like Elgin, Blagrove was convinced that the moral and religious education of the blacks was the planters' essential ally.[35]

Meanwhile the planter-dominated Jamaica Assembly, in which Blagrove sat, not only approved Elgin's enthusiasm for industrial education, but did so in language that reflected aspects of the metropolitan view of social order. Schools that coupled labor with moral instruction would be especially useful they thought in stimulating the necessary moral regeneration of their workers.

> [W]hat has hitherto been defective in the parent ought to be supplied in the tuition of the child; There can be little doubt that these deficiencies in a large and important class of our population are produced in a great degree by an injurious absence of parental guidance and control. At a maturer age these must infallibly result in the want of due appreciation of the restraints of social order; of the advantages of a steady pursuit of domestic happiness and comfort through a course of usefulness; and of a proper understanding of those relative interests in the fair rewards of labour which identify individual with general prosperity.[36]

In this passage, of course, the planters also expressed their skepticism about seeing these citizen-making functions carried out within the freedmen's private households. In time that skepticism would be found among special magistrates and other colonial officials as well, providing common ground for a future agreement to abandon democratic practice.

At this juncture, however, the issue was moot, because agreement on first principles did not lead to an agreement on an effective educational system. Most of the planters educated their children in England or in private schools on the island, and thus were not themselves beneficiaries of the public system; it is very likely, too, that some feared the uncertain effects of education on their labor supply. Consequently, schools remained

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[35] Journal of Henry John Blagrove, 1841--42, 3 July 1841, Jamaica Archive, Spanish Town.

[36] "Reply of Assembly to the Governor," 23 Oct. 1845, encl. with Elgin to Stanley, 23 Oct. 1845, no. 90, CO 137/285.

underfunded and underdeveloped largely because of the planters' resistance to providing adequate funding. Not until six years after emancipation was any significant colonial effort made to organize and fund a public education system for the black majority. About £1,000 was appropriated in 1844 to finance public education through grants to existing parochial schools, but the system---if it can be called that---remained underfunded and served only a minority of the island's eligible youth. An 1847 report counted 178 schools with a total enrollment of 14,532, which amounted to about 20 percent of the eligible children in a school-age population estimated to be 75,558.[37]

But public schooling also suffered because the Baptist missionaries, whose schools enrolled the majority of freed people's children, strongly resisted industrial schools, seeing them as little more than new instruments of planter coercion.[38] Consequently, the Baptists declined public financial assistance, as did the Church Missionary Society, the Roman Catholics, and the Jewish congregations. Only the Methodists, Presbyterians, Moravians, and the American Congregationalists accepted state funding.[39] By the mid-1850s, therefore, education was declared to be "at its lowest grasp," with "scarcely half as many children receiving instruction as had done so the year before."[40] By 1858, Jamaica had spent about ten times more on the immigration of indentured laborers (£231,488) than on public schools.[41]

Much like this debate over industrial education, there followed a series of similar conflicts--over state-funded recruitment of indentured

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[37] Elgin to Stanley, 15 Jan. 1845, no. 5, CO 137/283; Charles Grey to Earl Grey, 20 Sept. 1847, no. 91, CO 137/293.

[38] By contrast, the Methodists were early supporters of industrial education (see James M. Phillipo to Sligo, 24 Oct. 1835, encl. with Sligo to Glenelg, 25 Oct. 1835, no. 174).

[39] Charles Grey to Earl Grey, 20 Sept. 1847, no. 91.

[40] Barkly to Henry Labouchere, 18 Mar. 1856, no. 47, CO 137/331.

[41] Darling to Stanley, 25 May 1858, no. 77, CO 137/337; Darling to E. B. Lytton, 21 July 1859, no. 90, CO 137/345.

labor, allocation of the tax burden among working and owning classes, and developing systems for the administration of justice--in which notions of liberal statecraft all floundered on the shoals of real politics.[42] Whatever "mutuality of interests" planters and freed people theoretically shared broke down when decisions were required about specific allocations of scarce resources, rights, and powers. The victims of social inequities sought immediate solutions, which the beneficiaries of the inequities sought to deny.

But not only did British policymakers fail to account for class conflict in their model for democratic reform, they also never recognized the extent and power of competing, alternative spheres of publicity in Jamaican life. In their churches, villages, and communities Jamaican freed people nurtured an alternative world-view which proved more resistant to "reformation" than British policymakers had originally foreseen.[43] Consequently, the fashioning of bourgeois man proved a more daunting task than originally envisioned. But even as these competing social arenas came gradually into view, they were distorted and misread in official discourse. By the time Earl Grey's letter warning of the dangers involved in full political equality was written, official discourse was strongly marked by disgust with the Afro-Jamaicans' "lack of moral progress."

Concurrent with Thomas Carlyle's infamous "Discourses on the Nigger Question," there emerged an official discourse indicting the freedpeople's work ethic, family life, and sexuality, sometimes even their very humanity, all of these being interdependent parts of a general condemnation of their capacity to participate in civil society on the same basis as whites. Thus, even while acknowledging that the prevailing low wages offered "no inducement to the more independent class of people to work on estates," many Jamaican

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[42] See Holt, The Problem of Freedom, chap. 6.

[43] This point is developed more fully in Holt, The Problem of Freedom, chaps. 5 and 8.

officials insisted that blacks were somehow at fault: "The people betake themselves to the mountains, buy an acre of land, and squat on it. Indolence begets its certain inheritances. We know the rest."[44] The "rest," according to Governor Henry Barkly, writing in 1856 in language reminiscent of Henry Taylor's nightmarish prognosis of 1833, was a dangerously isolated peasantry. They did not even see whites from one year to the next, Barkly wrote, and obeah practices and other African superstitions and religious beliefs were encouraged by the isolation. During that very year, in fact, colored assemblyman John Castello introduced legislation outlawing obeah, which soon became law.[45]

Thus, despite all evidence to the contrary, arose the legend of "Quashee"---lazy, morally degenerate, licentious, and heedless of the future. By the mid-1850s it laced the special magistrates' reports: the peasantry was unaffected by the moral sanctions of the larger society and adhered to an alternative moral system; for them no shame, but a kind of celebrity, attached to criminal convicts, who returned to their communities without stigma. "I regret to state," special magistrate Alexander Fyfe reported in 1854, "that I see little improvement in the laboring classes. They work for no prospective or moral object, the incentive is entirely present and physical. They are improvident, reckless of life, and almost indifferent to the ties of kindred. They are scarce grateful for charity in sickness, and whilst they will lavish pounds on a funeral, they grudge a shilling for the medicine which might avert it. Disease entails trouble, death is followed by merriment and feasting." Another magistrate, Robert Emery, added: "Their march back to barbarism has been rapid and successful."[46]

When in 1864 a group of black peasant farmers petitioned Jamaican

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[44] Colonial Standard, 12 Jan. 1850.

[45] Barkly to Labouchere, 21 Apr. 1856, no. 57, CO 137/331.

[46] PP 1854 [1848], 43:39--40, 96.

governor Edward John Eyre for land reform and justice in the local courts, he advised them that the solutions to their problems were moral reformation, piety, and propriety. They must improve in "social habits and in domestic comfort, as well as in material prosperity." They required larger houses so that they could "distribute their families in separate sleeping rooms at night." They must attend more "to their ordinary daily dress, rather than sacrifice that to grand displays on Sundays." The remedy for the larceny of their crops depended upon their own moral choices: they must "improve in civilization;" they must educate their children in religion, industry, and respectability, "both by example and precept."[47]

Though his Victorian platitudes were less than helpful to distressed Afro-Jamaicans, Governor Eyre's address received a favorable reception at the Colonial Office. Indeed, just a year later Henry Taylor drafted a comparable reply to a similar petition, revealing in the process amazing callousness and an obtuse disregard of Jamaican realities. Taylor's response, styled the "Queen's Advice," amounted to a short lecture on classical economics. He advised the land-hungry petitioners

> that the prosperity of the Labouring Classes, as well as of all other Classes, depends, in Jamaica, and in other Countries, upon their working for Wages, not uncertainly, or capriciously, but steadily and continuously, at the times when their labour is wanted, and for so long as it is wanted; and if they would use this industry, and thereby render the Plantations productive, they would enable the Planters to pay them higher Wages for the same hours of work than are received by the best Field Labourers in this country; and as the cost of the necessaries of life is much less in Jamaica than it is here, they would be enabled, by adding prudence to industry, to lay by an ample provision for seasons of drought and dearth; and they may be assured, that it is from their own industry and prudence, in availing themselves of the means of prospering that are before them, and not from any such schemes as have been suggested to them, that they must look for an improvement in their condition; and that her Majesty will regard with interest and satisfaction their advancement through their own merits and efforts.[48]

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[47] Eyre to Cardwell, 6 Aug. 1864, no. 234, CO 137/384.

[48] There is no evidence of any disagreement within the Colonial Office over this soon-to-be controversial dispatch. Enclosed with Eyre to Cardwell, 25 Apr. 1865, no. 117, CO 137/390.

Such determined unresponsiveness by colonial officials at all levels fed a popular discontent that exploded later that year in a bloody rebellion at Morant Bay. Shortly afterward, the British Parliament abolished self-government in Jamaica. It did so in response to arguments that Afro-Jamaicans were, as Earl Grey put it to the House of Lords during the debate, "unfit to exercise political power." But it is perhaps equally significant that their "unfitness" was coupled with, indeed rooted in, the failure of their households and conjugal arrangements. In this debate Grey was immediately followed by Lord Lyttelton, who complained--almost as if to bring a thirty-year discussion full circle--that "of all the deplorable features exhibited by the Jamaica [parliamentary] papers the most distressing was that describing the demoralized state of the people, especially as regards those in the matrimonial state," and until that was remedied "no mere political arrangement could confer the least benefit upon the people of Jamaica."[49] The simultaneity of these pronouncements confirmed that Afro-Jamaicans were answerable to but deviant from a moral and political order Britons defined, that their public deficiencies grew out of their private failings, and that for these reasons they were legitimate objects of British hegemony for the foreseeable future.

Thus was the Morant Bay Rebellion taken as an explicit demonstration of the failure of British emancipation policy and as evidence of the ex-slaves' incapacity for responsible citizenship. The moral contract of emancipation as Glenelg had conceived it would be altered. It would not be Britain's particular articulation of liberal democracy that was deemed faulty; rather it was the supposed deficiencies of its beneficiaries. Consequently, the perceived failure of West Indian emancipation resonated with and helped sustain the rise of a virulent official racism, which in turn helped give shape and focus to the racial thought of the larger public. In the rhetorical

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[49] Hansard, 3rd Ser., House of Lords, (13 Mar. 1866), 181:131, 133.

iconography of the late nineteenth century, colored peoples were invariably stigmatized as underworked and oversexed, their material interests or drives unaroused, while their libidos were out of control. A common theme running through racist thought was that "the natives" had no inner controls; thus the need for external controllers.[30] Wayward children of the human family, they became fit subjects for a "beneficent despotism." Projected to the world stage, beneficent despotism became "the white man's burden," a transparent justification for imperialist adventures lent force and moral legitimacy by the "failed" efforts to make bourgeois subjects of former slaves.

[30] Comparable to this discourse on the colonial "Other" are Henry Mayhew's contemporaneous observations on the London underclass, in which he links in the same sentence "repugnance to regular labour," "extraordinary powers of enduring privation," "love of libidous dances," "delight in warfare," and "absence of chastity among his women" (quoted in Cassidy, "Islands and Empire," 19).