
CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR
EMPIRE
of Neglect
THE WEST INDIES
IN THE WAKE OF
BRITISH LIBERALISM

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The West Indies in the Wake of British Liberalism

CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR

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TO CHRISTOPHER AND GERRI TAYLOR,
MY PARENTS,

&

SARAH PIERCE TAYLOR,
MY NEVER NEGLECTFUL PARTNER

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INTRODUCTION

The age of empire was dead; that of free traders, economists, and calculators had succeeded, and the glory of the West Indies was extinguished forever.
—ERIC WILLIAMS, *Capitalism and Slavery*

Empires of neglect emerge when subjects demand the attention of a world that is indifferent to their presence within it. This book argues that British West Indian writing of the long nineteenth century emerged in response to the rise of neglect as a practice of imperial rule. I adopt the term "neglect" from my archive, using it to describe these transformations in imperial governance, as well as to mark the forms of subjectivity constituted in relation to these transformations. "Neglect" was the name West Indian writers gave to a diffuse set of discursive and institutional practices that facilitated the divestment of economic capital, political care, and popular concern from colonies that had once been considered the crown jewels of the British Empire. This critical attunement, I will argue, fashioned particular forms of imperial subjectivity—forms of subjectivity that, outraged by their attenuated presence in the imperial world, are saturated with normative understandings and deeply felt fantasies of what empire was, what it risked becoming, and what it could be. What happens, I ask, not simply when subjects are neglected, but when they come to conceive of themselves as being neglected?

I link this dialectic of structural transformation and subject formation to gritty, technical, and at times eye-droopingly boring changes in the politico-economic fabric of the British Empire. What West Indians decried as imperial neglect was an effect of novel forms of thinking about and organizing economic relations that emerged in the wake of the partial collapse of Britain's Atlantic empire after 1776. Beginning with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), classical political economy's theorizations of the relationship

between states and markets were all opposed to what Smith called "the mercantile system," or what we today call mercantilism.[1] The mercantilist order of the British imperial state secured to West Indian merchants and planters a protected monopoly over British markets in tropical produce. After decades of political-economic theorization and free-trade agitation, the mercantilist order was more or less dismantled in 1846 with the passage of the Sugar Duties Act, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the repeal of the Navigation Laws.[2] Through this legislation, Britain disembedded its economic structure from the empire; many of its commodity markets no longer distinguished between imperial and extra-imperial producers but admitted from both at the same tariff rates. These changes in tariff laws might seem rather arcane, but concealed beneath them was a "great transformation" in the modalities by which Britain related to the broader imperial polity—and, in particular, to the West Indies.[3] The mercantilist market protections that free trade exploded were something more than narrowly fiscal instruments. Elite West Indians had long understood mercantilist market protections as materializing what the planter-historian Bryan Edwards called "a fixed and permanent *compact*," which he described as "an arrangement not framed by the colonies, but by the mother-country herself, who has suffered it to grow sacred by time, has recognized it by a multitude of laws, and enforced it by stricter ties and recent provisions."[4] The very term "protection" was saturated with political and affective connotations, harking back to early modern conceptualizations, as well as plebian understandings, of the relationship between subjects and sovereign and to kin-based models of parental oversight.[5] The theory and practice of economic liberalism displaced the idioms and the institutions that loosely structured empire as a polity, unbinding Britain from the inchoate but nonetheless effective normativity of the imperial compact.

This unbinding took place through the decades during which the West Indies were becoming "increasingly negligible," in Eric Williams's words, to British capital.[6] We tend to think of the first decades of the nineteenth century as a time during which Britain invested an overwhelming amount of moral energy and public attention in the West Indies, culminating with emancipation on 1 August 1834. We can even assign a monetary value to this care: Britain paid £20,000,000 to slave owners as part of a constitutional bargain with colonial legislatures for black freedom. Yet the very process of emancipation worked to shunt British capital and British attention from the islands. While the motivations behind Britain's decision to emancipate enslaved West Indians were hardly a reflex of economic determinations, political-economic

thought provided the institutional mechanisms that structured emancipation: West Indians were emancipated to the market.[7] The problem was that the value and profitability of the islands had been shrinking through the early nineteenth century and nearly collapsed after emancipation. As the profitability of the West Indian colonies declined, British capital and British imperial attention shifted from the West Indies to more remunerative sites within empire, such as India, or to sites beyond it, such as Cuba and Brazil.[8] Liberalization facilitated this divestment of capital and concern, allowing capitalists to turn from an area that, just a decade previously, had been the object of the abolitionist state's intense moral investment. If West Indians were emancipated to the market, eight years later the market was emancipated from West Indians. Whatever the intentions of good-hearted Britons, liberal freedom *became* a form of liberal neglect. These intentions soured pretty quickly anyhow. Britain's increasing reliance on extra-imperial sugar producers called into question the value of retaining what Benjamin Disraeli would describe as the "forlorn Antilles" and as "millstones" around the collective neck of Britain.[9] Why keep the West Indies at all? Was maintaining the Atlantic empire even worth it? Spectators on both sides of the Atlantic considered free trade "preparatory to a dissolution of the imperial connexion"; in Britain, free traders, fiscal conservatives, and even abolitionists wished that the West Indies would declare independence, that the United States would annex the islands, or that the islands would sink into the sea.[10] None of these things happened; for this reason, the passage of the Sugar Duties Act is frequently treated as a footnote in British fiscal history or a chapter in postemancipation West Indian history, not an epochal event in the constitution of the empire. Yet the combined effect of the discourse and practice of economic liberalism yielded a new, flexible form of imperial rule, one premised on the indifference of empire to the reproduction of its own *imperium*. It yielded, in other words, an empire of neglect.

As is probably evident, my approach to liberalism departs somewhat from that of scholars working across the fields of economic history, political theory, and literary studies. By sticking close to the discursive and institutional process of liberalization, and by tying these tightly to transformations in tariff regimes, I hope to avoid reproducing the vague ways that the adjective "liberal" tends to circulate. Here, liberalism is not a transhistorical philosopheme with an inbuilt tendency toward fashioning self-possessive subjects or excluding infantilized others; nor does it name a voluntary party affiliation.[11] Instead, I explore how the discourse of liberalism was practically *enacted* and trace the looping consequences of these enactments.[12] In so doing, I hope

to push back against scholarship that attempts to save the Enlightenment or liberalism from itself by stressing the anticolonial, anti-imperial, or antiracist fundaments of these varied traditions.[13] My problem with this approach is that the political and ethical value of "anticolonial" and "anti-imperial" thinking has transformed across time even as it was heterogeneous across historical space; we cannot fuse our postcolonial political horizons with those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Adam Smith's critique of empire seems righteous to us—certainly more righteous, if we follow Jennifer Pitts's important account, than the civilizationist and racist imperial liberalism articulated decades later by John Stuart Mill. For the colonial subjects I explore, however, Adam Smith's anti-imperialism was precisely what made him odious. Indeed, as Pitts points out, liberal anticolonial and anti-imperial thought emerged with little reference to the stated desires of imperial subjects, which were for the most part *not* anti-imperial in ways recognizable to us as being such.[14] (Moreover, and as we will see, most nineteenth-century West Indian anticolonialisms were not anti-imperialisms; indeed, opposition to the colonial state form was frequently articulated through the ideological resources of the empire and as a defense of it.) Given that metropolitan anti-imperialisms tended to ignore the thoughts and feelings of imperial subjects in the colonies, the methodology of this revisionist approach—which is more or less a hermetically textualist intellectual history—reproduces the foreclosure of colonial subjectivity, even as the critic reads the tradition as aligning with what the colonial subject might or would have said. At the same time, this textualist mode of interpreting the liberal tradition centers authorial and moral intentions over instituted effects.[15] One need not doubt that Smith sincerely found empire unjust; that the liberal abolitionists whom I explore in this book really cared about enslaved humans; or that Richard Cobden and other free traders truly believed that liberalization would end slavery, increase global plenty, and bring about world peace. But the institutions constructed to translate anti-imperial intentions into worldly action were themselves constitutively indifferent to the sovereignty of moral intention. West Indians lived not in the warm glow of abolitionists' and political economists' hearts but with the effects induced by the institutional structures built by these intentions. Approaching metropolitan thought and practice from the colonial world requires a methodological consequentialism.

This book explores how West Indians responded to the set of transformations that rendered their position in empire negligible, at best, and precarious, at worst. I read across a broad archive of materials—economic treatises

and husbandry manuals, plantation novels and planters' books of account, sentimental novellas and pirate romances, emancipation narratives and post-emancipation memoirs—to assay the shaping force of imperial neglect on West Indians' relations to the empire and to the world. It is only through a close engagement with this archive that neglect can become legible as a practice of imperial rule. Admittedly, "neglect" seems like a weird term to apply to empire. The heavy Foucauldianism of colonial and postcolonial studies has yielded a picture of empire as indefatigable, busy regulating, controlling, shaping, and ending the lives of colonial subjects. It is indeed an image that empire solicits: the archive at Kew bulges with metric tons of proof that empire never relinquished attention over the colonial world. Moreover, as seminal texts of postcolonial studies demonstrated, the cultural archive of Britain is structured by an imperial unconscious: even when empire seems far away, it is right there, symptomatically present in the parlor of Mansfield Park.[16] No one was neglected. To describe empire as neglectful seems mistaken for another reason, too: the charge of neglect inscribes empire within a normative framework that much social thought and humanistic critique takes to be inapplicable to the realities of imperial power. Empire, we know, was (and is) always indifferent to the claims of imperial subjects; to postulate that it had a duty it could neglect is to be foolish, at best, and to reproduce a racist-civilizational alibi for empire, at worst. Yet I will argue that there is a stark discontinuity between the forms of attention Britain extended and the kinds that West Indians desired: the practices of governmentality or metropolitan Britons' weak awareness that empire existed did not equate to the form of political legibility West Indians desired. Moreover, to take empire as a form of power that ineluctably excepts itself from normative bindings of the political—one that will achieve form *only* through practices of governmentality or in the metropolitan unconscious—is precisely to recapitulate the emergent conceptualization against which West Indians wrote. From elite plantation owners to their emancipated ex-slaves, from Tory protectionists to mulatto socialists, West Indians across the lines of race and class strove to render legible the subtle institution of neglect and, by so doing, to recompose empire as a political world bound to accord meaning and value to West Indian lives—whatever the economic value of the West Indies.

Etymologically, neglect connotes the activity of not reading, of not gathering together, and (in a maximal philosophical sense) of not gathering something into a given *logos*.[17] Liberalization constituted West Indians as empire's negligible subjects—they could neither compel British attention through the

citation of political logics nor gesture to the economic value of the islands and were functionally rendered invisible in the liberal order of things. Published a year after the epochal votes on free trade, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) neatly encodes this shift: the creole Bertha is locked away; Rochester simply ignores the legal ties binding them together; Bertha offs herself in an enactment of free-trade fantasies that the islands would simply disappear; and the moral and narratological horizon of the novel shifts toward St. John Rivers's India. The heterogeneous subjects I mark off as "West Indian" were fashioned through this double play of ignored ties and divested care. My use of the term "West Indian" refers less to a stable identity or a demographic population than to heterogeneous subject positions that emerged as the opposition—and in opposition—to the consolidation of liberal-capitalist logics. Moreover, this was the term that my subjects themselves used; it was only at the tail end of the liberal project, concomitant with Britain's transfer of regional hegemony to the United States, that the neutral geographic signifier "Caribbean" would come to replace the historically and political laden term "West Indies," and then only unevenly. It might be tempting to imagine that these broad political and economic transformations went on above the heads of all but the most elite of West Indians, but they did not. Debates over market liberalization and free trade enflamed both elite and subaltern publics throughout the Atlantic world, just as neoliberal globalization has been an item of popular and elite debate and contestation today.[18] If critiques of free trade were common across classes, however, race differentially allocated the effects of liberalization, differentially patterned responses to it, and opened up different possibilities for managing the rise of neglect as an imperial practice.[19] Binding these different and frequently antagonistic positions together is the normative fantasy that the empire should work to sustain West Indian life and the despair attending the recognition that British attentions were going elsewhere. Rather than marking a coherent form of subjectivity, then, "West Indian" names the incoherence of varied subjectivities de- and reconstituted by the de- and reconstitution of the British Empire.

Drawing as heavily as I do on West Indian self-description to track the imperial practice of neglect, I am interested in the selves fashioned and formed as performative effects of those descriptions. What happens when subjects relate to themselves as if they are neglected? Neglect is a profound experience of nonsovereignty, one that locates the possibilities of one's being in a world in the attenuated attentions of another. Yet a low-grade, subtle optimism underwrites neglect's affective repertoire of loneliness, incompletion,

and diminishment. To feel oneself neglected is to inscribe the present tense of another's inattention within an anticipatory horizon of the other's return, enabling one to periodize nonrelation as a brief hiatus, a temporary withdrawal. Neglect thus poses the diminution or even absence of a relation as the grounds for that relation's construction, reparation, or reanimation.[20] Throughout this book, I explore how West Indian critiques of imperial neglect worked to attach subjects to a world that was turning away from them. In many ways, then, complaining about imperial neglect is an inherently conservative act: it retains a particular horizon of political legibility as the only horizon of legibility imaginable or desirable. It is also, however, fantastically, critically utopian. It envisions the reconstitution of a world such that those neglected by it would be accorded legibility within it, a world in which, to follow Rancière, the uncounted might count.[21]

Empire of Neglect explores how this double play of world maintenance and world building would ultimately result in a vexed reorientation of West Indian political and literary imaginaries toward the hemispheric Americas. Indeed, glancing at the figures, generic forms, and imaginative geographies prevalent in this literature, one would hardly be able to guess that subjects of the British Empire wrote much of the writing this book considers. Following Britain's turn to free trade, Simón Bolívar figures more prominently in this archive than Queen Victoria; *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is drawn on more frequently than *Bleak House*; and Boston and Caracas serve more readily as settings than London and Liverpool. This literature might seem to demonstrate West Indian writers' participation in the hemispheric circuits of political, commercial, and cultural exchange that scholars of the transnational Americas have identified in the past two decades. Yet West Indian writers did not approach the hemisphere with the inspiriting, expansionist thrill of building *nuestra América*.[22] Rather, the Americas functioned as a surrogate for the imperial world that West Indians could not inhabit but to which they remained melancholically attached.[23] Unfortunately, scholars have largely failed to include the nineteenth-century British West Indies within hemispheric American studies. This is partly a result of the field's mooring in U.S. literature and American studies departments and its development out of studies of U.S. empire.[24] As an analytic topos, the "hemisphere" tends to be configured by the itineraries of U.S. empire building, and the British West Indies went blessedly unvisited by Yankee gunboats for most of the nineteenth century. The hemispheric itinerary that I trace diverges from these trends, insofar as this creole America emerged less through the dynamics of U.S. expansionism—although these dynamics

certainly shaped West Indians' engagement with the hemisphere—than as an alternative to problems internal to the British Empire. Some writers, such as the Trinidadian Michel Maxwell Philip and the Jamaican Mary Seacole, used the imaginative geography of the hemisphere to model postliberal forms of imperial relation: they wrote to empire by writing through the Americas. Others, such as the Trinidadian mulatto radical George Numa Des Sources, who founded a short-lived socialist colony in postcolonial Venezuela, sought to build new, postliberal worlds in the New World. In all cases, the Americas emerged as an alternative horizon of political belonging that promised West Indians (and especially black West Indians) forms of political legibility and social care denied them in the liberalized empire. As we will see, the United States plays but a minor role in this hemispheric formation. The writers I explore looked more to the south than to the north as they sought new worlds.

This book offers an account, then, of the political, economic, cultural, and affective processes through which West Indian writers situated their worlds in the Americas. In so doing, it follows the work of other hemispheric scholars in moving beyond programmatic demands that we take the hemisphere seriously as an analytic frame and beyond geographically determinist models that take the hemisphere as a given unit of analysis.[25] I am rather interested in the historical conditions of possibility that incite subjects to dramatically remap their worlds. The analytic frames that I deploy are thus responsive to the political orientations and reorientations of the subjects I explore: scalar shifts register recompositions of political imaginaries. Indeed, it is perhaps only on the basis of the reorientation I track that the psychic and affective violence of imperial liberalization can become apparent. The occluded violence of imperial neglect becomes most visible when we realize that it so devastated West Indians' worlds that they were impelled to turn to a new one: the New World itself.

Political Economy and One Origin of West Indian Literature

At first glance, it might seem strange that West Indian writers invested so heavily in the arcane knowledge buried in political economic treatises or in the minutiae of debates over economic governance. What could be less susceptible to literary treatment than tariff law? Yet West Indians' literary investment in such topics is so superficially apparent that one need not undertake allegorical acrobatics to find the economic in their literary writing. The white Jamaican Francis Cyrus Perkins's lyric "The Planter's Petition"

(ca. 1846), for instance, laments the inauguration of British free-trade policies; sixty years later, the black St. Kittsian George Reginald Margetson's long poem *England in the West Indies: A Neglected and Degenerating Empire* (1906) would lament their persistence. But the impact of economic thought and practice went far beyond supplying objects to West Indian writers. More decisively, the rise of political economy structured the function of West Indian literature in local, regional, and imperial public spheres. Indeed, what I have rather hastily been calling "West Indian literature" emerged as a generic and epistemological alternative to political economy.[26] This literature offered an alternative mode of reading the relationship between polity and economy at odds with the emergent discipline they castigated as neglectful.

To understand how literary genres came to serve in this function requires understanding the broader discursive and generic ecology of West Indian writing. It is a little remarked on but nonetheless remarkable fact that no British West Indian—however broadly we define the term—wrote a book bearing the title "A Political Economy" throughout the period of the discipline's consolidation or, indeed, wrote anything that would be legible to us as a treatise of political economy.[27] This archival lacuna is odd for a couple of reasons. Given the commercial orientation of West Indian life, creole textual culture was saturated with mundane genres of economic writing. Business correspondence, plantation books of account, and various forms of legal and financial instruments were the stuff of the plantation world's scribal ordinary. At the same time, West Indian elites were not the indolent ignoramuses of abolitionist caricature. It is now well established that elites across the Caribbean participated in and made contributions to Enlightenment-era scientific inquiry, that many elite West Indians had high levels of education, that some were avid readers of political economy, and that a select few even sat in the same parliamentary chamber as David Ricardo.[28] They wrote both multivolume tomes of colonial history that rigorously considered economic development and occasional interventions into pressing economic debates. They wrote manuals on plantation husbandry and discourses on tropical medicine. They even wrote poems, plays, and novels concerned with aspects of economic life. But at no point did a West Indian write a political economy. Reading the logic of an absence is an uncertain enterprise, but I want to suggest that the lack of a West Indian political economy is the product less of ignorance, creole indolence, or the contingencies of history than it is itself an argument—that, in effect, this lacuna in the archive of creole letters possesses a robust positivity and even quietly articulates a fierce polemic.[29]

For West Indians, political economy was an inherently "anticolonial" enterprise—and that was not a good thing.[30] Indeed, almost as soon as Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, West Indians approached political economy as a unified discourse that achieved coherence and regularity through a devaluation of the imperial world. Bryan Edwards, for instance, takes a moment in his monumental 1793 history of the British West Indies to chastise those "Political economists" who "theorize concerning the utility of colonies"—one of the first usages of the collective noun.[31] Decades later, Alexander MacDonnell's *Colonial Commerce* (1828) would decry the "Political Economists who are most in vogue" for their approach to colonial affairs.[32] Between these two, and beyond, the West Indian public sphere lit up with critiques of political economy; as MacDonnell would relate, the possible policy effects of this emergent, increasingly hegemonic discourse had induced an "intense anxiety" in the West Indies.[33] How could the technical idiom of political economy have engendered such intense affective responses? The problem was not, as one might expect, political economy's critique of slavery—which did not really exist.[34] Nor was it solely that political economy's investment in free markets threatened the profits of West Indian planters and merchants—although it did. The problem, rather, was that the very discipline of political economy was built on the destruction of the imperial polity.[35] West Indian critiques of political economy were defenses of their position within empire, as well as of empire itself.

From Adam Smith onward, political economists and their popularizers frequently staged empire's end to limn the existence of an economic order superordinate to the dictates of the state. As the rumble of canon and shot from Lexington and Concord echoed around the Atlantic, *The Wealth of Nations* posed a simple question to its readers: was empire worth it? Smith would answer no: Britain "derives nothing but a loss from the dominion which she assumes over her colonies."[36] Yet the answer Smith gives is less important than the very articulation of the question. Smith takes the corrosion of imperial sovereignty marked by the eruption of imperial civil war as an opportunity to disembed economic logics from political rationalities. Smith had cast economic relations as an epistemic domain autonomous from the political much earlier in his treatise, making a distinction between economic and political power in a gentle critique of "Mr. Hobbes."[37] This theoretical distinction, however, had minimal purchase in a world where sovereign states everywhere aspired to control economic processes to augment state power. As Mary Poovey has written, Smith's political economy

is epistemologically riven by the fact that it could not descriptively, empirically render what it sought to theorize: the systematic, natural market.[38] Smith used the collapse of empire into civil war to modulate *The Wealth of Nations*'s latent epistemological crisis: it made empirically intelligible the effective existence of a supersensible, systematic economic order over which no sovereign was truly sovereign. Following Smith, political economists returned again and again to the American Revolution to demonstrate the viability of an auto-regulative commercial order formed by the sovereign state's withdrawal. Political economy cognitively disembedded the market from the polity by staging the dismantling of empire.[39]

For West Indians, political economy's epistemic separation of the economic from the political threatened profound alterations in the political constitution and political imaginary of the empire. As legal scholars have attested, the imperial constitution of Britain's Atlantic empire had always been incredibly indeterminate. Heterogeneous legislatures and legal codes striated the empire; it was composed of largely autonomous spaces that were federated but lacked a coherent and explicit constitutional form.[40] For members of this fragile polity, economic connections frequently stood in for formalized political relations. What we might think of as economic transactions articulated the relationship between imperial subject and imperial sovereign—the export duties that were paid to the Crown, say, or the preferential tariffs that West Indian produce received on Britain's markets. For West Indians, these seemingly "economic" relations materialized empire as a field of reciprocal protections and obligations, a polity by negotiated compact if not by coherent design. This understanding of economic relations underwrote all discussions of West Indian commercial life, from Edward Long's and Bryan Edwards's encyclopedic accounts of West Indian history through petitions and pamphlets addressed to the Crown. West Indians even offered arguments for free trade long before this policy would be identified as anti-imperial in tendency, as a privilege the Crown should extend to deserving subjects.[41] One postemancipation Jamaican peasants' petition to Queen Victoria—the one whose incompetent response from the Colonial Office partially set off the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865—requested that the Crown establish what was basically a joint-stock company for the landless peasantry in recognition of their condition as Her Majesty's impoverished subjects.[42] Following Louis Dumont's description of mercantilist economic writing, we might take West Indians' approach to empire as "mingl[ing] the phenomena we classify into economic and political. They considered economic phenomena from the

point of view of the polity."[43] But we might tweak it, too: West Indians surrogated an imperial political perspective through considerations of economic phenomena, deducing an imperial polity from the multiplicity of economic interactions. As it became hegemonic, political economy decomposed the epistemic and discursive contexts in which such acts of mingling or surrogation would make sense. Take a single keyword, "protection." In the 1780s, it still rang out with early modern, Hobbesian connotations of a sovereign's obligation to his subjects; by 1846, it would more narrowly name the economic instruments that had once mediated that political relation.[44] Empire was functionally depoliticized as a consequence of political economy's analytic disembedding of the economic from the political, leaving imperial subjects without a coherent idiom or imaginary of imperial political belonging.

West Indian literature emerged to create the discursive and epistemic framework within which empire could become legible as a polity that gathered West Indians into it as constituent members. West Indians did not write political economies, no; instead, they wrote novels and poems to theorize political and economic relations. By refusing to think economic affairs through the forms that increasingly claimed an epistemic monopoly over them, West Indian writers enacted a refusal at the level of genre to engage the economic as if it could cohere into autonomous, discrete epistemic field. Literature thus developed much differently in the West Indian from how it developed in the contemporary metropolitan Britain. Whereas metropolitan writers posited an autonomous field of literary value in response to the political economy's autonomization of economic value, West Indian writers never conceded the autonomy of the economic in the first place.[45] Rather, West Indian literature sought to theorize the economic while simultaneously reembedding it as a subordinate component in a broader imaginary of the polity. As a consequence, West Indian writers never posited literature as possessing an autonomous, self-evident value, either; the literature I explore is almost entirely, unapologetically indifferent to literariness. (As you will see, much of it reads that way, too.) The Barbadian writer J. W. Orderson, for instance, would acknowledge that "*West Indian Literature*" had not "climbed the higher steeps of Parnassus, nor . . . [did it] occupy any eminent station in the flowery paths of *Belles Lettres*."[46] But for Orderson, as for others, the value of West Indian literature derived not from its aesthetic quality but from its presentation of "facts"—that is, for its referential relationship to the social, economic, and political world from which it emerged.[47] Obviously, the factuality of this discourse is debatable, particularly through the era of slavery, but that

is part of my point: creole writers used literary genres to describe worlds in order to circulate alternative norms and epistemologies for thinking empire.

I thus read this literary archive as articulating a peripheral form of politico-economic theory that is fundamentally opposed to the discursive and epistemological order installed by political economy, generalized through multiple popularizing recensions, and eventually instituted in state practice. While this argument is motivated by a desire to specify more precisely what literature actually did for West Indian writers, another part of my aim is to broaden our sense today of literary genres' epistemic and political possibilities. Literature is rarely content to be literature or content to assume a coherence or stability that could make the very term "literature" something more than a catachresis or a marketing category. I do not mean this in the sense that literature absolves itself from any ontological or epistemological configuration that would ensnare it, although I do tend to keep faith with this deconstructive and postdeconstructive claim articulated differently by Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. I mean it in the humbler sense that a great deal of literature intends to push and present knowledge for and within domains of social being, an intention whose aims are irreducible to the aesthetic: it wants to tell us something about race, about politics, about (why not?) tariff law. Indeed, literary genres are sites of epistemological democratization, even communization, for populations with diminished access to the generic and epistemic codes of expert knowledge or (as in the West Indian relation to political economy) for populations whose accession to a particular generic and epistemic code necessitates a violation of their form of life.[48] This is particularly true of much of the (post)colonial world, where the formation of higher institutions of (Western) disciplinary knowledge production developed well after the formation of colonial literary cultures, which even then made themselves available to only small segments of the population. Indeed, as many postcolonial scholars have argued, literary genres might more adequately map the political and social realities of postcolonial life than the social sciences do or can.[49] They certainly map vernacular social imaginaries far better. The enduring maldistribution of access to expert knowledge means that most thought cannot be thought through the epistemic and generic codes that organize what counts as disciplinary "knowledge."[50] And yet, thinking happens, a lot of it, and frequently in the amateurish space of to-hand literary genres: novels, short stories, poems, plays. Literature is the peculiar anti-institution—or even ante-institution—that interrupts settled distributions of knowledge with the otherwise illegible thinking of those about whom

disciplinary knowledge is bound to not care. And it was through literary genres that West Indians would make a claim that the emergent discipline of political economy was founded on neglecting: that they were rights-bearing members of an imperial polity.

The Vanishing Horizon of Empire

From the vantage of our postcolonial present, it might be surprising that empire constituted the horizon of political legibility for West Indians. Indeed, I began research for this book hoping to identify a cultural link between the full emancipation of enslaved West Indians in 1838 and the incipiently anticolonial labor rebellions that swept through the region in 1938. My aim was to excavate nineteenth-century proto-nationalist "foundational fictions" to displace the conventional understanding that Windrush generation authors in postwar London originated British West Indian literature.[51] Reading across a handful of recently recovered nineteenth-century texts shattered my expectations of them: I found everything but anticolonial nationalism.[52] That is, I found an intense fealty to the British Empire, on one hand, and an emergent investment in the hemispheric Americas, on the other. Where is the nation? I wondered. It had to be somewhere, but it was not. Reading across imperial discourse of the era—and, in particular, empire-scaling debates over economic liberalism—I came to realize that this archive was offering an account of my own incomprehension of its politics. Like the liberal economic discourse this literature emerged to critique, I neglected to consider these writers in the way they insisted on being considered—as rights-bearing subjects of an expansive imperial polity. What required explanation, I realized, was not why colonial subjects understood themselves as political subjects of empire, but the opposite. How had it become nearly unthinkable to imagine empire as the horizon of subjects' political lives, as the existential framework that gathered their worlds into a coherent order?

Reading empire as a viable state form, one that organized the affective and imaginative lives of colonial subjects, requires rethinking the political epistemologies of the contemporary disciplines. As Frederick Cooper argues, the "standard view of global political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" is one of "a long and inexorable transition from empire to nation-state."[53] As Cooper suggests, focusing primarily on French African decolonization, this narrative evacuates the contingencies of process from

the decolonizing transition.[54] Moreover, this narrative inhibits the development of a critical idiom for reading the politics of those who refuse to submit to the iron historical law of nation formation. Colonial subjects are always supposed to be moving out of empire. How, then, do we address those who seem to dwell within it? As David Sartorius remarks, scholars of the colonial world routinely encounter "pro-colonial affinities" in their archives, only to dismiss them "as the misfires of historical subjects acting against their interests: dupes, victims, collaborators."[55] Subjected to functionalist explanation or ideological demystification, conventional approaches to empire occlude what Antoinette Burton calls "imperial facticity," which I take to name the ways in which empire might appear to subjects as their unremarkable, ordinary political world.[56] This occlusion becomes weirder when we consider that most people, for most of world history, built lives within empires. It is the nation-state that is exceptional, the contingent product of the Age of Revolutions that took about a century and a half to become the default unit of sovereignty in the world system.

Yet for a contemporary world system that is epistemologically and institutionally structured by postimperial norms, empires present and past can appear only as anomalous deviations from the proper order of things. In part, our inability to approach empire in its facticity is a product of the decolonization projects of the mid-twentieth century. The anticolonial moment wound up binding popular sovereignty—and so, for a liberal state system, the political itself—to the institutional form of the nation-state. Empire was correspondingly redefined negatively as a foreign polity's direct or indirect intervention into a national people's autonomous administration of its affairs (what I would call imperialism). Yet, as Martha Kaplan and John Kelly have argued, the epistemic, normative, and institutional fabrication of the nation-based state system was not only the outcome of liberationist anticolonial movements; it was equally a "new, global plan for political order" overseen by the United States.[57] Anticolonial movements were ultimately conscripted into a global state order that was entirely functional for U.S. hegemony at the same moment that empire more or less vanished as a meaningful political concept and became instead a term of polemic—and a polemical term that worked to reinscribe the normativity of the nation-state.[58] Ann Stoler has argued that colonial studies subsequently "produced a representational archive of empire" and particular models of imperial rule in which "empire is seen as an extension of nation-states, not as another way—and sometimes prior way—of organizing

a polity."[59] Put differently, the rightly critiqued "methodological nationalism" of the social sciences and the humanities is always already a methodological postimperialism.[60]

This methodological postimperialism has informed much scholarship on the British Empire in the age of free trade. While a generation of imperial historians, under the influence of J. R. Seeley, understood liberalization as a watershed moment, scholars today tend to deny that free trade was indeed a "great transformation" in the imperial world.[61] Indeed, empire is largely absent from the signal, much cited theoretical account of the liberal era: Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944). Polanyi waxes apocalyptic about the repeal of the Corn Laws but has nothing to say about the Sugar Duties Act; he laments liberalization's decimation of the social and moral fabric of British life but does not register how it decimated the broader imperial polity. My point is not that Polanyi *should* have assumed a broad imperial optic in assessing liberalization's impact. It is, rather, that the political cartography assembled by liberalization functionally made such an optic unavailable.[62] Similarly, more contemporary scholarship on free trade tends to approach the process as if it is narratable from the perspective of Britons alone. Part of the problem is archive selection: focusing on British policy makers, parties, or parliamentary voting patterns ensures that West Indians will be occluded.[63] Scholars who explicitly address empire do not do much better. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's influential "free trade imperialism" thesis reinscribes the narrow analytic perspective of Little Britain even as it tracks the expansion of British imperial involvements throughout the era. While liberal mid-Victorians—like antiliberal West Indians—understood Britain to be anti-imperial, Gallagher and Robinson hew to the fact of Britain's multiform and growing entanglements around the world to argue that the empire of free trade was broadly continuous with the mercantilist empire that preceded it and the neo-mercantilist empire to follow it.[64] The "imperialism of free trade" thesis is more Cobdenite than it would perhaps care to admit, insofar as a narrowly defined Britain serves as the analytic perspective that synthesizes the diffuse and dispersed activities that, for Gallagher and Robinson, constitute empire: investment in South America, wars in China, state building in India, colonization in Australia, the retention of formal colonies elsewhere, and so on. Here, "empire" functions as a catachresis for Little Britain's expansion beyond the small islands in the North Atlantic; it is not a state or a polity so much as what Great (not Greater) Britain did.

Unwittingly, these critical accounts of free trade metaleptically posit an effect of liberalization—an insularly definable British polity—as the process's presiding subject. From Smith on, liberal political economy worked to build the spacing of the political that latter-day historians take as common sense. Thus, in the final paragraph of *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith writes that Britain had accrued the debt of imperial war making through the eighteenth century because "the colonies were *supposed* to be provinces of the British empire." Given the fact that the colonies did not support their defense well enough—they did not pay their own way—Smith declared Britain's empire to be one "in imagination only," a "golden dream."[65] By distinguishing the imperial from the provincial, Smith cognitively scales the political space of Britain down to the Three Kingdoms; moreover, by deriding empire as a "golden dream," he denies it politico-ontological status. The political cartography projected by Smith would gain traction through the nineteenth century—ironically, even as Britain busied itself asserting its "moral *imperium*" in the West Indies.[66] On one hand, political economists would increasingly delaminate Britain from the empire, tending to define colonial trade as foreign trade. On the other hand, political processes worked to consolidate the political at the level of Little Britain. In particular, Reform in 1832 functionally expelled the West India interest from Parliament, with the effect that the islands no longer had secure representation in the empire's legislative body.[67] Finally, the passage of free-trade legislation in 1846 dramatically confirmed the exteriority of the colonial world from the British polity: from the perspective of Britain's liberalized markets, Jamaica was as foreign to Britain as Cuba, or Trinidad as Brazil. The West Indies were conceived of less as political members of an expansive polity than as expensive "property" (as Cobden put it) of the British nation.[68] And not just expensive: free traders such as John Ramsay McCulloch and Cobden described the islands as expendable and recommended simply abandoning them.[69]

McCulloch and Cobden are perhaps limit cases, but the very idea that the islands were detachable, nonintegral components of the British polity enabled the development of a rationale of imperial rule as flexible as the free markets that underwrote it. The liberalization of Britain's markets maximized the mobility of British capital, allowing capitalists to divest from the declining colonies and invest in more profitable sites within and beyond the empire. Claiming imperial subjecthood could no longer compel British capital or British concern to stick around. Indeed, the very status of imperial subject underwent a profound transformation. As liberal economic reason subsumed imperial

political logics, liberal jurists and statesmen would attempt to provide a *nomos* for an empire whose ontic persistence could not be squared with its theoretical and institutional dismantling. The emergence of ideologemes of responsible governance for the lighter-skinned colonies made thinkable—as the U.S. Revolution did for Smith—a tendential political division of empire in the name of bestowing representative government to white colonists, allowing for fiscal retrenchment in Britain, and maintaining healthy commerce among all parts. At the same time, statesmen and jurists suggested that empire should persist for the darker folk of the world not because colonial subjects had a political right to inclusion in the empire, but because Britain was bestowing a gift of civilizing governance to prepare the uncivilized for self-rule.[70] Scholars tend to read such rhetoric as providing ideological cover for an empire expanding throughout Asia and the Pacific, and so it did. Yet what served as a justification for the intensified incorporation of Asia into the political and economic world of Britain functioned as an alibi for Britain's turn from the West Indies.[71] The replacement of political with economic logics supplemented by racial moralism as empire's foundation rendered West Indians' relation to Britain precarious, dependent as it was on the moral voluntarism of metropolitan Britons, even as liberalization facilitated the divestment of British capital and British concern from the West Indies to locations elsewhere. By positioning empire in the horizon of the nation-state—even if this horizon was infinitely deferred—the liberalized empire refused to consider empire itself a meaningful location of political relation. In Stoler's terms, liberalization rendered empire a "moving target," a form of relation that evaded capture by political normativities.[72]

From the late eighteenth century until today, metropolitan social theory has been unable to sight the emergence of neglect as a practice of imperial rule precisely because the neglect of empire constitutes the deep structure of its various epistemologies. I want to suggest that the practice of neglect—and thus the crisis it occasioned for West Indians—can become legible only by adopting the perspective of those negotiating their instituted illegibility. Williams's opus *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) is a key text for opening up this perspective. In many ways, *Capitalism and Slavery* is the West Indian twin of Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*: it supplements Polanyi's fixation on Britain with an emphasis on the empire in ways that enable us to see the polity-destroying gravity of the transformations that Polanyi narrowly narrates as the history of a small island in the North Atlantic. While Williams's text is frequently (and reductively) taken as an economistic critique

of hagiographic historiography on abolition, it is more properly read as an account of how the West Indies came to be "forgotten" in the wake of abolition and emancipation.[73] Interpreting abolition in 1807 and emancipation in 1834/38 from the horizon of liberalization in 1846, Williams could not reconcile the intense investment of imperial concern attending the first two events with the neglect instituted by the last.[74] As he goes on to explain, capitalism deploys and produces certain social formations for accumulation in one era (such as plantation colonies during mercantilist empire), only to divest from these forms to enhance the valorization of capital in another (as with liberalization).[75] Williams's account of liberal capitalism's dynamics tracks Randy Martin's account of neoliberal capitalism: "Capitalism's drive for self-expansion forces people together to create forms of life that encumber social wealth, whose limitations capital subsequently flees."[76] *Capitalism and Slavery*'s mix of outrage, melancholia, and sarcastic realism—captured in the pseudo-Burkean epigraph to this introduction—derives from the fact that Britain did not care to sustain the imperial "form of life" that it had violently fostered and then freed. Williams's approach to capitalism is indeed rather economistic inasmuch as he sees the dismantling of the mercantilist empire as a foregone conclusion; yet the normative force of Williams's work derives from his outrage that the imperial polity nonetheless did not block capital from divesting from a world in which imperial subjects were forced to invest. In other words, *Capitalism and Slavery* is a scathing critique of imperial neglect—even if Williams, writing on the cusp of decolonization, did not himself care to be included in an imperial polity.

A century earlier, West Indian writers encountered this depoliticization of empire as a crisis of neglect without the imaginative and affective buffer afforded by the nationalist alternative. As we will see, this refusal of nationalism was overdetermined by multiple conditions, but here I want to foreground the islands' unique histories of settlement and development. By the era of free trade, there were few local frames of political reference beyond the empire within which West Indians, black or white, could emplot their worlds. The political dislocation of the Middle Passage, as well as the fact that by the 1840s most black West Indians had been born in the islands, meant that empire appeared less like a foreign invader than like the quotidian but deep structure of West Indian reality.[77] Empire was "the political reality with which [West Indians] lived," the underived ordinary within whose coordinates West Indians mapped their relation to the world.[78] They were, to supplement David Scott's lovely phrase, conscripts of imperial modernity.[79] When I suggest, then, that

liberalization induced a crisis in West Indian political imaginaries, my point is not that West Indians, black or white, loved empire, gladly sang Victoria's praises, or invested much positive affect in the relation—although there was plenty of that. My point is rather that empire served as an assumed horizon of political legibility that the discursive and institutional dynamics of liberal racial capitalism displaced.[80] For West Indians, empire was a "form of life," as Martin might put it. It was created by millions of people forced together (and who forced people together) with differentiated degrees of violence; it was nonetheless the world in which West Indians sought freedom, became emancipated, and imagined themselves as political subjects. Confronting liberalization's disembedding of Britain's polity and economy from the formal structures of empire, West Indian writers attempted to reanimate the empire as a political world to halt the flight of British capital and British concern.[81] In so doing, they generated an epistemic framework through which the dynamics of neglect could be exposed, understood, and critiqued.

Paradoxically, the form of critique developed against liberal political economy functioned to attach subjects to a world that was detaching from them. In many ways, the imperial polity that creoles invoked to manage the crisis of liberalization did not preexist its putative dissolution; the empire creoles desired did not preexist their citations of its loss. For this reason, it is a moot point whether Britons ever recognized West Indians as political subjects of the empire, or whether the imperial state had ever worked according to norms of obligation, reciprocity, and protection. The empire that West Indians imaginatively produced in response to the rise of economic liberalism is irreducibly discontinuous with the empire that actually existed, just as it is irreducibly discontinuous with the ways in which Britons imagined, conceptualized, and practiced empire.[82] West Indians looked to empire for political belonging not because they had it in the past—after all, as enslaved, most of them did not—but because they needed to reanimate a vanishing horizon of political relation in the present. West Indians' insistent invocation of a nonneglectful empire thus functioned catachrestically, as an a-referential formation of an always already lost object that enabled them to articulate political demands to negotiate their disorienting present. Given my insistence on the catachrestical nature of West Indians' empire imaginary, my aim in this book is not to provide a third-person, structural account of what empire was, such as one finds in the work of Alexander Motyl.[83] Instead, I take definitional or foundational accounts of what empire is—both historical and contemporary—to be already and necessarily bound up in a mutating field of

situated political fantasies. Tracking these fantasies requires maintaining an analytic intimacy with my subjects, such that the indicative and subjunctive moods of my own writing blur as I come to inhabit West Indians' peculiar structure of feeling. Indeed, neglect becomes legible only from a fantasy-laden perspective that empire was, could have been, or could be different. The critical idiom of neglect functioned analogously to the way that critical keywords generated in response to capitalism's restructuring of the social function of the state—"precarity," "abandonment," "disposability," and so on.[84] These markers of social catastrophe orient the present around the functional absence of a "past" form of the state; in so doing, they conscript critical affects and imaginaries into a cruel optimistic relationship with the state in its present form. The result is a bounded and binding poiesis, a fabulation of a world to come that intensifies the hope subjects have in the mutability of the world that, at the moment, does not care for their presence within it.

The Hemispheric Turn

Liberalization reconstituted the political cartography of Britain such that West Indians could no longer immediately or intuitively assume the British Empire as their political world. *Empire of Neglect* argues that British West Indian writers encoded their subtraction from the empire as an entrance into worlds exorbitant to it. Hemispheric American geographies, histories, and literary genres overtake those of the British Empire in the literature produced in the wake of free trade. These narratives—which are almost always tales of orphans and illegitimate mulatto children—symbolically render liberalization as a process of parental abandonment, one that can be repaired only through the formation of political, kinship, and romantic ties in the hemisphere. For some West Indians, the Americas came into being as an imaginative and practical site through which they could manage their functional expulsion from the imperial polity. I say "some" because, without a more concerted effort at recovery, the to-hand literary record of the nineteenth century is too small to admit generalizations; moreover, the significant literary texts we possess are biased toward Trinidad and Jamaica (with some input from Barbados, British Guiana, and elsewhere). Nonetheless, within the texts we do possess, the Americas functioned as a placeholder for the desires, fantasies, and hopes that could no longer readily or easily attach to Britain. For this reason, the hemispheric reorientation I trace is not a stark rupture with West Indians' imperial past. Rather, West Indians' turn toward and encounter

with the Americas was structured by the perduring sense that they belonged elsewhere. Within this discursive, affective, and political ecology, the Americas became a zone of political investment for West Indians insofar as they functioned as a surrogate for Britain—as a displaced repetition of a world West Indians could not have but could not not want.

Part of my argument here is that the usability of the hemisphere as a scale of literary and historical analysis for these materials is dependent on and subordinate to West Indians' relations to intraimperial transformations. As many literary scholars and historians have shown, the British West Indies had long been connected to points in the New World through shared histories of conquest and settlement and flows of commodities, capital, and people.[85] There is, however, a fundamental discontinuity between scholarly and historical subjects' modes of world mapping, and the observable empirics of circulation cannot stand in for the phenomenological, affective, and political orientations through which subjects locate their worlds. Indeed, one source of the frustration that has accompanied hemispheric American studies from the beginning is that it is simply easier to identify "the Americas" as an analytic field materialized by the circulation of stuff than it is to find Americans or Americanos who inhabit the hemisphere as their political world.[86] Thus, while British West Indian subjects routinely interacted with other points in the New World, the density of empirical articulations with American polities did little to affect the contour of West Indian political identifications. Indeed, as Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy has argued, the emergence of colonial independence movements in the Americas—and the American Revolution of 1776 first and foremost—reattached planter elites to the British imperial polity, even as they continued to agitate for local autonomy in governmental affairs and for freer rights of trade with American polities.[87] It was only with liberalization in 1846, when they understood themselves as abandoned by empire, that West Indians would begin to consider themselves in a broadly American frame of reference. The hemisphere operates in this book less as a cartographic given or a field of empirical connections than as the imaginative space constituted by a political project. It functioned as a flickering horizon of time-bound social possibility whose value was structured by the negativity of imperial neglect and abandonment.[88]

These projects of hemispheric reorientation were heterogeneous, riven by the multiple modalities by which neglect fashioned subjects in the West Indies. West Indians approached the hemisphere in diverse ways. Elite white West Indians turned to hemispheric frames of analysis to describe the ironic

effects and possible consequences of liberalization. As I show in chapter 3, creole pamphleteers argued that liberalization in Britain intensified slavery and territorial imperialism in the hemisphere: imperial neglect would result in the islands' abandonment to reenslavement at the hands of Yankee filibusterers. According to this line of argument, Britain needed to return to imperial protectionism so that plantation owners could both protect black West Indians from U.S. conquest and civilize them through the extension of remunerative wage labor. The expansionist presence of the United States in the hemisphere similarly conditions the political imaginaries of black and brown West Indian writers. Indeed, the absence of nationalist imaginaries is readily explicable by black fears, common throughout the hemisphere, that black sovereignty was impossible in a state system that first and foremost cognized black subjects as enslaveable and in a hemisphere where the space of slavery seemed only to be expanding.[89] Put simply, black West Indians could not reiterate the U.S. declaration of independence in a world inhabited by the United States. (As we will see, black British West Indian authors marked the inadequacy of nationalist projects to their political present by refusing the modal normativity of the Haitian Revolution.) Instead, black West Indian writers gestured to U.S. slavery and imperialism as a means of recalling Britain to the promises that they associated with emancipation. At the same time, however, black West Indians increasingly drew on hemispheric American histories and geographies to model what emancipation, as an incorporation of black subjects into the imperial polity, *should* have been.

Unsurprisingly, then, it was not the United States to which most black West Indians turned in their attempt to manage the crisis of imperial neglect. They instead looked south and mobilized Spanish imperial and Spanish American histories, geographies, and political forms to imagine and theorize modes of political belonging opposed to the neglectful logics of the liberalized empire. To be sure, U.S. print culture played a remarkable role in the development of West Indian literature. The publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was perhaps *the* print event in the mid-nineteenth-century West Indies, and black and white creoles also borrowed other genres from Yankee print culture (the dime novel, socialist pamphleteering, and so on). However, these generic forms were mobilized in the service of reorienting West Indian political imaginations from the north to the south, from the anglosphere to the hispanosphere, from a neglectful empire to a new world of care. This work of reorientation is most evident in texts that maintain a link to Stowe—Michel Maxwell Philip's

Emmanuel Appadocca (1854), Marcella Noy Wilkin's *The Slave Son* (1854), and George Numa Des Sources's *Adolphus* (1853)—all historical narratives about Trinidadian slavery in which Bolívarian Venezuela replaces Canada as the realizable, desirable site of fugitive mulatto freedom. More broadly, West Indian writers recuperated Spanish imperial norms—or associated them with postimperial Spanish American polities—to fabulate the existence of multiracial states that accorded black subjects political legibility and secured their material lives with diverse forms of economic protection. Black West Indians contested liberalism by investing (what Anglos on both sides of the Atlantic thought of as) the decaying form of Spanish mercantilist empire with a political and ethical normativity opposed to liberal neglect. The quasi-Fourierist Des Sources would radicalize this fantasy, describing the imperial and postimperial regime of Venezuela as more or less socialist throughout the run of his radical newspaper, *The Trinidadian* (1849–54). As Des Sources's career attests, West Indians' investments in the Americas were not simply figurative: Des Sources would found a short-lived socialist, black autonomist colony in Venezuela in 1853. More famously, Mary Seacole's career as the "black Florence Nightingale" would begin in the isthmus of Panama, where she worked alongside thousands of other West Indians to build and service the infrastructure of transcontinental transportation systems. Des Sources and Seacole simultaneously built hemispheric alternatives to British imperial belonging *and* modeled postliberal modalities of political and economic life for Britain.

In tracing this reorientation, my aim is to argue for the poetic possibilities that accrue in zones of instituted depletion, neglect, and abandonment. Neglect is not simply a position of social death. Rather, it incites acts of worldmaking through which subjects attempt re-enfleshing forms of life that have been stripped bare.[90] By tracing the worlds West Indians formed as they sought to find a place where their presence would be meaningful to others, my aim is not to valorize endurance over exhaustion or mobility over stuckness in conditions where a population is structured as negligible. The poiesis of the world poor cannot be taken as an alibi for their impoverishment. Yet I fear that contemporary critical idioms generated in similar scenes of disposable, abandoned, or negligible life work to subsume the political semiosis of such subjects in the service of maintaining the encounter with life's other as a politico-ethical absolute. As Alexander Weheliye quips of Giorgio Agamben's influential conceptualization of bare life, "What seems to have vanished from this description is the *life* in the *bare life* compound; hence the homo sacer remains a thing, whose happening slumbers in bare life without journeying

through the rivulets of liberation elsewhere."[91] As we will see throughout this book, the subtraction of "life" from "bare life," the inattention to the persistence of social vibrancy from scenes of bodily or social unworlding, was entirely functional for the installation of a political order that was neglectful of black life. Approaching life as bare disburdens the critic from listening for the fugitive, otherwise unthinkable forms of life fabricated by those for whom social life is a being toward death. Obviously, the point is not to romanticize such improvisations with structures of catastrophe. Rather, the point is that the neglected project forms of world that are necessarily discontinuous with the desires emanating from the world of the critic, the scholar, or the state.

For neglected West Indians, these worlds to come were figured by and within the New World. But West Indians' political investments in the Americas were fragile, dependent as they were on intraimperial dynamics. Indeed, they ultimately proved ephemeral. By the turn of the twentieth century, Britain would begin a return to preliberal modalities of empire; in 1919, it would reestablish the tangle of protections and preferences whose dismantling in the 1840s induced a West Indian crisis of political identification. Yet this economic reincorporation of empire did not include the political rights that an earlier generation of West Indians imagined underwrote economic relations between free peoples. Instead, this economic reincorporation of empire would relocalize political antagonism within the empire. As Britain reoriented toward and reinvested in the West Indies, West Indians reoriented their political imaginaries toward Britain. In the process, West Indians would come to inhabit the binary mapping of the political that would propel anticolonial nationalism—that of the colonizer/colonized. While West Indians would continue to travel through the Americas—and, indeed, migrate more and more to the United States—the Americas themselves would cease to hold the political meaning with which an earlier generation of writers had invested them. They would become, as V. S. Naipaul would lament decades later, a mere "fact in a geography book."[92] That Naipaul and his generation would more or less forget the writers this book treats makes sense: they inhabited another world.

Outline of Chapters

This book is organized into two parts of two chapters each, with a hinge chapter between them. While each chapter moves across various temporal units, the dominant line of the book unfolds more or less chronologically.

In part, this recourse to a chronological historical structure is an effect of the fact that readers are unlikely to be familiar with much of the material I explore or the historical coordinates in which this material is situated. At the same time, the narrative I offer is one of an accumulating crisis. The first three chapters should be read sequentially; the order matters less for the last two. Situated as this work is between British imperial and hemispheric American frames of reference, it is possible that students of American culture will find it too British and students of British culture will find it too American. I beg patience from both sets of readers, offering as my excuse that the feeling of not being where you would like is precisely the melancholic unworlding of the West Indies that I am tracing.

Part 1, "Managing Neglect," is conceptually organized by morphologies of a plantation's decline. A planter's neglect, urged husbandry manuals, would lead to a plantation's worthlessness, which would ultimately force the planter to abandon it. These keywords—"neglect," "worthlessness," "abandonment"—reappear frequently in the archives I explore as the idioms through which black and white West Indians examined their attenuating relation to the British Empire. These keywords, moreover, map onto key moments in the discursive and institutional elaboration of economic liberalism in the British imperial world: 1776, 1834, and 1846.

Chapter 1, "The Political Economy of Neglect," traces how British political economy constituted itself, in the wake of the American Revolution, through incessantly imagining the abandonment of empire. Reading key texts of political economy alongside an archive of plantation correspondence, planter and husbandry manuals, and the anonymously published novel *Marly; or, A Planter's Life in Jamaica* (1828), I explore how the figure of the planter emerged as an imperial antithesis to the neglectful sovereign of political economy. Where Smith's political economy was epistemologically and politically grounded on the possibility of the state's withdrawing attention from economic transactions, elite West Indians understood the imperial economy as propped up by obligatory, inexhaustible bestowals of attention and care from figures bound together in an incalculable web of relations. The planter emerges as a noncalculating bearer of attentiveness whose presence supplements the necessary inadequacy of any automated, market-based regime of calculable rationality. The planter's imperial gaze gathers together diverse domains of existence, countering political economy's division of the economic and the political, the imperial world and Little Britain.

Chapter 2, "'Them Worthless Ones': Emancipatory Liberalism in Jamaica," explores the vicissitudes of the emancipation process in Jamaica. In an obvious sense, emancipation worked by stripping enslaved subjects of the monetary value that their bodies bore; it worked by rendering their persons worthless and relocating value in transactional labor-power. The four-year period of Apprenticeship inaugurated in 1834 was intended to assist in this relocation of value by fashioning formerly enslaved humans into an industrious, wage-dependent peasantry. Instead, Apprenticeship constellated a durative period of worthlessness without repair, as planters hyper-exploited still-bonded laborers while they retained secure access to them. This chapter explores the divergent ways in which liberal abolitionists and Jamaican ex-slaves navigated the institution of black life as absolutely worthless. Reading across abolitionist pamphlets, I argue that abolitionists always maintained sanguine hopes for black worthlessness, arguing as many did through the 1820s and 1830s that freedom could be quickly obtained by divesting all value from the islands through market liberalization. Confronting the failure of labor markets and market rationality during Apprenticeship, abolitionists attempted to relocate the normative grounds of value from the market to the reproductive labor of Jamaican women. Reading the ex-slave James Williams's *A Narrative of Events, since the First of August, 1834* (1837) alongside the parliamentary inquiry it set off, I argue that emancipated Jamaicans sought to develop idioms of imperial subjecthood as a way to resist their slide into worthlessness. Where abolitionists picked up the figure of worthless life to reconstitute projects of liberal value production, ex-slaves moved through worthlessness to find another horizon of social being that they associated with empire.

Chapter 3, "Imperial Abandonment and Hemispheric Alternatives," examines the collapse of this fantasy of imperial belonging with the liberalization of Britain's sugar markets in 1846. Here I am interested in how liberalization's reconstitution of the politico-economic scale of Britain patterned the modalities by which liberalization would register as an event for Britons and West Indians. The West Indian writers I explore are motivated by a vexing question: how could they show that liberalization was not simply an act of fiscal fine-tuning but a dramatic event of imperial abandonment? Reading the pamphlets of the white absentee planter Matthew Higgins and the pirate novel *Emmanuel Appadocca; or, Blighted Life, a Tale of the Boucaneers* (1854), by the Trinidadian mulatto Michel Maxwell Philip, I argue that West Indian

writers turned to the Americas to render legible the occluded violence of imperial abandonment. In turning to the hemisphere, Higgins and Philip fabulate new forms and norms of imperial belonging at the very moment that empire seemed threatened with wholesale dismantling—Higgins, by arguing that liberalization would ultimately result in the conquest of the islands by the United States; Philip, by recuperating fantasy-laden ideals of what the Spanish empire had once been to model a postliberal form of British imperial care. This chapter is a hinge chapter inasmuch as it begins to trace a hemispheric reorientation on the part of West Indian writers, but it is *only* a hinge insofar as this reorientation is incomplete. As Philip's novel explores, the cost of conceiving of oneself as abandoned is a melancholic introjection of the world one purportedly lost as the deep structure of one's subjectivity. Philip's novel warns, I argue, that any critique of imperial neglect or imperial abandonment risks fashioning subjects who are nothing but their wounded attachment, unable to attach to alternative horizons of political belonging.

Part 2, "Building New Worlds," is less tightly structured than part 1. This loosening of structure is a symptom of the fact that liberalization destructured West Indians' imaginative and affective worlds. Chapter 4, "Uncle Bolívar's Children," explores how black and mulatto West Indian subjects attempted to find a world in compensation for their instituted worldlessness. This chapter is centered on *The Trinidadian*, a newspaper based in Port of Spain and edited by the radical mulatto George Numa Des Sources. A vehement critic both of imperial liberalization and the racial-capitalist order of colonial Trinidad, Des Sources would urge his fellow Trinidadians of color to migrate to Numancia, a Fourierist colony he founded in Venezuela. As I argue, Des Sources's colonizing scheme was underwritten by a profound ambivalence about the possibility of black subjects' acceding to any position of political belonging in the world's interstate system, arguing that blacks were fated to political homelessness but still in need of a home. Des Sources wanted both recognizable political belonging and to subtract himself from this very problematic. This ambivalence, I argue, structured his approach to Venezuelan colonization, which was simultaneously coded as a separatist movement from any state *and* as a relocation of citizenship dreams to the postcolony. Arguing that state abandonment rendered black political imaginaries transnational by default, I explore the transnational web of literary transactions that constituted the dialectic of Des Sources's political thinking.

Reading across Des Sources's investments in Spanish imperial law, German and American utopian socialism, and the tradition of sentimental abolitionism opened by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I show how Des Sources's Venezuela is a composite rendered ambivalent by his conflicting desires for freedom from and proximity to the state.

Chapter 5, "A Purely 'Mercial Transaction," reads Mary Seacole's *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857), a memoir that details the travels of this sutler, hotelier, and nurse from the edges of the U.S. and British empires in Panama to the edges of the British and Russian empires in the Crimea. A migrant seeking work after Jamaica's economic collapse, Seacole uses her text to valorize forms of material sociality that exceed the "purely commercial transactions" of liberalism's market. Declaring herself "Mother Seacole," she describes her affective labor as a nurse, petty trader, and hotelier throughout the Americas as a model for her mother country, Britain. Seacole's text identifies postliberal potentials that inhere in the interstices of empires. For Seacole, liberal empire depends on decidedly nonliberal economic practices for its maintenance—practices that are organized by ideologies of reciprocity, redistribution, and responsibility. Seacole poses the affective, caring, and marketing labor that she undertakes in spaces only partially incorporated into the British Empire as exemplary for how the empire should be organized. It is only in disaster zones of capital and empire such as Panama, I argue, that Seacole can imagine herself a subject of the British Empire.

This hemispheric reorientation would, however, be of fairly short duration. By way of conclusion, I explore how West Indian political imaginaries were eventually reincorporated into the empire in such a way that anticolonial nationalism became the political horizon of West Indian writing. I examine this shift by focusing on well-known West Indian responses to James Anthony Froude's famously racist travelogue, *The English in the West Indies; or, The Bow of Ulysses* (1888). Scholars tend to read these responses—particularly that of John Jacob Thomas—as inaugural sites in the history of West Indian anticolonialism. This anticolonial nationalism, I suggest, testifies to a broader transformation in the grammar of West Indian political thinking. By the twilight years of the era of free trade, West Indian writers had absorbed the epistemic and political principles of economic liberalism. Assertions of black fitness for political autonomy premised on economic achievement came to overwhelm prior generations' political idioms and imaginaries; the political cartography

of colonizer-colonized began to reset the map of an integral empire that creoles strove to realize. This binary mapping occluded the third space of the Americas and all of the fantasies for which the Americas had stood. In time, anticolonial nationalism would render these other modes of being political unthinkable, unimaginable, and, above all, neglected.

Notes

Introduction

1. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 456, *passim*. The very term "mercantilism" has been subjected to analysis—some critical, some recuperative—for more than a century now. Neither Smith nor his predecessors used the term, and scholars tend to agree that it names more a heterogeneous set of practices than a definable economic theory or doctrine. For a recent overview of these debates, see Stern and Wennerlind, *Mercantilism Reimagined*. For the sake of brevity, I refer to Smith's text throughout this book by its popularized, truncated title.

2. The classical text on this moment is Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System*. I have also drawn heavily on Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England*.

3. I am adopting this term from Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.

4. See Edwards, *The History, Commercial and Civil, of the British West Indies*, 2:567, 2:579.

5. Thomas Hobbes is as good a figure for this conceptualization as any. As Carl Schmitt puts it in a very Hobbesian moment, "The *protego ergo obligo* is the *cogito ergo sum* of the state": Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 52. West Indians tended to reverse the line of this dictum, presenting obligation and dependence as the normative ground of protection. Indeed, Schmitt would himself mark the possibility of a philosophical transaction between the West Indies and Hobbesian thought through a citation to Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1657). Ligon writes, "And truly these vegetatives, may teach both the sensible and reasonable Creatures, what it is that makes up wealth, beauty, and all harmony in that *Leviathan*, a well governed Commonwealth: Where the Mighty men, and Rulers of the earth, by their prudent and carefull protection, secure them from harmes; whilst they retribute their paynes, and faithfull obedience, to serve them in all just Commands": Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 20–21. For a broader reading of the political connotations of protection and obligation, see Skinner, *Visions of Politics III*, 264–86. See also Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*. On Ligon and Hobbes, see Parrish, "Richard Ligon and the Atlantic Science of Commonwealths."

6. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 132.

7. For a general history of Jamaican emancipation attuned to the impact of political economy, see Holt, *The Problem of Freedom*. I discuss this at length in chapter 2.

8. For a description of this shift from an illuminating world-systems perspective, see Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*.

9. Disraeli's description of the "forlorn Antilles" is cited in Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 144. For the "millstone," see Monypenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, 385.

10. Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 27.

11. See Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*.

12. I am inspired by Hadley, *Living Liberalism*; Kazanjian, "The Speculative Freedom of Colonial Liberia"; Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*; Sen, *Empire of Free Trade*.

13. See Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*; Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*.

14. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 242.

15. For a critique of intentionalist recuperations, see Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, 188. The history of rescuing liberalism by rescuing liberals' intentions is a far longer historiographical tradition, dating back to the "Adam Smith Problem" in nineteenth-century Germany: see Montes, "Das Adam Smith Problem."

16. See Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 80–97.

17. Neglect comes from the Latin *ne-* (not) and *legere* (pick up, gather). *Legere* is a cognate of the Greek *legein* or *logos* (neglect, *v.*): *Oxford English Dictionary*, online ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), http://www.oed.com, accessed 18 March 2015.

18. On the contemporary U.S. reception of free trade, see Palen, *The "Conspiracy" of Free Trade*. For an ethnography of banana workers responding to neoliberal initiatives in the 1990s in St. Lucia, see Slocum, *Free Trade and Freedom*.

19. "Former slaves and former masters agreed that the Sugar Duties Act signaled not merely the expansion of free trade but also the empire's abandonment of its Caribbean colonies and its backpedaling on antislavery principles, making a rare moment when the two groups' interests aligned. Their concurrence quickly vanished after 1846": Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom*, 90.

20. I am indebted to Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, for help thinking through the ways that subjects manage binding to bad objects.

21. Rancière, *Dissensus*, 33.

22. Key texts in the development of hemispheric studies include Belnap and Fernandez, *Jose Marti's "Our America"*; Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere*; Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*; Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America*.

23. I draw the term "surrogation" from Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 2.

24. For work that thinks through the relationship between the British West Indies and the Americas, see Goudie, *Creole America*; Goudie, "Toward a Definition of Caribbean American Regionalism"; Watson, *Caribbean Culture and British Fiction*.

25. Paul Giles warns us against "simply replacing nationalist essentialism . . . with a geographical essentialism predicated on physical contiguity": Giles, "Commentary," 49. Martha Schoolman has recently argued that scale was itself a problematic that historical subjects—particularly abolitionists—addressed and that literary scholarship should trace these scalar shifts, not impose them: Schoolman, *Abolitionist Geographies*.

26. For other scholarship on this archive, see Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries*; Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow*; Rosenberg, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*; Smith, *Creole Recitations*.

27. From the perspective of canon-forming compendiums such as John Ramsay McCulloch's *A Select Collection of Early English Tracts on Commerce* (1856) or from the vantage of canon-forming narratives offered in texts like Joseph Schumpeter's *History of Economic Analysis* (1954), one could draw the conclusion that West Indians never contributed to economic theory at all.

28. See Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 113. For West Indians' broader involvement in the British polity, see Gauci, *William Beckford*. For their engagements with Enlightenment philosophy and science, see Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic*. On West Indians' parliamentary presence, see Franklin, "Enterprise and Advantage"; Higman, "The West India 'Interest' in Parliament"; Ragatz, *Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean*, 52.

29. On reading apparent ignorance as motivated refusal, see Lloyd and Thomas, *Culture and the State*, 81.

30. A smattering of examples includes MacDonnell, *Free Trade*, 464; Premium, *Eight Years in British Guiana*, 58; Telfair, *Some Account of the State of Slavery at Mauritius*, xiii. The term "anticolonial" and the label "anticolonial party" were also extended to abolitionists. See [Anonymous], *Sketches and Recollections*, 256, 259–60; and Barclay, *A Practical View*, 377, 383.

31. Edwards, *The History, Commercial and Civil, of the British West Indies*, 2:482.

32. MacDonnell, *Colonial Commerce*, xii.

33. MacDonnell, *Colonial Commerce*, x.

34. See Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment*, 34–53. I discuss this in chapter 2.

35. As David Beck Ryden notes in his study of abolition, "What is striking about these defenders of the trade in Africans was their conviction that the abolition movement was part of a conspiracy to undermine the 'old colonial system.' From the planters' perspective, then, the abolition of the British slave trade was not simply a threat to their labor supply, but, a challenge to their entire political and economic philosophy": Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, 7. The defense of the African trade—and, later, slavery—was not only a defense of slavery in itself, but was also a defense of the empire.

36. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 665.

37. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 34.

38. Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact*, 236–49.

39. I draw the concept of disembedding from Polanyi, for whom the embeddedness of an economic structure marks its nonautonomy and functional reliance on kin and political institutions: Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.

40. See the work of Jack Greene, who mobilizes the concept of an "imperial constitution" to think regularity in the absence of form: Greene, *Negotiated Authorities*; Greene, *Peripheries and Center*. As Gould writes, "Even within the subordinate polities of Ireland and the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean, Parliament's theoretical supremacy remained hedged about by the competing claims of provincial assemblies and a variety of customary local rights and privileges": Gould, "A Virtual Nation," 482. For recent discussions of the legal and juridical incoherence of Britain's Atlantic empire, see Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*; Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire*;

Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power*; MacMillan, *Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World*.

41. See Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*.

42. See "The Humble Petition of the Poor People of Jamaica and Parish of St. Ann's," in Harvey and Brewin, *Jamaica in 1866*, 101–3.

43. Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx*, 34.

44. As just one instance of the earlier usage, the Samuel Estwick, agent for Barbados, writes, "To the crown and dignity of the king I owe the firmest loyalty and attachment, and to his person and government all due allegiance; so long as in the judgment of the public, and as by his coronation-oath, as well as by law, he is bound to do, he shall protect, and no longer, the constitutional liberties of his subjects. I say, I owe all *due* allegiance, because allegiance and protection are terms of reciprocal duties only": Estwick, *A Letter to the Reverend Josiah Tucker*, 17. For the use of "protection" in the process of its semantic recentering, see Stephen, *The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated*, 1:xxxviii.

45. For a fantastic account of the generic—and, I would argue, epistemic—separation of economic from literary writing, and literature's counterformation in relation to this separation, see Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy*, 87–153.

46. Orderson, *Creoleana*, v.

47. Orderson, *Creoleana*, vi.

48. For a similar claim about the natural scientific work literary genres performed in the black Atlantic, see Rusert, *Fugitive Science*.

49. See, for instance, Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 36; Quayson, *Calibrations*, xi–xl.

50. See Guru, "How Egalitarian Are the Social Sciences in India?"

51. See Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*. For an overview of how the nineteenth century has largely been expelled from West Indian literary historiography, see Rosenberg, *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature*, 1–12.

52. West Indian archives remain woefully underdigitized, inhibiting a broader distribution of the intense primary research work that goes into archival excavation. Exploring the National Archives in Britain and in Trinidad, however, made it clear to me that colonial newspapers from an early period published poetry, serialized stories, and so on—and this is surely true of other islands with presses. Simply collating this material would amply expand the available archive of nineteenth-century West Indian literature. At present, we see only the tip of the iceberg—a handful of republished novels.

53. Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 1. For another brilliant attempt to think decolonization beyond nation-state formation, see Wilder, *Freedom Time*. For contemporary politics of nonsovereignty in the Caribbean, see Bonilla, *Non-sovereign Futures*.

54. For another take on contingency, imperial breakdown, and nation-state formation, see Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, 258.

55. Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*, 28.

56. Burton, *Empire in Question*, 22.

57. Kelly and Kaplan, "Nation and Decolonization," 427. See also Louis and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization." For a historically rich, theoretical recovery of anticolonial thinkers' and politicians' attempts to remake the world order in the name of sustaining postcolonial sovereignty, see Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire*.

58. As Alexander Motyl notes, "Empire, as a distinctly *political* system, has received scant attention from social scientists." Part of the reason, he suggests, is that empire simply became a term of political invective—particularly in the late Cold War—with Ronald Reagan's critique of the "evil empire": Motyl, *Imperial Ends*, 1.

59. Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," 137.

60. Wimmer and Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration."

61. Indeed, Seeley's attempt to reconceptualize British history as Greater British history was articulated explicitly in the horizon of free trade: Seeley, *The Expansion of England*, 73. For a rather partisan account of free trade, primed by the collapse of the liberal project in the early twentieth century, see Walker-Smith, *The Protectionist Case in the 1840s*.

62. For Polanyi, as for Lenin and then Rosa Luxemburg, imperialism was a means by which nation-states negotiate global crises of accumulation—a falling rate of profit in conditions of monopoly capital, difficulties of realizing surplus in the metropolitan center, and so on. Taking the late-century scramble for Africa as paradigmatic, these accounts accord the nation analytical and ontological precedence over empire. As a consequence, empire itself is never conceived of as a collective or corporate political subject; rather, empire is the institutional scaffolding through which the real collective subjects of the world system (state-backed capitalists in Britain, the United States, Germany, and so on) exercised their power. I do not dispute the adequacy of this analysis to late Victorian imperial expansion. My concern is to stress that the analytic detachability of empire from the nation in these accounts was an epistemic and institutional *effect* of liberalization. Center-left (Polanyi) and Marxist (Lenin, Luxemburg) conceptualizations of empire *as* imperialism share economic liberalism's epistemological frame: See Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*; Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*.

63. See, e.g., Howe, *Free Trade and Liberal England*; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, esp. 184–91. Schonhardt-Bailey, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade*, rigorously mobilizes incredible data sets to demonstrate how Cobdenites "nationalized the interest" in the repeal of the Corn Law—but nationalizing here marking a scaling *up* from the local, not *down* from the imperial.

64. Gallagher and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," 1–15. Following Gallagher and Robinson, Bernard Semmel tracks how the anti-imperial epistemics of political economy rather seamlessly converted into free-trade imperialism: Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

65. Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1028; emphasis added.

66. The phrase is from Richardson, *Moral Imperium*.

67. As Alexandra Franklin remarks, "The year 1833 marked the lowest ebb of West Indian planter power in Britain": Franklin, "Enterprise and Advantage," 257.

68. Cobden, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, 290.

69. See McCulloch, "Colonial Policy," 303.

70. For an exhaustive account of the formation of policies of responsible government, see Ward, *Colonial Self-Government*. On Britain's civilizing mission, see esp. Hall, *Civilising Subjects*. See also chapter 3 of this book.

71. Indeed, as Karuna Mantena argues, the "civilizing" alibi would be dropped after the rebellion of 1857, leading to the emergence of forms of indirect rule—that is, to practices of governance that created even greater distance between ordinary imperial subjects and the British polity: Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, 11.

72. Stoler, "On Degrees of Imperial Sovereignty," 127.

73. For a detailed overview of these debates, see Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, 7–33. As Ryden notes, critiques of Williams's argument—or, more accurately, what critics take to be Williams's argument—has had the effect that "the West Indies are written out of the story of the humanitarian victory of 1807": Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition*, 12.

74. As Williams put it, "The slave trade was abolished in 1807, slavery in 1833, the sugar preference in 1846. The three events are inseparable": Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 136. The point here—which is missed when critics read Williams's argument from the punctum of a single date, 1807—is that Williams wants to back read a diffuse systemic causality from the vantage of the consequences that attended and accumulated with each legislative moment. To be sure, Williams *does* occasionally inhabit a conspiratorial, intentionalist idiom, one in which a cabal of Manchester Men rigged abolitionism to free capital. (Such conspiratorialism is a frequent politico-methodological recourse of progressive critiques of capitalism that cannot commit to an anticapitalism, which Williams did not.) But his point is rather that abolitionism, emancipation, and then obviously free trade were all *functional* for a form of capital seeking to divest itself of a previous generation's bad investment.

75. "But this industrial development, stimulated by mercantilism, later outgrew mercantilism and destroyed it": Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 106. Earlier, he describes this dialectic of production and destruction as configuring Caribbean history as a "relay race," in which "the first to start passed the baton, unwillingly we may be sure, to another and then limped sadly behind": Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 7.

76. Martin, *An Empire of Indifference*, 131.

77. One might suggest that the forms of life and political imaginations developed by black West Indians were indigenous to empire. I am hesitant to describe this dynamic in such terms; Shona Jackson has importantly shown how creoleness became fashioned into a form of pseudo-indigeneity, and frequently through appropriative erasures of extant indigenous populations: Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*.

78. Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History*, 2.

79. Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*.

80. For the classical account of racial capitalism, see Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

81. Indeed, the contemporary field of new imperial studies was founded on such reparative maneuvers in relation to economic transformations within the British Commonwealth: see Armitage, "Greater Britain."

82. There were some metropolitan Britons who articulated imperial imaginaries that tracked those developed by black and white West Indians—most notably the systematic colonizers in the form of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, imperial federationists, and Tory protectionists. Yet the racialization of imperial belonging through the 1840s and 1850s had the effect of muting West Indians presence even in projects to unify the empire politically: see Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*. Still, there was certainly a gap between metropolitan and colonial understandings as to what imperial belonging entailed. Writing of the period of the American war for independence, P. J. Marshall argues, "The bulk of the British political elite seem to have judged empire in terms of material costs and benefits. . . . A view of the British empire as embodying a common set of values had been much more strongly held in the coloniaes than in Britain itself": Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic*, 7.

83. Motyl, *Imperial Ends*.

84. See, among others, Biehl, *Vita*; Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*; Standing, *The Precariat*; Wright, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*.

85. See, e.g., Goudie, *Creole America*; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*; Pares, *Yankees and Creoles*; Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation*.

86. Rodrigo Lazo has recently figured this deficit of subjectivity as the "impossibility" of building an archive of the hemisphere: Lazo, "The Invention of America Again," 751–71.

87. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 238–48.

88. For another narrative along these lines, but centered more on (what becomes) Colombia's ties to, and eventual disentanglement from, the transimperial western Caribbean, see Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory*.

89. See, e.g., Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, 195–96.

90. In making this argument, I am holding onto the hope that Fred Moten never stops articulating through a long sequence of engagements with the problem of black "social death" first given a name by Orlando Patterson and then rearticulated by Afropessimist scholars such as Jared Sexton. As Moten puts it in a clarification of his position, "What I assert is this: that black life—which is as surely to say *life* as black thought is to say *thought*—is irreducibly social; that, moreover, black life is lived in *political* death or that it is lived, if you will, in the burial ground of the subject by those who, insofar as they are not subjects, are also not, in the interminable (as opposed to the last) analysis, "death-bound," as Abdul JanMohamed . . . would say": Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness," 739. This death to the social, for Moten, opens the possibility of a fundamental reordering of the world. He writes, "[Blackness] instantiates and articulates another way of living in the world, a black way of living together in the other world we are constantly making in and out of this world, in the alternative planetarity that the intramural, internally differentiated presence—the (sur)real presence—of blackness serially brings online as persistent aeration, the incessant turning over of the ground beneath our feet that is the indispensable preparation for the radical overturning of the ground that we are under": Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness," 778–79.

91. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 131. Along these lines, Christina Sharpe argues, "Even as we experienced, recognized, and lived subjection, we did not *simply* or *only* live *in* subjection and *as* the subjugated": Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 4.

92. Naipaul, *The Loss of El Dorado*, 353.

Chapter 1. The Political Economy of Neglect

1. Torrens, *An Essay on the Production of Wealth*, 229–30.

2. Mill, "Colonies," 31.

3. For a brief overview of Torrens's position on free trade, see Irwin, "The Reciprocity Debate in Parliament."

4. See Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

5. See Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*; Hilton, *Corn, Cash, Commerce*.

6. On this point, see the classic argument in Gallagher and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

7. Arguments in favor of continuity date back at least to Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire*, which is concerned to see Britain's "swing to the East" as a process coextensive with empire building in the Americas. See also Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. I"; Cain and Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas. II. New Imperialism"; Cain and Hopkins, "The Political Economy of British Expansion Overseas"; Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*.

8. See Guttridge, "Adam Smith on the American Revolution."

9. See, e.g., McCulloch, "Colonial Policy—Value of Colonial Possessions"; Smith, *The Empire*, 44; Spence, *Britain Independent of Commerce*, 88.

10. For some of these critiques, see Gambles, *Protection and Politics*; Goldman, "The Origins of British 'Social Science.'"

11. I draw this term from Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 187.

12. The topic of West Indian decline is vexed within the historiography, due to attempts to locate the logic of emancipation within—or without—structural changes in the British and West Indian economies. For an overview of this historiography, see Ryden, "Does Decline Make Sense?"

13. Tomich, *Slavery in the Circuit of Sugar*, 26. See also Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery*.

14. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 132.

15. See, e.g., Spence, *The Radical Cause of the Present Distresses of the West-India Planters*, 103.

16. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 144.

17. For an overview of early receptions of Smith's work, see Teichgraeber, "Less Abused Than I Had Reason to Expect."

18. Edwards, *The History, Commercial and Civil, of the British West Indies*, 2:482.

19. Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy*, 87–153.