

Anna Sundelin

# 'Expensive Living and Costly Entertainment'

Britons as Aspiring Consumers in Jamaica, c. 1750-1810





## Anna Sundelin

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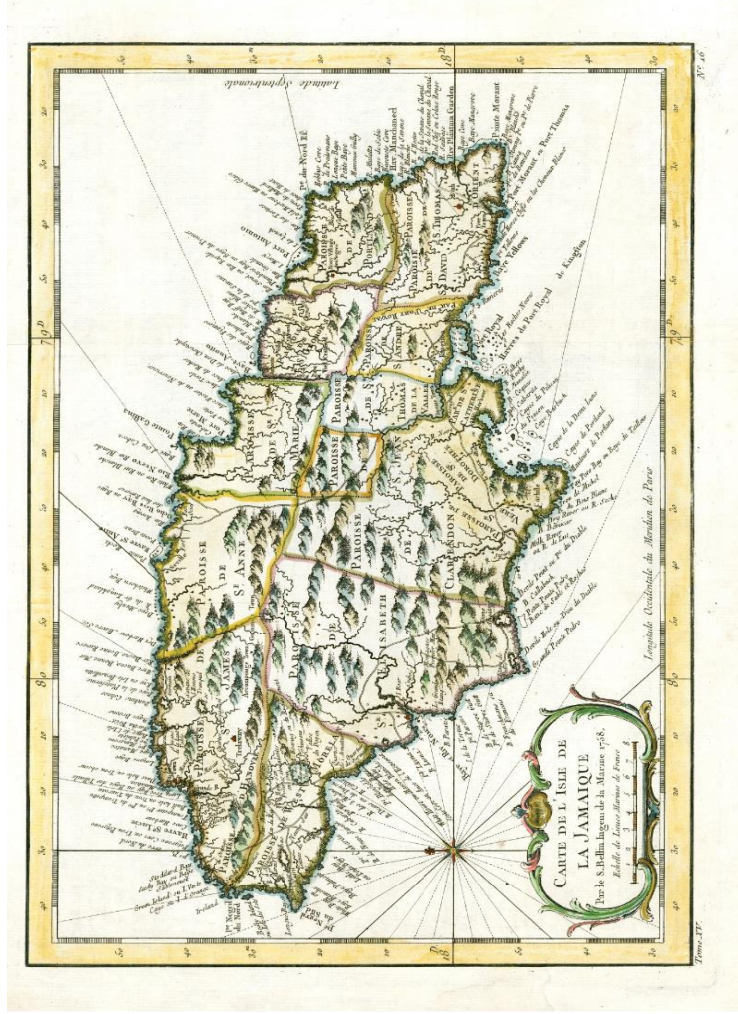
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Åbo, June 2018

Image 1, Carte de l'Isle de la Jamaïque, Jaques Nicholas Bellin, published 1758. University of Florida, via Digital Library of the Caribbean. Kingston and Port Royal are located on the southeast coast of the island. Spanish Town is located in the Parish of St. Catherine.



# 1 Colonial consumers

In late eighteenth century, Ann Gardner Broadbent, wife of a doctor and a resident of Spanish Town, Jamaica, sat down to write letters to those of her children living overseas. After finishing a letter to her son Rigby, she reached for the pen again, this time desirous of 'having a little chit-chat in a pleasant way' with her daughter Jane, residing in England.<sup>1</sup> Jane, who was born in 1779, was at the time a young student attending Mrs Fenwick's boarding school at Flint House in Greenwich, southeast of London. This was a common arrangement for children of settlers in the West Indies, as there was no school of a suitable standard for members of the middle class and the elite at the time.<sup>2</sup> Eager for some familiar conversation with her long-lost daughter, Mrs Broadbent set out to tell her all the latest news regarding friends and family members as well as the pet dog Jane had left behind when leaving to be educated in England. Wanting similar information in return, she reprimanded her daughter for neglecting to mention the promotion of a family acquaintance in her last letter. Mrs Broadbent also urged Jane to report every comment she would hear about her brother Rigby's clothes and behaviour. Rigby had recently returned to England from France, and now his mother was eager to know whether his stay in the fashion metropolis of Paris had affected his manners and appearance, and if so, in which way? She was especially curious to hear any comments about a coat that her son had bought in Paris, as a previous purchase had met with some disapproval from an acquaintance of the family. Furthermore, a substantial part of the letter was devoted to describing the measures taken by the Broadbents in Jamaica in preparation for the upcoming season of festivities on the island. During the following weeks, the Jamaican House of Assembly, the legislature of the colony, would be in session and in the evenings the inhabitants of Spanish Town would arrange numerous balls, dinners and

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<sup>1</sup> Geraldine Mozley (ed.), *Letters to Jane from Jamaica 1788–1796*, London, Published for the Institute of Jamaica by the West India Committee, 1938, p. 70–71.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Skedd, 'Women Teachers and the Expansion of Girls Schooling in England, ca. 1760–1820', in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 107; Maurie Dee McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2005, p. 5; Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government in Three Volumes*, London, T. Lownudes, 1774, vol. 1, p. 438.

other amusements; occasions that required proper clothing. According to Mrs Broadbent, the younger people on the island were especially anticipating the series of entertainment as the town had been 'most stupidly dull'<sup>3</sup> for several months:

Your dear Father and Sister are both well, the latter in high expectations of a Gay Session (for this is the season of gaiety here, when the Assembly meet and most families come to Town) and no less elated with the hopes of getting her Finery in time from England, to make her appearance at the Balls quite equipped by Mrs. Gifford: should she be disappointed I would not answer for the consequences, indeed, she would be badly off, for you seldom meet with those things here to please you, and if you do they are dreadfully expensive.<sup>4</sup>

We do not know how this story evolved, but one might suspect that the desired items did not reach the island in time for the social gatherings and dancing. For some reason, Mrs Broadbent did not finish the letter in one sitting, but added a few days later that 'the 20<sup>th</sup> of October is arrived and our fine things not come yet – which is a dreadful disappointment to your Sister, for they are much wanted by her'.<sup>5</sup> We can only speculate about the sister's reaction to the delay of the shipment of modish dresses.

The correspondence of Mrs Broadbent and her daughter is an example of the important ties that Britons in the West Indies and their relatives and friends in the mother country created and upheld across the Atlantic Ocean in the late eighteenth century. For the white inhabitants in Jamaica, the exchange of letters was an important means of staying in touch with friends and family members on the other side of the Atlantic. Moreover, the correspondence kept the white inhabitants in the colonies connected to British material culture. The letters sent from Britain included information about the latest trends in fashion in Europe and by writing to contacts overseas the settlers could make orders for desired items. One might ask why the question of fashionable, imported, dress for an upcoming ball was so important to the Broadbents and their peers in Jamaica. The letter cited above gives two explanations. It was rare to find clothes that were to one's liking on the island and if one did, they were

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<sup>3</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 70–71.

<sup>5</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 72.

often expensive. Looking at the broader context, another explanation comes to mind. In the eighteenth century, public diversions were significant occasions as they not only offered entertainment and a break from tedious everyday life, but also functioned as settings where people could display themselves as refined, well mannered and fashionably dressed. For an aspirational West Indian resident, desirous of being seen as an English gentleman or woman by his or her peers, this was all-important. Jane's sister, Nancy Maria Broadbent, was at the right age for finding a husband and the upcoming balls and other amusements would provide her and her family with many opportunities for establishing contacts. The sessions of the Assembly increased the population of Spanish Town significantly, as those settlers in Jamaica who lived on more remote plantations came into town. In another of her entertaining letters, Mrs Broadbent confided in Jane that the competition among the girls at these occasions was fierce, and she feared that 'the loss of fine Caps and scratched faces' would be the result if girls from the countryside were preferred by the young men.<sup>6</sup>

The historical context for this study is a society where consumption of a growing array of items became increasingly common on all levels. For many, especially from the middle classes, the growth in the supply of various kinds of goods of all qualities, in combination with money and opportunities to make purchases, as well as a desire to do so, offered the start of a new way of life.<sup>7</sup> Consumption was an important means to display status and appear genteel, polite and honourable. A knowledgeable consumer could display gentility through material items, but also taking part in activities such as shopping or attending the theatre were ways of showing refinement.<sup>8</sup> For the white settlers of Jamaica and their children, situated far away from the mother country, consumption of British manufactured items was an important link to Britain and British culture.<sup>9</sup> If one leafs through newspapers printed in Jamaica at that time, one will find advertisements for an abundance of imported goods that

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<sup>6</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 203–205.

<sup>8</sup> John Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c. 1680–1830*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants 1670–1780*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p. 108.

vary in quality, material, colour and even brand. Storekeepers on the island sold, for example, stylish ostrich feathers, textiles and ready-made clothes in a variety of colours and patterns, a range of mahogany furniture as well as blue and white china. This abundant supply of goods of various qualities and executions was the result of a long process. Many of the fashionable consumer goods of the eighteenth century, or at least their raw materials, came to Britain and its colonies from places far away. Up until the middle of the century, the British colonies had mainly functioned as providers of raw materials for British manufacturers as part of imperial expansion and mercantile capitalism. However, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the role of the colonies shifted, and the colonial inhabitants became increasingly important, not only as producers of raw materials, but also as consumers of British manufactured goods.<sup>10</sup> Ostrich feathers are one example. Ostrich feathers, alongside feathers from other birds, were at the time used by both men and women as decorative elements, for example on hats.<sup>11</sup> It can be assumed that they found their way into a Jamaican store in the following way: Until more organised farming of ostrich began in the middle of the nineteenth century, hunters killed birds for their feathers in southern and eastern Africa.<sup>12</sup> From Africa, merchants transported feathers to Britain where artisans dyed them in fashionable colours or refined them into stylish items such as boas or fans. Later, the manufactured items were repacked and shipped to a market somewhere in the British Empire, ending up in a store in, for example, Kingston, Jamaica, and perhaps subsequently decorating the lavish hairstyle of one of the women attending a ball on the island. Similarly, international trade brought Asian silks and cotton fabrics, Chinese porcelain, Madeira wine and British manufactured goods to the island, at times at an astonishing pace. During the latter part of the eighteenth century, more than half of the British exports of a number of items, ranging from textiles to window glass and earthenware ended up in the hands of

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<sup>10</sup> Birgit Neumann, 'The Empire of Things in Eighteenth Century English Literature: Consumption of the Foreign and Imperial Self-Fashioning', *English Studies*, vol. 93, no. 8, 2012, p. 931.

<sup>11</sup> Valerie Cumming, C.V Cunningham and P.E Cunningham, *The Dictionary of Fashion History*, Oxford, Berg Publishers, first published 1960, paperback edition 2010, p. 80.

<sup>12</sup> Anon., *The Complete Compting-house Companion: or Young Merchant and Tradesman's Sure Guide: to which is Added, in the Introduction, a State of the New Duties on Wines, Cyder and Perry; which are Contained in no Other Treatise on Trade. By a Society of Merchants and Tradesmen*, London, Printed for William Johnston, 1763, p. 125.



eager consumers in the colonies.<sup>13</sup> In addition, as the previously-cited letters by Mrs Broadbent show, the white inhabitants of Jamaica desirous of fashionable goods also had items privately shipped to the island from Europe. All in all, the consumption behaviour of the white inhabitants of Jamaica at the end of the eighteenth century was not only a local event, but also an activity connected to a trans-national and even global network.

## 1.1 Aim and focus

The British eighteenth-century society was highly stratified, and there was a common understanding about how a person of a certain standing should act and dress. However, historian Lorna Wetherill, among others, has demonstrated that as the century evolved, an increasing number of people began challenging these boundaries. Previously it had been indisputable what people of a certain standing could buy, own and use, but now also others than the most high-ranking in society began purchasing many of the above-described new consumer products.<sup>14</sup> This work seeks to understand how the increase in commodities, and the changes in consumption patterns during the eighteenth century, affected the lives of the white settlers living in the West Indies. This is done by answering the following questions:

- 1) **What was refinement and taste considered to be among aspirational Britons in Jamaica?** In comparison to the North American colonies, many of the contemporary commentators saw the West Indies as a temporary place of settlement. Previous research has shown that the majority of the Europeans living in the West Indies perceived themselves as Englishmen who by accident happened to live far away from their home country. Their main aim was to quickly become rich and leave the West Indies for the safety of Britain.<sup>15</sup> However, also during their stay in the West Indies, they could use their purchases to convey a certain image.

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<sup>13</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 285.

<sup>14</sup> Lorna Wetherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660–1760*, second edition, London 1996; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*; Gudrun Andersson, 'Det materiella som social strategi', in Anna Maria Forssberg and Karin Sennefelt (eds), *Fråga föremålen: Handbok till studier av materiell kultur*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2014, p. 111.

<sup>15</sup> Trevor Burnard, *Master, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004, p. 19–20.

Was the consumer culture similar in Britain and in Jamaica or were there differences? What did the white inhabitants see as fashionable? By examining how settlers wrote about refinement and taste in relation to clothes, housing and entertainment, it will be possible to discover their underlying ideas about taste and fashion.

- 2) **What possibilities were there for the settlers to purchase fashionable items and novelties in Jamaica?** At first glance, Jamaican newspapers from the late eighteenth century seem to be filled with advertisements for various goods, and the local traders' letters to their contacts in Britain were occasionally taken up with complaints about the difficulties of selling items on an overfull market. What goods were sold locally and how well did these items correspond with the current notions about gentility? Previous studies show, that for an eighteenth-century consumer, his or her social network was the most significant influence on shopping behaviour.<sup>16</sup> For the white settlers in Jamaica, this social network stretched across the Atlantic to London and other British colonies, as they were part of what Sarah M. S. Pearsall has called the 'Atlantic families'.<sup>17</sup> To these British families, separated by the Atlantic because of a number of reasons, the writing of letters was a way of staying in touch and making the long times of separation easier to endure. Historians have previously studied letters sent across the Atlantic between family members as markers of status, wealth and authority.<sup>18</sup> In this study, I use them as a means to understand how the idea of gentility spread across the Atlantic, and more specifically, to see how the white inhabitants in Jamaica and their families reproduced a common notion of gentility and good taste in their correspondence. In addition to the supply available in the local stores, the transatlantic correspondence

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<sup>16</sup> Claire Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 169.

<sup>17</sup> Sarah M. S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 11.

shows that the white settlers in Jamaica made requests for goods from Britain.

- 3) **What role did the use of proxy consumers, that is friends and relatives in Britain, have in the white settlers' quest for items that could be deemed genteel?** In what way could the proxies be helpful in practical matters and in mediating ideas about, for example, genteel clothes and housing to the white settlers in Jamaica?

Jamaica attracted a lot of attention among travel writers and other narrators during the eighteenth century. For example Edward Long's book, *The History of Jamaica*, published in three volumes in 1774, was widely read in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By mixing personal opinions and facts about life in Jamaica in general and the trade between Britain and the island, Long advocated strongly for the rights of the planters living in the West Indies. Long, an emigrant to the island but from a family since long connected to it, was at the time of writing a colonial jurist, plantation owner and lover of Jamaica.<sup>19</sup> By describing the trade between the island and Britain, he aimed at showing the readers the advantages of the Jamaican colony, and the great wealth that was the result of the West Indian trade. Consequently, it was in his interest to display the planters and the profit they gave Britain in as good a light as possible. However, when the consumption patterns of the whites in the West Indies provoked interest among their contemporaries, it was not always in a positive light. Also Long described this lavishness and excess in dress. According to him, the creole or native-born, gentlemen in Jamaica were 'too much addicted to expensive living, costly entertainments, dress and equipage'.<sup>20</sup> He continues:

Our English belles in Jamaica [---] do not scruple to wear the thickest winter silks and sattins; and are sometimes ready to sink under the weight of rich gold and silver brocades. Their head-dress varies with the ton at home; the winter fashions of London arrive here at the setting in of hot weather ; and thick or thin caps, large as an umbrella or as diminutive

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<sup>19</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/> [14.4.2015].

<sup>20</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 261, 265.

as a half crown piece, are indiscriminately put on, without the smallest regard to the difference of climate.<sup>21</sup>

For all this, he blamed the fashion and the customs on the island.<sup>22</sup> In his work, Long describes the English settlers in Jamaica and their descendants as vain slaves of fashion. The women in his account seem to have made their decisions regarding dresses not on the basis of how comfortable they were or how well they were adapted to the climate on the island, but rather on the basis that they brought a whiff of London to their appearance.

The topic chosen for this thesis is worthy of study for a number of reasons. Despite the growth in the field of Atlantic history during the last decades, Jamaica and the other West Indian colonies have not received the same amount of attention as the British colonies in North America. Previous studies have for the most part focused on the West Indian settlers rather as slave owners, absentees or traders than as consumers as is done here. In these preceding studies, the islands in the West Indies have often been described as culturally inferior in comparison to the other British colonies. By questioning earlier studies, I hope to broaden this view of the British settlers and shed new light on their consumption and the way that they used their purchases to show gentility. This, in turn, will give new insights into the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. By examining the questions above, we can glimpse how the white settlers in Jamaica interpreted the way consumer items shaped their lives. The settlers were a small group of people living in a harsh and often dangerous surrounding. As was previously mentioned, the white inhabitants in general saw themselves as Britons and tried to conduct themselves according to the ideas about gentility that were prominent in Britain. However, Britons in Europe did not always accept them as such. This placed the white population in Jamaica in a liminal position, between the metropolitan ideals and their own wishes.<sup>23</sup> It is this effort to fit in, and the role that consumption played in it, that is under scrutiny in this thesis.

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<sup>21</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 522.

<sup>22</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 520. For an analysis of what Edward Long has written about the plantation owners of Jamaica, see for example Michael Craton, *Reluctant Creoles – the Planters' World in the British West Indies'*, in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Strangers Within the Realm*, Chapel Hill, Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2007, p. 217; Christer Petley,

## 1.2 Delimitations, sources and definitions

The following sub-chapters include a discussion on the sources used in this thesis, reflections on previous studies and an outline. When discussing research in three specific areas covered by this study, I will explain how my research questions fit into these areas. Topics of special importance to this thesis are studies on consumption behaviour and material culture, research on gentility, status and consumption and research on transatlantic contacts.

Past studies have shown that the changes in consumer behaviour during the eighteenth century took place among all ranks in British and colonial society. Analyses of the possessions of ordinary men and women have revealed that they in many cases not only had an interest in but also the means to purchase novelty fabrics and fashionable items.<sup>24</sup> The group of people in focus in this study, members of the white society on eighteenth-century Jamaica, have previously been somewhat understudied from the perspective of consumption. This group can in turn be divided into two sub-groups, belonging either to the landed gentry or to the non-landed mercantile families on the island. The former were plantation owners, growing for example sugar, coffee or pimento while the latter mostly sought to acquire wealth and improve their social respectability through trade.<sup>25</sup> Free people were a rarity on the island at the time, as slaves amounted to 90 per cent of the population.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the individuals in centre of this study cannot be seen as representative of all the inhabitants of the island; instead, my aim is to make an in-depth study of a small but influential group.

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'Gluttony, Excess and the Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean', *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> Anne E.C. McCants, 'Exotic Goods, Popular Consumption, and the Standard of Living: Thinking about Globalization in the Early Modern World', *Journal of World History*, vol. 10, no. 4 p. 433–462; John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007; John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770–1820*, reprinted in paperback form, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup> Trevor Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica, 1655–1780', *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1996, p. 769–796; Barry W. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2005, p. 2.

This study focuses on a specific place and time, the British colony Jamaica in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, Jamaica was in many ways connected to England, and some of the individuals figuring in this thesis crossed the Atlantic more than once as they travelled back and forth between the colony and the mother country. In addition, as was already described, many of the goods available in stores on the island came from overseas. The Atlantic Ocean consequently worked as an important link between the Britons in Jamaica, the mother country and the wider world. The individuals that I am studying stayed in Jamaica for various lengths of time, varying from a few months to several years. I am interested in them all, regardless of whether they were creole, understood here as born in the Caribbean, or born in Britain. It can be discussed how the time spent in Jamaica affected the settlers' understanding of British society and their need to identify themselves as part of this society. Especially towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the voices against slavery became louder, the white inhabitants on the island attempted to create a sense of community among themselves. Previous research has shown that this pro-colonial lobby tried to stress the success of the colony in creating wealth and the general use that Britain had of the colonies.<sup>27</sup> However, in the end, their work was unsuccessful, and the Abolition of Slave Trade Act abolished slavery in 1807.

Finally, the choice of sources has some consequences for the delimitations of the study. Overall, there is a substantial collection of surviving records from eighteenth-century Jamaica. In addition to parish records and other more common archival sources, scholars have previously used inscriptions on tombstones and archaeological findings when documenting the activities of the West Indian settlers.<sup>28</sup> This study draws on a number of qualitative sources. Many of these were themselves the result of the increase in consumer items during the eighteenth century as already the act of writing a letter at the time meant that the person had the means of making an investment in writing equipment.

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<sup>27</sup> Christer Petley, 'Rethinking the Fall of the Planter Class' *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, p. 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> R.D. Barnett and Philip Wright, *The Jews of Jamaica: Tombstone Inscriptions 1663–1880*, Jerusalem, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Publications, 1998; J.H. Lawrence-Archer, *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies* London, Chatto and Windus, 1875; James A. Delle, Mark W. Hauser, Douglas V. Armstrong (eds), *Out of Many, one People: The Historical Archaeology of Colonial Jamaica*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2011.

As the ability to write was necessary in order to keep a diary or write letters, a substantial proportion of the residents of Jamaica at that time are excluded from this work. Consequently, this thesis sheds light only on the group of people that were relatively well off, with an interest in buying many of the new consumer goods of the time.

### *Sources*

The sources comprise letters, diaries, memoirs, illustrations and, to some extent, probate records. I examine choices regarding purchases and ideas about fashion through the writings of among others a governor's wife, a number of young clerks of a Bristolian company trading in the West Indies and several contemporary commentators. The letters studied come mainly from two collections. The Bright Family Papers is a collection of letters and other papers, transcribed by the historian Kenneth Morgan. The papers relate to the business activities of the Bright-Meyler family and their trade in the West Indies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In total, there are around 6000 items in the collection, most of these from the years 1730 to 1840. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the family's trade was already declining, they were still among the 20 most important importers of sugar to Bristol. The business of the Bright-Meylers was part of the increasing transatlantic commerce during the early modern era. From the beginning of the eighteenth century to the 1770s, English exports to the West Indies grew rapidly and increased nearly sixfold. The organisation of transatlantic trade involved a great number of people, and many of those migrating from Europe to the colonies made a living as storekeepers or were active in other forms or retailing.<sup>29</sup> The dangers involved in the transatlantic trade at the time were manifold. As the distance between the place of production and consumption was great, the merchants were for example often struggling with the balance between supply and demand of goods.<sup>30</sup> One way of minimizing the risks involved

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<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 'Introduction', in Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection 1732–1837*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 3–5, 15–16; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community 1735–1785*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Europe and the Americas*, p. 9; Kenneth Morgan, 'Shipping Patterns and the Atlantic Trade of Bristol, 1749–1770', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1989, p. 519; Francis Bright, Kingston to Henry Bright, letter dated 7 April 1747, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, 2007, p. 198; Lowbridge Bright, St. Kitts to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated 6 December 1763, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, 2007, p.

was to send a representative to the colonies. In the Bright-Meyler Papers, one can find the correspondence of Henry Bright (1715–1777), Francis Bright (1723–1754), Jeremiah Meyler (1729–1792), Robert Bright (1714–1758) and Lowbridge Bright (1741–1818). These were all young men who travelled from Bristol to Jamaica to superintend the conduct of business on that side of the Atlantic. In the letters sent back and forth across the Atlantic between the members of the Bright-Meyler Family and their partners, the authors not only exchanged business information, but also ideas about consumption, fashion and conduct more generally.<sup>31</sup>

The other larger collection of letters used were written by Ann Gardner Broadbent (1751–1827) in late eighteenth-century Jamaica, to her daughter Jane Gardner Broadbent (born in 1779) in England. Geraldine Mozley has edited the collection and it was published in London in 1938.<sup>32</sup> As the quotes from the letters by Mrs Broadbent cited in the introduction to this thesis show, these letters touch upon a number of topics related to everyday life in the West Indies. Many of the letters contain references to purchases and entertainment as well as thoughts about fashion. Furthermore, I have used a few letters sent across the Atlantic Ocean by members of the Lee family in the analysis. This collection, transcribed by Anne M. Powers, contain the correspondence of members of the Lee family in England and in Jamaica. The majority of the letters in the collection were written in England, but there are also some letters from Spanish Town, Jamaica. These were written by Joseph Lee (1734–1772) and Robert Lee (1735–1794), two brothers who travelled to the West Indies to seek their fortune.

In addition to the collections of letters, I have used diaries and memoirs. Of these, the most famous one is perhaps the journal kept by Lady Nugent. Lady Maria Nugent (1771–1834) spent a few years in Jamaica at the beginning of the nineteenth century as she was married to George Nugent, the Lieutenant-Governor of the island in the years 1801–1806. During her stay in the West Indies, Maria Nugent kept a journal in which she depicted her everyday life and recorded her thoughts about life in the West Indies. The notes span an array of subjects, from descriptions of West Indian customs to practical matters concerning her children. She

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380; Henry Bright, Kingston to Richard Meyler II Bristol, letter dated April 1, 1751 in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, 2007, p. 237.

<sup>31</sup> Morgan, *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, 1938.



originally wrote the journal for personal use; however, in 1839 it was published in a limited edition and has thereafter been printed in various versions. The one used in writing this thesis is a reproduction of the edition from 1907, edited by Frank Cundall.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, accounts by a number of other men who spent their whole life or part of their lives in the West Indies have been used. William Hickey (1749–1827) was a British lawyer, whose life is well known due to his memoirs published in the beginning of the twentieth century. In the autobiography, Hickey gives a detailed account of his life, of which he spent some time travelling within the British Empire to India and Jamaica. During his stay in Jamaica in the 1770s, Hickey did not support himself by working; instead, he spent most of his days touring the island and taking part in leisurely activities in Kingston. In his memoirs, Hickey gives a detailed account of these occasions. Information about life in the West Indies is also given by J.B. Moreton and Robert Renny, two men who arrived on the island in the eighteenth century in order to work as “book-keepers”, that is supervisors on slave plantations. Later they both wrote books based on their experiences in the West Indies, describing the conditions on the island, life on slave plantations and the manners and customs of the residents.<sup>34</sup> Another person making notes about his life in the West Indies was John Stewart. As a long-time resident of Jamaica, he was well familiar with the topics that he wrote about: commerce, government, laws, plants and animals, as well as the inhabitants of the

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<sup>33</sup> Nugent, Maria, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, in Frank Cundall (ed.), *Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica one hundred Years Ago. Reprinted from a Journal kept by Maria, Lady Nugent, from 1801 to 1815, issued for private circulation in 1839*, London, Published for the Institute of Jamaica by the West India committee, 1907, 2010; For a discussion on the differences between various editions of the journal, see: B.W Higman, ‘Eight Iterations of Lady Nugent’s Jamaica Journal’, *Kunapipi*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2012, p. 170–176.

<sup>34</sup> J.B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners Containing Strictures of the Soil, Cultivation, Produce, Trade, Officers, and Inhabitants; with the Method of Establishing and Conducting a Sugar Plantation. To which is added the Practice of Training New Slaves*, London, printed for J. Parsons, 1793; Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica: with Observations on the Climate, Scenery, Trade, Productions, Negroes, Slave Trade, Diseases of Europeans, Customers, Manners and Dispositions of the Inhabitants: to which is Added, an Illustration of the Advantages which are Likely to Result from the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, London, printed for J. Parsons, 1807.

island and their manners.<sup>35</sup> In addition, an account by the Irishman Patrick Browne (1720–1790) provides evidence about life on the island. Browne was a physician and botanist, corresponding with Linnaeus among others, and he spent a large part of his youth in the West Indies. After studying medicine in Europe, he returned to the Caribbean and worked as a doctor in Jamaica. His book, *Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, was published in London in 1756. It contains observations on a number of topics, ranging from the plants and animals of the island to the manners and customs of the residents.<sup>36</sup>

This study also relies on illustrations from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica. I have used James Hakewill's (1778–1843) *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica* and satirical caricatures printed by William Holland (1757–1815) in my analysis. Hakewill was originally an architect but he became famous for his illustrated books of various places. He spent two years in Jamaica at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even though the main aim of his book was to provide an overview of the island in images, his experiences caused him to feel that he also had to condemn slavery in his work.<sup>37</sup> William Holland was a successful printer in London in the end of the eighteenth century. In his shop he sold a wide array of prints, including expensive illustrated political satires for the elite. In general, printers at the time aimed at commenting on current events and political affairs, making their timing an important factor. William Holland printed several prints around the year 1800, condemning slavery and the luxury of the white settlers in the colonies. Together with other types of printed matters, satirical caricatures spread around the country as well as overseas, reaching also the West Indian colonies.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> John Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present state of Jamaica with Remarks on the Moral and Physical Conditions of the Slaves and on the Abolition of Slavery in the Colonies*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1823.

<sup>36</sup> Patrick Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, London, sold by B. White and Son, 1789.

<sup>37</sup> James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica*, London, Hurst and Robinson, 1825, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Age of George III*, New Haven, Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art, 1996, p. 2–4; Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth Century England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 24–25.

Part of this thesis examines the way that proxies affected the purchases made by the white inhabitants in Jamaica. The relatives and friends in Britain who received letters from the island with requests for specific items were one such group; the storekeepers in Jamaica were another. The storekeepers published advertisements in the local newspapers. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the island had six newspapers; two of these were published daily. According to the previously-mentioned John Stewart, the content of the published newspapers was in general the same, and they often contained many advertisements and articles on politics copied from British newspapers as well as excerpts from books and plays.<sup>39</sup> Previous research tells us that little is known about the printers in Jamaica in the eighteenth century. However, the story of one man, Alexander Aikman, is somewhat better known. Aikman (born in 1755) came to the island during the American Revolution and opened up a print store in Spanish Town. He also became a member of the Jamaican House of Assembly. Together with his brother William Aikman and a partner, David Douglass, he was responsible for much of the printing on the island in the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>40</sup> The advertisements studied in this thesis can be found in the following late eighteenth-century newspapers: *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* (later renamed *the Royal Gazette*) from the years 1779–1781, 1793, 1794, 1797 and *The Daily Advertiser*, 1790. The newspapers are kept in The British Library’s newspapers collections in London, England and the Bodleian Library, Oxford, England but have been made available by the company Adam Matthew Digital in a searchable database entitled ‘Eighteenth century Journals portal’. Since the newspapers are few and several issues appear to be missing, it is not possible to make a complete survey of the available goods in the stores on the island. However, the advertisements were common and they filled a considerable portion of the newspapers, with information about a wide range of newly-imported manufactured goods. Consequently, an examination of the available advertisements will give some hints about the range of goods that were available on the island. Moreover, they show how the storekeepers described these things to potential customers, persuading them to make purchases. In combination with the other sources, advertisements are used

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<sup>39</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 204.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Cundall, ‘The Press and Printers of Jamaica prior to 1820’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 26, no. 2 p. 305, 359.

in trying to establish how the ideas about genteel acquisitions spread from the sellers to the buyers. A survey of the supply of commodities, luxuries and novelty goods on the island, in combination with an insight into the ideas that guided the settlers' consumer choices, are in general important factors when trying to examine patterns of buying.<sup>41</sup>

As I have discussed in detail elsewhere, historians have used probate records as sources in studies focusing on the history of consumption.<sup>42</sup> Previous studies on eighteenth-century wills and testaments show that they include a number of possessions, but also that there were differences between the items mentioned by men and women. If the testator was a man, the given legacies were mostly money, animals or property. When the deceased was a woman, the legacies often consisted of money, clothes, porcelain and various kitchen utensils.<sup>43</sup> Since this study concerns the quality of the white inhabitants' purchases rather than their quantity, wills and probate records are not used for large-scale statistical analysis, but rather as illustrations of specific points in the argumentation.

### *Definitions of terms*

In the following, the most important terms related to consumption used in this thesis will be discussed, starting with the word '*consumption*' itself. Consumption can be defined as 'the desiring, acquiring and enjoying of goods and services which one has purchased'.<sup>44</sup> This broad definition suits this thesis, as the focus in this study is not only placed on actual purchases, but also on desires. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, use of the word consumption occurred for the first time in the sixteenth century.<sup>45</sup> In the Protestant culture of eighteenth-century frugality, the opposite of consuming, was often considered a virtue. The fact that the word

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<sup>41</sup> Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 174.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Sundelin, "'My Last Will and Testament'. Testamenten och bouppteckningar som källor för forskning kring kvinnors konsumtion under tidigmodern tid i England', *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 1, 2008, p. 26–37.

<sup>43</sup> Nigel Goose and Nesta Evans, 'Wills as an Historical Source', in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds), *When Death do us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* Oxford, Leopard's Head Press Limited, 2004, p. 39.

<sup>44</sup> Joyce Appleby, 'Consumption in Early Modern Social Thought', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 162.

<sup>45</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [1.4.2016]

consumption also can refer to a disease was something that those criticising the increase in consumption and new goods on the market at the time readily remarked upon.<sup>46</sup> In the political discourse, luxury was a heavily debated topic. Matters of criticism were for example the ways in which the use of luxury goods allegedly effeminised men and the way that the increase in novelty consumer items distracted workers. Moreover, critics were concerned that use of luxury goods erased differences between the ranks in society.<sup>47</sup> In the public debate, commentators often saw consumption and luxury as synonymous.<sup>48</sup> Both writers and politicians were discussing how to approach luxury and how the economy and society should relate to the changes in consumer behaviour. Bernard Mandeville, a Dutch doctor living in England, had an important impact on this debate with his work *The Fable of the Bees*. In a frequently-cited poem describing the society of that day, Mandeville stated that '[---] their darling folly fickleness/in diet, furniture and dress/that strange ridic'ulous vice was made/the very wheel that turn'd the trade'. In other words, people's greed and vanity made society work. The purchasing of novelty consumer items in fact increased trade and offered opportunities of employment for more workers.<sup>49</sup> Scholars have seen Mandeville's writings as a turning point in the debate on luxury. From this point on, contemporary commentators not only saw consumption as something negative but rather a way to improve the economy.<sup>50</sup>

At the centre of this thesis are items that contemporary commentators frequently described as either *novelties* or *luxury commodities* during the eighteenth century. These categories often merged, as much of the luxury quality of an item in many cases was linked to it

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<sup>46</sup> Sverker Sörlin, *Världens idéhistoria 1492–1918*, Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 2004, p. 399.

<sup>47</sup> Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> Appleby, 'Consumption in Early Modern Social Thought', p. 165.

<sup>49</sup> Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits, Containing Several Discourses, to Demonstrate, that Human Frailties during the Degeneracy of Mankind, may be Turn'd to the Advantage of the Civil Society, and Made to Supply the Place of Moral Virtue*, London, printed for J. Roberts, 1714, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates' in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 8–10; Roberta Sassatelli, *Consumer Culture: History, Theory and Politics*, Los Angeles, SAGE publications Ltd, 2007, p. 36.

being new in some way.<sup>51</sup> In the eighteenth century, fine tableware, silver buckles and buttons or exotic foodstuffs such as coffee and tea flooded the market. Many of these popular consumer items had started out as luxuries in the century before, with a wide appeal to all ranks of society.<sup>52</sup> The new products that flooded the British market in the eighteenth century, and that had a wide appeal among the British middle classes, have also been referred to as *semi-luxuries* in previous studies. Contrary to luxuries that had been passed on from one generation to the next, these semi-luxuries were often fashionable novelties, and their prices were not set too high, making them available also to others than the elite.<sup>53</sup>

As the century evolved, they developed into conveniences or even necessities for many individuals, a fact that is important as it shows the elusiveness of defining an item as a luxury. Adam Smith, the founder of economic liberalism, discusses the difference between luxuries and necessities in his famous work *The Wealth of Nations*. In his writings, the fluidity of the concept is evident, as he states that ‘consumable commodities are either necessities or luxuries. By necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable individuals, even of the lowest orders, to be without’.<sup>54</sup> The strong force of custom is important in this thesis, and it is also evident in Long’s description of the dresses of creole women on the island cited earlier.

According to the historian John E. Crawley, a new way of looking at items emerged in eighteenth-century society, one that introduced

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<sup>51</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, New York, Vintage, first edition 1992, paperback edition 1993, p. 240; Johanna Ilmakunnas and Jon Stobart, ‘Display, Acquisition and Boundaries of Luxury and Taste’, in Johanna Ilmakunnas and Jon Stobart (eds), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisition and Boundaries*, London: Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 1–3.

<sup>52</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 26; Carole Shammas, ‘European Demand for Tropical Goods’, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (eds), *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 163–185.

<sup>53</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 4–5.

<sup>54</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. By Adam Smith... in three Volumes...*, Dublin, printed for Messrs. Whitestone, Chamberlaine, W. Watson, Potts, S. Watson [and 15 others], 1776, vol. 3, p. 282.

*comfort* as a category between luxuries and necessities.<sup>55</sup> Previous studies have suggested that this was because people perceived such goods providing comfort as morally and socially less intimidating than luxuries.<sup>56</sup> The eighteenth-century consumer used the notion of comfort in relation to a number of items, as they evaluated everything from artificial illumination to houses based on how comfortable these were.<sup>57</sup> In this study, I am further exploring the notion of comfort in relation to the homes of eighteenth-century Jamaican white settlers in chapter 4.

In previous studies, the increase in the use of the word fashionable, new commodities have widely been connected to the concept of *status consumption*. As this study focuses on the link between consumption and gentility, status consumption will have a central role in the process of reasoning. Woodruff D. Smith has defined status consumption as ‘a cultural pattern that overtly connects the possession of material goods with prescribed modes of behaviour held to be appropriate for particular levels of social standing’.<sup>58</sup> Status goods are items used in order to create and confirm the image of belonging to a specific social order. During the eighteenth century, *gentility* was a key concept and ambitious men and women from all ranks in society made an effort trying to achieve genteel status. The terms *gentleman* and gentility are frequently used in this thesis. ‘Gentleman’ is to be understood as a wide category going beyond the limits set up by the social hierarchy. The king and nobles were gentlemen, but in the case of men of lesser social standing and their families, their social category was not that obvious and their place in society could be questioned. Especially social climbers living in the colonies were uncertain about their standing in British society and they compared themselves to not only their local peers but also to others living within the boundaries of

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<sup>55</sup> John E. Crowley, *Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 149; Appleby, ‘Consumption in Early Modern Social Thought’, p. 169.

<sup>56</sup> Kevin M. Sweeney, ‘High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the Colonial Elite’, in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, p. 136, 203; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 267–268; Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire*, London, Routledge, 2001, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> Woodruff D. Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 25.

the British Empire.<sup>59</sup> However, aspiring persons could try to achieve genteel status by adopting certain characteristics and displaying themselves in a certain manner. An interest in the latest consumer items and taking part in the new consumer culture were important parts of this process.<sup>60</sup> According to the historian Maxine Berg, the idea that a person could influence the way others regarded her or him by consuming socially acceptable commodities such as furniture, clothes, entertainment and food, was prevalent in eighteenth-century society.<sup>61</sup> New, manufactured goods offered novelty, change and inclusiveness for consumers. When storekeepers and other traders made these goods available for purchase, these were often marketed as fashionable and desirable, linking the items with dreams and hopes.<sup>62</sup> Against this background, it is easy to see how an interest in material culture and consumption of luxury items are important factors behind everyday decisions among those who desired to portray themselves in a certain light.<sup>63</sup>

*Politeness* was connected to ideas about taste, fashion, design and decorum in behaviour and personal style, and the concept will be of importance in exploring the settlers' consumer behaviour. A number of scholars have used politeness as an analytical tool while a critic might argue that the concept could be used to depict almost anything.<sup>64</sup> However, in a more narrow sense, politeness has been used to describe the code followed by the urban middling classes both in London and in the colonies. When men and women from these classes made purchases, they based their decisions on the fact that the items displayed their knowledge of polite behaviour, their desire for convenience and the property of their personal choice.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, knowledge and choice are also connected to the terms, *proxy consumers* and *correspondence shopping*. As the interest in new

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<sup>59</sup> Trevor Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen: The Maryland Elite 1691–1776*, London, Routledge, 2002, p. 3, 237.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 29–30; Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen*, p. 237.

<sup>61</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 205.

<sup>62</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 280.

<sup>63</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2003, p. 197–202; Sörlin, *Världens idéhistoria*, p. 398–401.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, p. 870.

<sup>65</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 233–234.



consumer goods and luxuries grew, also those living farther away from the larger towns wanted access to these goods. Eager consumers in rural areas both in Britain and in the colonies sent letters to tailors and other artisans in towns, ordering them to send specific items corresponding to their desires.<sup>66</sup> The form of purchases studied in this thesis, where the act of buying was performed by a friend or a relative can, as argued by historian Claire Walsh, be seen as different from the commissioning trade where professional agents was involved. As family members and friends rather than agents made the purchases, the person requesting an item could engage the proxy in an examination of various options in a more profound way.<sup>67</sup> The discussion on fashion and executions of orders in the letters sent from the West Indies become of interest in this study as I examine the transatlantic discussions on possible purchases.

### 1.3 The methodological and theoretical orientation

Previous studies of the white population of Jamaica during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have focused on the settlers as traders, plantation owners or absentees. In this study, I partly use the same sources, but my emphasis is on the white settlers' decisions as consumers, the meanings that they gave to their purchases and the strategies that they used to obtain desired items. In comparison to studies on colonial consumption based solely on probate records, my aim is to get closer to the individual consumers and examine the ways that they used their purchases to display themselves in a desired manner. One of the main advantages with taking the settlers' own writings as a starting point is that this makes it possible to study their thoughts about their purchases and on how these conformed to current style. The methodological approach that I have chosen is therefore, a qualitative reading, where I examine the descriptions and thoughts that the persons that appearing in my sources express about their belongings and purchases. Based on that, I analyse what these things meant to them.

Personal sources such as letters, diaries and journals are useful in a study of consumption and the way that specific individuals made

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<sup>66</sup> Miles Lambert, "Sent from Town': Commissioning Clothing in Britain during the Long Eighteenth Century', *Costume*, vol. 43, no.1, 2009, p. 66–67.

<sup>67</sup> Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making', p. 170.

decisions regarding what to eat and drink, how to dress, or how they spent their spare time. I argue that an examination of the writings in diaries and letters, getting as close to the author's way of thinking as is possible 300 years later, will deepen the analysis and enable a discussion on individual choices relating to consumption. This is significant as making well-informed choices was crucial for a person wanting to use his or her purchases for self-display. Previously, historians have used letters when researching topics such as government, trade and consumer habits. In addition, studies on the history of everyday life and microhistory have spurred the use of letters as sources. The correspondences studied here were affected by the conventions of the time when they were written. In the eighteenth century, families separated by the Atlantic Ocean not only remained in contact through letters, but their correspondence was also a way to create a common Atlantic world.<sup>68</sup> The historians Anu Lahtinen, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki and Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen have all underlined the importance of the context when studying letters, as well as the process when they were written and the various ways that they can be interpreted. In letters the authors shared their emotions, thoughts and feelings with their correspondents. Factors that affected the way the letters turned out were, among other things, the age of the writer, gender and education. The difference in private and public topics are also in general visible in letters. In the case of the Bright-Meylers, the letters are a mix of private and public. In the business letters the author often concludes with a few personal reflections. In comparison to journals, letters are often written as part of an ongoing communication, and the writer is expecting an answer to his or her message.<sup>69</sup>

The early modern period was a time when many explorers adventured out into the world and created detailed reports of their travels and experiences. With the advances in the printing industry in the eighteenth century, travel writings became even more popular and easily spread.<sup>70</sup> In writing this thesis, I have also made use of travel writings and journals from the late eighteenth-century West Indies. The genre of travel

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<sup>68</sup> Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 30–31.

<sup>69</sup> Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Anu Lahtinen, Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen and Kaisa Vehkalahti, 'Kirjeiden uusi tuleminen', in Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Anu Lahtinen & Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen, *Kirjeet ja historiantutkimus*, Helsinki, Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 15.

writing has a long history, dating back at least to Antiquity. Various forms of writing can be seen as part of this genre, stretching from secret diplomatic reports, to private diaries depicting journeys and guidebooks intended for publication.<sup>71</sup>

Similar to the use of other types of sources, the use of personal sources does present certain challenges. The travel journals and other accounts were written with some kind of intention and in a context that may or may not have affected the narrative. Therefore, caution should be taken when analysing the sources for evidence of certain consumer behaviour. The author of a diary or a letter might have had a certain motive for his or her writings, or a desire to display him- or herself in a certain light. The sources used in this thesis are available today for various reasons. In the case of William Hickey, who visited the West Indies in his youth, he desired to recollect various stages in his life in his memoirs, for the pleasure of his friends. It can be asked how the time elapsed since his stay in the West Indies affected his memory, or whether he perhaps wanted to display himself in the best possible manner and therefore omitted some of his activities. The other accounts offer similar challenges. Robert Renny's motive seems to have been to be an advocate for slavery. Consequently, some parts of his account are in stark contrast to what is commonly acknowledged today, for example, he writes about the Jamaican slave owners' good treatment of the slaves.<sup>72</sup> His views on slavery may have affected his description of the whites as diligent workers. One of the accounts of life in the West Indies met with criticism even at the time of its publishing. J.B. Moreton's account *West India Customs and Manners*<sup>73</sup> received a direct reply by another resident of the island, Samuel Augustus Mathews, entitled *The Lying Hero*.<sup>74</sup> In his fiery response, Mathews stated that Moreton had done his best to defame a group of men that were of such high standing in society that, if his account had been true, he would not have had an opportunity to interact with them. As a punishment for his false accusations, Mathews hoped that 'the

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan (eds), *Oxford World Classics: Travel writing 1700–1830: An Anthology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. xiv–xv.

<sup>72</sup> Renny, *An History of Jamaica*, p. 213–214.

<sup>73</sup> J. B. Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*.

<sup>74</sup> Samuel Augustus Mathews, *The Lying Hero. Or an Answer to J. B. Moreton's Manners and Customs in the West Indies by Samuel Augustus Mathews*, St. Eustatius, printed by Edward L. Low & Co., 1793.

very stones as [Moreton] walks any street in the West Indian Islands should rise up in judgment against him, and batter his brains, if he has any left after such extensive knowledge has been displayed'.<sup>75</sup> Here too the parts of the account causing the most aggravation seem to have been connected to the treatment of slaves by the slave-owners. However, with the motives of the author in mind, as well as an understanding of the context, this and other similar accounts can function as a useful entry point into a discussion of the white settlers' conspicuous consumption and opportunities to make fashionable purchases in Jamaica at the time in question.

In addition to written sources, this study relies on late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricatures depicting life in the West Indies. During the eighteenth century, the flourishing printing press spread images of various kinds throughout the British society. Due to the boom in printing, everything from illustrations depicting landscapes and copies of fine art to satirical caricatures were widely available in expensive as well as cheap versions, consequently reaching all kinds of customers.<sup>76</sup> Satirical prints originated in the courts of Renaissance Italy. Initially, participants in political and religious debates often used them as a way of convincing or ridiculing their opponents. However, previous research has shown that their cultural influence reached its highest point in late eighteenth-century London.<sup>77</sup> Even if the printing industry at the time was focused to London, printers also distributed their work to other parts of the country and exported prints to the colonies. Previous studies have established that printers often collected and shared prints, as well as displaying them in the windows of their print stores. However, it is still difficult to estimate how large the audiences were. According to the historian Harry Thomas Dickinson, only a few print shops had the opportunity to arrange exhibitions and therefore their audiences were not that large, even if the exhibition took place in the shop window and therefore was available free of charge. Furthermore, many of the satirical caricatures of that time included some writing, making literacy a necessity for understanding their full meaning. On the other hand, prints and cartoon strips were commonly printed in between a few hundred and

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<sup>75</sup> Mathews, *the Lying Hero*, p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> Brewer, John, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1997, p. 450–452.

<sup>77</sup> McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 4.

1,500 copies, at times even more if the topic especially popular. Customers also borrowed collections of caricatures from print stores and some prints were reproduced in widely-read newspapers and other publications reaching not only those living near a print store but wider audiences. At times, prints were also found on the walls of public places, such as taverns and clubs.<sup>78</sup>

Starting in the 1760s, caricatures commenting on luxury and consumer behaviour became increasingly common. Luxury and consumer behaviour is also the topic of the satirical prints of West Indians by William Holland examined in this thesis.<sup>79</sup> The prints were made by etching, a process where a copper plate is covered with varnish or wax, and the image is scratched into the surface. When the plate is covered with acid, etched grooves that hold ink appear. In the eighteenth century, the printing of etchings was done sheet by sheet on a press at a pace of 20 sheets an hour. The cost of one such print was around one shilling; the coloured ones were often more expensive.<sup>80</sup> William Holland was known as a provocative printer at the time, to the extent that he was arrested for selling pamphlets by a political activist and philosopher in the 1790s. Around the year 1800, Holland published prints attacking slavery and the luxurious life of planters.<sup>81</sup> Several caricaturists made these prints, a common arrangement at the time as most artists involved in the satirical print business worked for money or developed sketches that they had been given by others. Consequently, the caricatures that they made were necessarily not showing their personal opinions but rather that of their client.<sup>82</sup> Holland kept a print shop first in Drury Lane, later in Oxford

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<sup>78</sup> Harry Thomas Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution 1760–1832*, Cambridge, Chadwyck-Healey, 1986, p. 14–15; Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, p. 2–3; Dorothy George and Frederic George Stephens, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum Division 1 Political and Personal Satires*, London, Printed by order of the Trustees, 1935, vol. 5 p. xii–xiv.

<sup>79</sup> McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze*, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Hiley, 'Showing Politics to the People: Cartoons, Comics and Satirical Prints', in Richard Howells and Roberts S. Matson (eds.), *Using Visual Evidence*, Berkshire, Open University Press, 2009, p. 26.

<sup>81</sup> David Kunzle, *The Early Comic Strip: Narrative Strips and Picture Stories in the European Broadshets from ca. 1450 to 1825*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1973, p. 372–375.

<sup>82</sup> Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, p. 25–26.

Street and Cockspur Street, where he, like other printers, displayed his prints in exhibitions that people could visit for a small entrance fee.<sup>83</sup>

The historian Nicholas Hiley notes that until recently academic writers for the most part have used images such as satirical prints and cartoons to illustrate their text, for example to show what a specific person or situation mentioned in their writing might have looked like. However, by using images in this way, without paying attention to the methods used in making the images, the maker of the images, the implied and actual audience and the effect of the images, their value as historical sources has been highly neglected. It is only when the context is noted and understood that an image can reach its full potential as historical evidence.<sup>84</sup> The historian Lena Liepe has supported these ideas. According to Liepe, researchers should critically examine pictures and establish their origin and making. All illustrations have been created in a certain context and with certain aims in mind. While acknowledging this, an analysis of images can be of great use to historians and help us to gain a better understanding of the past.<sup>85</sup> In the case of William Holland, it is clear that he took on a controversial topic in printing caricatures criticising the luxury of white West Indians at a time when slave trade and slavery were hotly debated. Therefore, an analysis of his prints can complement other sources in providing new insights into the public opinions of that day.

Peter Burke has underlined that illustrations are especially useful sources for studies that focus on the material culture of the past. For example in the analysis of dress, Burke argues that an image is more descriptive than the written word. Images show the pieces of clothing in a context and they tell us not only that a piece of clothing was worn, but also how it was worn, in combination with what other garments and in what context. Furthermore, images can also be more illustrative than text in describing technologies such as printing or weaving. However, a word of caution is necessary as painters, and later photographers, at times retouched and cleaned up their pictures in order to make the motif look as desired. According to Burke, researchers should always consider the

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<sup>83</sup> Donald, *The Age of Caricature* p. 5; Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-century London*, London, Atlantic Books, 2006, p. 601.

<sup>84</sup> Hiley, 'Showing Politics to the People', p. 24–25.

<sup>85</sup> Lena Liepe, 'Konst som historiskt källmaterial. Om bildens epistemologi', in Lars M. Andersson, Lars Berggren and Ulf Zander (eds), *Mer än tusen ord. Bilden och de historiska vetenskaperna*, Lund, Nordic Academic Press, 2001, p. 19–20, 25.

context, for example the political situation at the time and explore the motives of the artist.<sup>86</sup> In the examination of the caricatures in this study, thought has been given to the artist, the situation in which the image has been executed, the audience it was directed at, as well as the aim and content.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, a few remarks on the use of probate records as sources are necessary. Probate records have been used in a number of studies, from large-scale statistical analysis to studies of how the probated person expressed him- or herself through consumption.<sup>88</sup> As with other historical sources, wills and probate inventories come with their own limitations and source critical challenges. Since the existence of wills and testaments required that the testator had a certain amount of possessions, they shed little light on the poorest in society. In addition, as wills usually were made late in a person's life cycle and wealth may vary throughout life, the possessions listed in them does not show the total wealth of the testator. Furthermore, estimates of the worth of an item could vary between different places and times, making comparisons difficult. Despite these shortcomings, wills and probate inventories, alongside other sources, can give valuable information about the early modern consumer patterns.<sup>89</sup> However, in this study, I only use them as examples as I am focusing on the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspects of consumption.

### *Theoretical considerations*

There are many possible starting points that could be used in a study dealing with the white inhabitants of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica. The Jamaican society at the time covered in this thesis was multiracial, but organised so that only the minority of European origin profited from the wealth produced.<sup>90</sup> Due to the emphasis

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing. The Use of Images as Historical Evidence*, London, Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 9–10, 81, 86.

<sup>87</sup> Reine Rydén, 'Hur skall vi använda bilder? Ett bidrag till diskussionen om bilder som historiskt källmaterial', *Historisk tidskrift*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2006, p. 491.

<sup>88</sup> Tom Arkell, 'Interpreting Probate Inventories', in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds), *When Death do us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England*, Oxford, Leopard's Head Press Limited, 2004, p. 72–102.

<sup>89</sup> Giorgio Riello, '"Things Seen and Unseen": The Material Culture of Early Modern Inventories and Their Representation of Domestic Interiors', in Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern Things. Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800*, London, Routledge, p. 125–150.

<sup>90</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. xv.

on the white inhabitants in this thesis, it could be argued that the theoretical perspective offered by 'whiteness studies' would be a useful starting point for an investigation such as this one. During the last ten years, whiteness studies has been developed by scholars within several disciplines interested in the construction of whiteness, how diverse groups in society came to identify and be identified by others as white. Especially among historians there has been an interest in the construction of whiteness, with research building on the idea that race is an ideological or social construct, not a biological fact.<sup>91</sup> However, as this thesis focuses on consumption and the way that the Britons in Jamaica used their purchases as markers of gentility (which of course were connected to being white), I have found other theoretical approaches more useful.

Departing from an interest in consumption in a historical perspective, several paths lead into possible directions. Previous research has examined questions about consumers, the purchases that they made as well as the reasoning behind, and consequences of, their acquisitions.<sup>92</sup> However, there are also common features between past studies and especially their theoretical points of departure. Many of these studies have been influenced by the writings of sociologists Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu.

In Veblen's classical work from the turn of the twentieth century, entitled *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, social differentiation is seen as an incitement for consumption. As the title of the book indicates, Veblen's stand was that the wealthy, so-called leisure class set the boundaries for an appropriate lifestyle in a society. In this society, consumption was a form of competition between different groups. The elite used their purchases as a means to display status and power, and the lower classes tried to imitate this consumer behaviour to the best of their ability. This competition and imitation gave rise to new consumption patterns that spread from the elite to the lower classes. According to Veblen, luxury was particularly visible in clothing and choice of accessories, especially among women. This behaviour Veblen named 'conspicuous consumption', a form of status consumption that worked best in a society where the inhabitants

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<sup>91</sup> Peter Kolchin, 'Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 89, no.1, 2002, p. 154-173.

<sup>92</sup> For an overview see for example Frank Trentmann, 'Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2004, p. 373-401.



were in regular contact with each other and therefore had many opportunities for show and display. As such, the competition for status by consuming was a constantly on-going process that caused a steady increase in consumption. The aspiring men and women trying to improve their standing in society in this manner had to make more and more purchases to maintain their desired standard.<sup>93</sup>

Unlike Veblen, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu did not only see social competition as the driving force of consumer behaviour. Instead, he acknowledged that the motives behind purchases and leisure activities could be a desire to separate oneself from others or show that one belonged to a specific group. In his work, Bourdieu stresses the importance of taste, especially something that he calls legitimate or good taste. According to Bourdieu, taste is dependent on social position, and can be used as a tool in separating one group in society from another. As taste is closely connected to the consumption of goods, Bourdieu's theories explain how way of life and taste in, for example, art, are shown differently depending on the consumers standing in society.<sup>94</sup>

In the introduction to the anthology *The Oxford Handbook to Consumption*, the historian Frank Trentmann has noted that these are only two theories among many that can be used when analysing consumer behaviour. The notion of consumption as a form of competition has met some criticism. Critics have claimed that consumers are not always driven by jealousy and that social competition can manifest itself in other ways than in purchases. As has been discussed by Lorna Weatherill and others, one should not automatically make the conclusion that the lower orders were motivated by social competition and that this was something typical of the eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> In addition, Colin Campbell has warned about

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<sup>93</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *Den arbetsfria klassen*, trans. Rosa Hecksher, Stockholm, Wahlström & Widstrand, 1926, p. 34, 69, 112–114.

<sup>94</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984; Jukka Gronow, *The Sociology of Taste*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 10–12, 20–21; Pekka Sulkunen, *Introduktion till Sociologin – perspektiv och begrepp*, Helsingfors, WSOY, 1999, p. 76–78; Sassatelli, *Consumer Culture*, p. 84–85.

<sup>95</sup> John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth Century England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007; Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain 1660–1760*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 206; Christer Ahlberger, 'Det moderna konsumtionssamhället', in Johan Söderberg and Lars Magnusson (eds), *Kultur och konsumtion i Norden 1750–1950*, Helsingfors, Finska Historiska Samfundet, 1997, p. 117–120.

making too hasty conclusions, especially with regard to clothing. In his opinion, it has to be proven that purchases are made based on the symbolic value of an item, rather than the practical value, and there has to be a wide range of items to choose from. Furthermore, choices regarding purchases should be based on a shared system of meanings, not a personal one.<sup>96</sup> This point echoes the ideas of Veblen, which stress the importance of an audience. However, critics have noted that as both Veblen and Bourdieu aim at explaining consumer behaviour in a class society, their theories cannot be used when trying to explain how tastes that were not bound to a certain class spread.<sup>97</sup> Since Veblen wrote about the late nineteenth century and Bourdieu about France in the 1960s, it is relevant to ask if and how these models are applicable on purchase patterns in eighteenth-century West Indies. As will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, some elements certainly apply. The importance of public display discussed by Veblen is for example visible in many of the eighteenth-century sources used in this thesis. However, there is also the question of leisure, the importance that Veblen ascribes to not having to work. Many of the European emigrants who travelled to the West Indies in the early modern era came there to work, gain fortunes and improve their standing in society. Consequently, they were not part of a leisured class in Veblen's sense, with ample time to spend on entertainment and display. However, according to the historian Woodruff D. Smith, work had another function in eighteenth-century European society in comparison to the world described by Veblen. Instead of rejecting work, the practitioners of gentility status tried to show that their duties were, at least to some degree, based on their own choice. Even if there were limitations, they still had room for individual choices with regard to how to spend their spare time.<sup>98</sup> With this notion as a starting point, the theories by Veblen and Bourdieu are used in this thesis as an aid in explaining the spending patterns of at least some of the settlers. As will be discussed, the Jamaican society at the time provided many opportunities for individuals to compare themselves to their peers and those of higher social standing, in addition to Britons

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<sup>96</sup> Colin Campbell, 'The Meaning of Objects and the Meaning of Actions: a Critical Note on the Sociology of Consumption and Theories of Clothing', *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1996, p. 103–104.

<sup>97</sup> Frank Trentmann, 'Introduction', *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 32.

living in Europe. Therefore, there were many opportunities where consumption might have functioned as an arena for competition or as a means of creating a sense of belonging among the white inhabitants in the West Indies.

Dress as a way of displaying politeness has been a theme of several studies related to the history of consumption. Fashion, good taste and novelty have often been at the centre of these studies. During the eighteenth century, fashion, understood here broadly as something made in a new style, was not exclusively reserved for the elite. Whoever could afford to pay the asked price in a store could purchase an item of the latest fashion. Previous studies have focused on rapidly-changing fashions as one of the main distinctive marks in the Western pattern of status consumption. By following the latest fashions in clothing, the wearer of modish styles could communicate with others. Colours, materials and the fit of a piece of clothing, in combination with posture and manners, sent signals about, for example, the wearer's standing in society, occupation and preferences.<sup>99</sup> The historian Dror Wahrman writes about 'the possible literalness with which dress was taken to *make* identity' during the eighteenth century.<sup>100</sup>

In the eighteenth century, when the interest in consumption of status goods was no longer confined only to the wealthiest in society, the use of colours, fabrics and patterns grew more important as a means of making distinctions.<sup>101</sup> This desire was one of the reasons why consumers took shopping seriously. Making purchases was an act that required knowledge about and the ability to make decisions regarding several factors. The customers examined the items for sale with regard to several aspects. An examination of an object included notions about fitness to purpose and propriety, its function, wear, price and quality. These criteria were in turn affected by a shared idea about what constituted good quality.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 73–74; Timothy J. Shannon, 'Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrik, William Johnson and the Indian Fashion', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 1, 1996, p. 14–17.

<sup>100</sup> Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 179.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 26.

<sup>102</sup> Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making', p. 162, 169.

At the time, France was the fashion capital of Europe. Due to the long-lasting rivalry between the English and the French, Englishmen generally looked at France with some kind of suspicion. However, in questions of fashion, there was a feeling of ambivalence as the French fashion, especially haute couture and high fashion, had a wide appeal.<sup>103</sup> In addition to clothing, the interest in fashionable items from France in Britain ranged from the wardrobe to hairstyles, food and leisure activities such as card games.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps this was the reason why Mrs Broadbent, in the letters cited in the introduction of the chapter, was eager to find out if the visit in Paris had changed her son's appearance, dress and manners.<sup>105</sup>

It has also been argued that fashion was linked to novelty in that it played a part in how novelties were made desirable. The German sociologist Georg Simmel has stated that novelty is an important part of fashion. If something becomes too popular, and widely known, it is no longer in vogue.<sup>106</sup> According to Woodruff Smith, Simmel's description of fashion change works best in an analysis of short-term changes within the same fashion system. If we want to understand the importance of fashion over a longer period of time, such as the society of the eighteenth century, it is better to consider the role of fashion in a specific cultural context.<sup>107</sup> In this thesis, the cultural context is the British world that stretched from Britain to the West Indian colonies. Even if (and maybe because) fashion was expensive in the eighteenth century, and as the knowledge needed in order to use it in the desired way was hard to obtain, fashion became an arena for aspirational persons. Therefore, questions relating to fashion are of interest in an analysis of consumption in eighteenth-century Jamaica, where some of these ambitious men and women strove to improve their standing in society. These individuals were not necessarily by birth part of the elite, but aspiring to and dreaming of improving their position in the British society by gaining fortunes in the West Indies.

This thesis is also inspired by studies in material culture. Material culture is as a wide concept, suitable for the study of consumption in a

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<sup>103</sup> Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, p. 2, 6; Fairchild, 'The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods', p. 228.

<sup>104</sup> Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-century England: a Subject for Taste*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2007, p. 213.

<sup>105</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 71.

<sup>106</sup> George Simmel, 'Fashion', *International Quarterly*, vol. 10, 1904, p. 138–139.

<sup>107</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 44.

historical perspective. Key questions when taking this approach are the ways that miscellaneous artefacts were used and situated in homes, and, with the research questions in this thesis in mind, the meanings given to them. In comparison with studies that have mainly applied quantitative methods, such as counting the changes over time in the number of silverware in inventories, the advantage of a qualitative approach is that it reveals the relationship between the objects and their users.<sup>108</sup> In line with scholars such as historian Timothy H. Breen and sociologist Arjun Appadurai, the fundamental assumption of this study is that goods were something more than goods, that they had a meaning on a symbolic level. The underlying assumption is that objects have meanings and that their significance is reliant on their specific uses and contexts. The determining factor is how the individuals at the centre of my study understood and interpreted the goods on this level.<sup>109</sup>

When analysing the meanings that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century colonial settlers gave to their purchases, it is also important to take into account the role of the persons involved in the chain that led from the manufacturer via the merchant to the consumer. These individuals, for example storekeepers, could affect the ways that the buyers used the items that they had purchased. In addition, the ways in which the white settlers created their own understanding of an item, perhaps influenced by a visit to someone's home, should be considered. As the historian Ann Smart Martin has acknowledged, the values and meanings given to specific items could also be substituted for something

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<sup>108</sup> Carole Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and North-America*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990; Cissie Fairchilds, 'The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in Eighteenth Century Paris', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 228–248; Ad van der Woude and Anton Schuurman (eds), *Probate Inventories: a New Source for the Study of Wealth, Material Culture and Agricultural Development*, Utrecht, Hes Publishers, 1980.

<sup>109</sup> John Styles and Amanda Vickery, 'Introduction', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006. p. 22; Timothy H. Breen, 'The Meaning of Things: Interpreting the Consumer Economy in the Eighteenth-century', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 249–260; Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 3–63.

else as the goods travelled from the producers to the consumers.<sup>110</sup> Even if persons from different ranks in society could agree that an item was beautiful or had a certain economic value, the motive behind their purchases might vary. Those of higher status appreciated the way that specific items could be used to enhance or display their gentility while the same item signified a symbol of cosmopolitan culture for a poorer person. For those with less money, the items' potential value if resold was also an important factor when considering possible purchases.<sup>111</sup> In the eighteenth century, a market for second-hand goods developed and became widespread. The trade in second-hand goods gave customers a chance to buy fashionable, expensive, items such as furniture or pieces of clothing made of fine fabrics at a lower price.<sup>112</sup> Many of the Britons who travelled to the West Indian colonies only stayed there for a short period, and before they left the area, they put their belongings up for sale. Therefore, there was a market for used goods on the island, with both sellers and buyers interested in the second-hand trade. Consequently, this type of trade is also important for the analysis of the settlers' consumer behaviour, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

In addition to the concepts of conspicuous consumption and good taste, this thesis also makes use of the concept of 'sociability'. First introduced by the twentieth-century German sociologist George Simmel, the thought of sociability, defined by him as a form of social interaction without any deeper purpose, has in the hands of historians been somewhat broadened. Sociability should be perceived as something that was done not only for amusement, but as an activity with a purpose.<sup>113</sup> Recent historical research has demonstrated the usefulness of the concept, not only in studies on the elite but also on other social classes. The

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<sup>110</sup> Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods. Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia*, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2008, p. 9–10.

<sup>111</sup> Hartigan O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Styles, *The Dress of the People*, p. 8; Clive Edwards & Margaret Ponsonby, 'Desirable Commodity or Practical Necessity? The Sale and Consumption of Second-Hand Furniture, 1750–1900', in David Hussey & Margaret Ponsonby (eds), *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 122.

<sup>113</sup> Brian Cowan, 'Public Spaces, Knowledge and Sociability, in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 251–266; Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780–1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence*, Quebec, McGill-Queens's Press, 2003.

understanding of eighteenth-century sociability is meaningful in an examination of how the highly stratified society of that day was constructed and maintained through activities that were performed in the company of others. Such activities discussed in this thesis are for example taking part in dinners or balls, visiting the theatre or spending time in a local shop, discussing possible purchases.

## 1.4 Topics in earlier research

The approach taken in this thesis is informed by previous research within the history of consumption. In exploring the connection between status consumption and gentility among the white inhabitants in Jamaica, as well as their use of transatlantic contacts in obtaining desired items, this study engages with themes such as consumer behaviour and transatlantic networks. This sub-chapter is both an account of earlier research, as well as an attempt to place the position the research questions in relation to previous research. The sub-chapter is divided into three parts in order to cover the different strands connected to this study. Firstly a discussion of previous research about consumption and material culture during the eighteenth century is presented. This is followed by an outline of research on gentility during the period. The sub-chapter is concluded with a discussion on research on transatlantic contacts during the early modern era. The interpretations made in earlier research presented here provide a background to many of the themes examined in this thesis.

### *Consumption and material culture*

During the last four decades, ever since Neil McKendrick et al. placed the beginning of the so-called consumer revolution in eighteenth-century England, consumption during the early modern era has been of great interest to historians.<sup>114</sup> The reason for this interest in consumer behaviour and consumer culture has been the subject of some debate. One frequently given explanation is that we today live in a highly commercialised society and therefore scholars find it interesting to study the development that has

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<sup>114</sup> In Britain, many of the initial works were fuelled by a quest for the birth of consumer society, but historians in other countries have also been interested in consumption, Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1982.

led up to this day.<sup>115</sup> Throughout recent decades, the focus of research within the field of the history of consumption has been slightly altered. Earlier it was mainly concerned with the production of goods; today the main interest is on the demand of items. In the same time, the methods have changed; interdisciplinary research has become more of a rule and qualitative sources are increasingly used. The anthology *Consumption and the World of Goods*, published for the first time in 1993, had a huge impact on research about consumption and encouraged new approaches.<sup>116</sup> Since then, historians have written extensively about the increase in luxury commodities, changes in consumption patterns and the new forms of retailing that originated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>117</sup> New types of consumer items, as well as the individuals who bought them, have also been the theme of several studies.<sup>118</sup> A more recent overview of the history of consumption is found in Frank Trentmann's book *The Empire of Things*. According to the subtitle, Trentmann sets out to explain, "[H]ow we became a world of consumers, from the fifteenth century to the Twenty-first." His underlying assumption is that a historical perspective is necessary if we want to understand the importance of consumption and the spending of money on consumer items.<sup>119</sup>

Historians from several parts of Europe have examined the history of consumption. The well-known work by Fernand Braudel on the consumption of everyday items and luxuries in the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is one of the earlier studies.<sup>120</sup> Simon Schama's work on the cultural history of the Dutch Golden Age is another example. Here Schama explores the

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<sup>115</sup> For a discussion on studies on consumption within history today, see e.g. Trentmann, 'Introduction', p. 1–19.

<sup>116</sup> John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993.

<sup>117</sup> See e.g. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*; Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005; Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*.

<sup>118</sup> Styles, *The Dress of the People*; Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme, *Modernity and the Second-hand Trade: European Consumption Cultures and Practices 1700–1900*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; John Brewer and Susan Staves, *Early Modern Concepts of Property*, London, Routledge, 1996.

<sup>119</sup> Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-first*, London, Allen Lane, 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Fernand Braudel, *Civilization & Capitalism 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century. The Structures of Everyday Life. The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Siân Reynolds, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981.



moral ambiguity that Dutch people felt in the early modern era when they met with newly-imported consumer items from all over the world. On the one hand, the Dutch colonial trade provided the Dutch(men) with much wealth and colonial consumer items, but there was also a constant fear of losing their prosperity.<sup>121</sup> Schama's work has been inspirational for my research as he draws attention to the way that illustrations can be used as sources for the study of consumer behaviour. The economic historian Jan de Vries is known for his attempt to link the history of consumption with production and distribution. De Vries has discussed the so-called 'industrious revolution', a phenomenon that, according to his analysis, took place in Europe and North America in the century before the Industrial Revolution. At that time, more and more goods came out onto the market and families began spending more money on consumer items despite the fact that their disposable real income decreased. Instead, they financed their expenditure by working longer hours to produce commodities for the market.<sup>122</sup>

In France, the historian Daniel Roche has examined the history of everyday life.<sup>123</sup> Roche has shown how everyday items of consumption, such as food and clothing as well as people's understanding of comfort in relation to light, heating and water, should be taken seriously if we wish to understand the way that they affected the lives and consumer behaviour.<sup>124</sup> In demonstrating this, his work is not only concerned with things, but also with the attitudes towards these items, in a way which is similar to what I am attempting to do in this dissertation.

The question of elite consumption in Europe has recently been addressed in the anthology *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe*. In the book, the authors attempt to define luxury in different parts of Europe. Many of the luxuries of the time, or the raw materials used in making them, came from the colonies.<sup>125</sup> In another anthology, *Fashionable*

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<sup>121</sup> Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: an Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988.

<sup>122</sup> Jan de Vries, 'Between Purchasing Power and the World of Goods: Understanding the Household Economy in Early Modern Europe', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 85–132.

<sup>123</sup> Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>124</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, p. 6.

<sup>125</sup> Johanna Ilmakunnas and Jon Stobart (eds), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisition and Boundaries*, London, Bloomsbury, 2017.

*Encounters. Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, a number of Nordic historians and ethnologists all discuss the concept of fashion in some way. The topics range from fashionable dress to interior design and notions of fashion more generally.<sup>126</sup> This anthology has been useful for my analysis of the discussion about fashion among the white settlers, as it points out the multifaceted ways that fashion was important to consumers in the eighteenth century. Both Sweden and Denmark had colonies at the time, and there has lately been an interest in the Nordic Countries for the inhabitants of these colonies. Furthermore, the way that the colonies were useful for the inhabitants of the mother country has been examined.<sup>127</sup> The historian Karin Hassan Jansson has examined how the growing flood of luxury goods affected the public debate on gender and luxury in Sweden in the late eighteenth century. Her work shows, that common images like that of 'the fop', which will be discussed later in this thesis, were found in Scandinavia as well at the time.<sup>128</sup> Previous research conducted in Scandinavia also includes the anthology *Varans vägar och världar*, about trade and consumption in Scandinavia from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The contributions highlight the lack of studies that focus on men and their consumer behaviour.<sup>129</sup> Even if my research does not focus on the consumer behaviour of a specific gender, these studies have been informative and eye opening for my aims.

Britain and its colonies have been at the centre of several studies relating to the changes in consumer behaviour that took place during the early modern era. Historians such as Maxine Berg, Trevor Burnard and Richard Bushman have shown that the British colonists in America in the eighteenth century bought novelties and luxuries such as mahogany

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<sup>126</sup> Tove Engelhardt Mathiassen, Marie-Louise Nosch, Maj Ringgaard, Kirsten Toftegaard and Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (eds), *Fashionable Encounters: Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2014.

<sup>127</sup> Hanna Hodacs, *Silk and Tea in the North: Scandinavian Trade and the Market for Asian Goods in Eighteenth-century Europe*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

<sup>128</sup> Karin Hassan Jansson, 'When Sweden Harboured Idlers: Gender and Luxury in Public Debates, c. 1760–1830', in Göran Rydén (ed.), *Sweden in the Eighteenth Century World. Provincial Cosmopolitans*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, p. 264–271.

<sup>129</sup> Christer Ahlberger and Pia Lundqvist (eds), *Varans vägar och världar. Handel och konsumtion i Skandinavien ca 1600–1900*, Göteborg, Historiska institutionen Göteborgs Universitet, 2007, p. 21–22.

furniture, silver cutlery and fine clothing.<sup>130</sup> Nuala Zahedieh has examined the material culture of settlers in Jamaica in the late seventeenth century. Zahedieh shows that the demands for imported goods among the inhabitants on the island had a great stimulating effect on the industries in London. As the colonies to the most part lacked the skills and raw material for local production, there was a constant demand for shipments of, for example, shoes, silk dresses and hats among the colonist in the West Indies.<sup>131</sup> Another study dealing with the importation of goods to Jamaica is that by Kenneth E. Ingram. His research is one of the few more detailed examinations of the shipping of furniture to the island.<sup>132</sup> By analysing the existing records of the firm Waring & Gillow Ltd. of Lancaster, England, and their furniture trade with the West Indies he draws the conclusion that for the years 1770–1785, considerable quantities of fine furniture were shipped across the Atlantic. However, as Ingram himself states, this study is not far reaching enough for any firm conclusions about the extent of this trade to be made. As furniture is discussed in this study, I hope to build on Zahedieh's and Ingram's work and examine how furniture and other items were used as markers of gentility among the settlers in Jamaica.

Douglas F. Mann has made a more general analysis of the material culture of inhabitants in Kingston, Jamaica, during the eighteenth century. For his doctoral dissertation, Mann has studied a sample of inventories from Kingston in order to examine the material culture of both white inhabitants and slaves in an urban setting. His conclusion is that the racial hierarchies in Jamaica at the time affected the material culture in Kingston. The white inhabitants of the town continued to follow British norms in, for example, their dress, while the slaves used their purchases as a means for self-expression and resistance.<sup>133</sup> In my study, I examine these British norms and their impact on the consumer behaviour of the white inhabitants of eighteenth-century Jamaica, with a special focus on the transatlantic contacts.

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<sup>130</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*; Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen*; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*.

<sup>131</sup> Nuala Zahedieh, 'London and the Colonial Consumer in the Late Seventeenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1994, p. 255–256.

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth E. Ingram, 'The West Indian Trade of an English Furniture Firm in the Eighteenth Century', *Jamaican Historical Review*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1962, p. 22–37.

<sup>133</sup> Douglas F. Mann, *Becoming Creole: Material Life and Society in Eighteenth Century Kingston*, Athens, 2005, published online, p. 208–209.

The American historian Carole Shammas has compared the pre-industrial consumers in Britain and America. Based on an analysis of probate records, she argues that there was a high increase in the consumption of foodstuffs such as tobacco, sugar-based products and caffeinated drinks on both sides of the Atlantic between the years 1650 and 1750.<sup>134</sup> Merchants imported these crops, together with cocoa, to the continent from the colonies. The embrace of the new products had widespread consequences for the European consumers and their homes. The use of caffeinated drinks was followed by a desire for new tableware and utensils so that the liquids could be served in a correct manner. Consequently, the drinking of tea and coffee created a need for a whole range of items, such as tea- and coffee pots, dishes, cups and utensils.<sup>135</sup> The previous research by Shammas and others has drawn my attention to a behaviour and a diversification of consumer items that was visible in Jamaica as well. As Maxine Berg has pointed out, in the eighteenth century, one novelty item such as new fine dining plates often brought about a flood of related things, available in different styles and materials.<sup>136</sup> The diversification of consumer items at the time will be discussed in this thesis as part of the discussion on advertisements in Jamaican newspapers from that time.

There are several studies made on consumer behaviour in the British colonies in North America. Ann Smart Martin, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, Carole Shammas and Timothy H. Breen among others, have researched material culture in the colonies at the time. By studying topics such as the distribution and marketing of goods, the ownership of luxuries and the methods used in obtaining these items, these scholars have all contributed to a deeper understanding of the ways that consumer items and consumption functioned in the colonies. T.H. Breen has even suggested that one of the reasons for the American independence can be found in the North American colonist's anger that resulted from British attempts to restrain the colonial trade. This statement underlines the importance that European colonist gave to the European manufactured goods.<sup>137</sup> The works of Lorena Walsh on colonial Chesapeake, Ann Smart

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<sup>134</sup> Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer*, p. 292–293.

<sup>135</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 305.

<sup>136</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 7.

<sup>137</sup> Timothy H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 462–463.

Martin on consumers in Virginia, Trevor Burnard on creole gentlemen in Maryland and Jean Gelman on Europeans in Batavia, have all inspired me in my work as they see the social life and the consumption patterns of the colonist as something meaningful and worthy of study.<sup>138</sup> Zara Anishanslin's book *Portrait of a Woman in Silk* offers an interesting perspective on the trade between the North American colonies and Britain in the eighteenth century. Textiles were among the most important of the British exports to the colonies. By taking a portrait of a woman belonging to the colonial elite dressed in a silk dress as her starting point, Anishanslin explores the story of eighteenth-century Atlantic history. She points at the shift in meaning that an object can have in various contexts, and shows that the British colonies were not only copying British consumer behaviour, but that they also used consumption as a means to tighten the bonds with other British inhabitants in other colonies.<sup>139</sup> Among previous studies on life in the British colonies, I also want to mention the work by the historian Michael J. Jarvis. He has examined Bermudian transatlantic trade during the years 1680–1783. The consumption habits of the Bermudians is not the main topic of his study, but he does give their consumer behaviour and display of status through objects and dress some thought as well. According to Jarvis, 'seafaring short-circuited the ways that objects established and reinforced social hierarchies elsewhere in British America [---] and disrupted common correlations between wealth, gentility and material possessions'. Based on the number of genteel items listed in inventories from the island, he concludes that seafaring had made it possible for the homes on the islands to be well furnished. The Bermudian settlers in general seem to have owned a number of fashionable teapots, tea tables and musical instruments. Their houses were well built and furnished in style. However, Jarvis does also state that, due to the seafaring nature of the society, few of the Bermudians had the time

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<sup>138</sup> Lorena S. Walsh, 'Urban Amenities and Rural Sufficiency: Living Standards and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1643–1777', *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 107–117; Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*; Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen*; Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia. Europeans and Eurasians in Colonial Indonesia*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, first edition 1983, reprint 2009.

<sup>139</sup> Zara Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk. Hidden Histories of the British Atlantic World*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 83, 211–214.

or the chance to enjoy these genteel settings.<sup>140</sup> For my purpose, the global perspective of Jarvis study has been very enlightening.

In the eighteenth century, towns were important centres for fashion and display and therefore historians often have focused on towns in their studies of consumer behaviour. Studies by historians such as Cary Carson and Lorna Weatherill show that inhabitants in urban areas were eager to adopt the new consumer items of the eighteenth century. According to Weatherill, the inhabitants in British towns were more likely to buy new consumer items than wealthier persons in rural areas were. In addition, Cary Carson has shown that in the North American colonies, town dwellers first adopted new types of furnishings. Historians have given several explanations to the fact that new consumer items initially came in use in towns rather than in rural areas. It was easier to find novelty items in towns, as towns were the main places for marketing and manufactures. It was also more common in towns to take part in pastimes that required miscellaneous paraphernalia, such as those associated with tea drinking. In addition, the high concentration of inhabitants in towns made it possible for people to be more anonymous, or to display themselves in a certain light, in order to display status.<sup>141</sup> Frank Trentmann has in his wide and informative work added one more point to this list, stating that urban life in itself in general lessens the chances for the inhabitants of provisioning for themselves, making them more inclined to buy food and clothes and other necessaries. Trentmann's study has also been important for my work in other ways, not least in the way that it highlights the connections between different corners of the world and pointing out many differences but also similarities in consumer behaviour worldwide.<sup>142</sup>

Even if this thesis focuses on white inhabitants, I want to pick out some of the studies that have been done on the material culture of slaves in the West Indies. These studies include works by historians, Roderick

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<sup>140</sup> Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians and the Maritime Atlantic World 1680–1783*, Chapel Hill, Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2010, p. 307–314.

<sup>141</sup> R.C. Nash, 'Domestic Material Culture and the Consumer Demand in the British Atlantic World', in David S. Shields (ed.), *Material Culture in Anglo-America: Regional Identity and Urbanity in the Tidewater, Lowcountry and the Caribbean*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2009, p. 233.

<sup>142</sup> Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, p. 94.

A. McDonald<sup>143</sup>, Douglas V. Armstrong<sup>144</sup>, B.W. Higman<sup>145</sup> and Mark Hauser<sup>146</sup>. A common conclusion in these studies is that the material culture of slaves was more multifaceted than has previously been assumed.

### *Gentility and consumer goods*

Historians have explained the motives and reasons behind the changing consumer behaviour in the eighteenth century in multiple ways. In many preceding studies, notions of gentility have been taken as a starting point for the analysis. In his work on London merchants in the eighteenth century, the historian David Hancock stresses the urge for improvement that was prevalent among people on both sides of the Atlantic at the time.<sup>147</sup> In addition to buying land and engaging in politics, this desire also took visible and concrete forms as the aspiring men and women invested substantial sums of money in genteel houses and suitable furniture. Outer expressions of gentility have been studied by, among others, Woodruff D. Smith, Bernard L. Herman and Amanda Vickery.<sup>148</sup> Timothy H. Breen has examined the way that Americans began to define social status in relation to commodities. This practice gave the Britons who had emigrated to North America not only a common framework of experience, but also a shared language of consumption.<sup>149</sup> In this dissertation, I am interested in how the settlers spoke about their purchases and their desires. The

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<sup>143</sup> Roderick A. McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1993.

<sup>144</sup> Douglas V. Armstrong, *The Old Village and the Great House: An Archaeological and Historical Examination of Drax Hall Plantation, St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1999.

<sup>145</sup> B. W. Higman, *Montpelier, Jamaica: a Plantation Community in Slavery and Freedom, 1739–1912*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 1998.

<sup>146</sup> Mark Hauser, *An Archaeology of Black Markets: Local Ceramics and Economies in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica*, Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2008.

<sup>147</sup> Hancock, *Citizens of the World*.

<sup>148</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*; Bernard L. Herman, 'Tabletop Conversations: Material Culture and Everyday Life in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World', in Amanda Vickery and John Styles (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 37–60.

<sup>149</sup> Timothy Breen, 'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 444–482.

anthology entitled *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* has opened my eyes to the multifaceted ways in which consumption and gentility were connected at the time.<sup>150</sup> One of the main contributions of this book is the diversity in matters dealt with, related to lifestyle and consumer choices in Britain's North American colonies. The wide range of subjects examined in the anthology; housing, music, theatre, books, fashion and leisure, shows that the link between status consumption and gentility could be found in many places in the North American colonies, both in the homes and outside of them. This notion has inspired me in choosing the topics and places discussed in this thesis.

During the early modern era, the understanding of gentility changed continuously, engaging both those that were quite secure in their position and those wanting to achieve genteel status through consumption. Woodruff D. Smith and Amanda Vickery have stated that the easiest way to conform to this new convention was by buying the right goods.<sup>151</sup> This echoes the idea brought forward by the historian Kenneth A. Lockridge who has explored the feelings of inferiority among colonists in Virginia in relation to material culture. He suggests that it was a sense of subordination in relation to their peers in Britain that motivated the settlers in Virginia to spend even more of their money on purchases that they did not need for their daily survival. The harder these Virginian planters tried, the clearer it became that they could not fully measure up to their counterparts in Britain. The ambitious colonists in Virginia were thus left with two ways to quickly become rich and display themselves in a desired manner; namely public office and marriage. Since there were a limited number of public posts in the colonies, many of the hopeful and aspirational men tried to achieve status by finding someone to marry. However, this strategy often also failed, and according to Lockridge, these men ended up being rejected in several ways, perceived by contemporary commentators in Europe as colonial and feminized fops.<sup>152</sup> Also, the historian Vaughn Scribner has brought forward similar ideas. Scribner has suggested that for aspirational men and women in the North American colonies, traditional routes of entry to the elite social world were complex.

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<sup>150</sup> Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interests. The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994.

<sup>151</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 35, Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 161.

<sup>152</sup> Lockridge, 'Colonial Self-fashioning', p. 300.



Since the colonists, neither possessed landed titles nor were part of the nobility, in order to be perceived as genteel, they had to compensate these lacks with something else. According to Scribner, successful elite merchants chose to prove themselves as 'cosmopolites' in order to be seen as genteel. Status consumption was a major part of this effort and therefore being a cosmopolite included collecting art, dinning in the latest fashion, contributing to charity and participating in various types of clubs and other associations. In their quest for recognition, these colonial gentlemen also tied themselves to global networks.<sup>153</sup>

### *Collaborative consumption*

In the eighteenth century, the British were all part of an extensive seaborne empire. Despite the geographic distance, the Atlantic Ocean connected the ports in Britain with those in the periphery and enabled regular contacts. The ships from London to the West Indies and back crossed the ocean in, on average, two months, carrying goods, people and ideas from one port to the next. This created an extensive network across the Atlantic, not only between the traders and merchants, but also between settlers in the West Indies and their friends and relatives back home.

The transatlantic links between Britons in Europe and the West Indies have been examined in previous studies, for example by historian Simon D. Smith in his work on the Lascelles, a family of successful gentry capitalists.<sup>154</sup> The family originated in Yorkshire, northern England, but became wealthy plantation owners in the West Indies. Other scholars writing about transatlantic merchant networks include Richard Pares, Sherrylynn Haggerty, Richard Grassby and Jennifer L Palmer.<sup>155</sup> Their studies stress the importance of family and transatlantic connections, factors that are also investigated by Sarah M.S Pearsall in her work on

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<sup>153</sup> Vaughn Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists: Gentlemen's Pursuit of Cosmopolitanism and Hierarchy in British American Taverns', *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2013, p. 470–474.

<sup>154</sup> Smith, *Europe and the Americas*.

<sup>155</sup> Richard Pares, *A West-India Fortune*, New York, Longmans Green, 1950; Sherrylynn Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community 1760–1810: Men, Women and the Distribution of Goods*, Leiden, Brill, 2006; Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580–1740*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001; Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Atlantic families and the writing of letters.<sup>156</sup> However, none of the above-mentioned studies focuses on the importance of networks on the consumption patterns of the settlers. A study of the transatlantic links from this perspective will therefore add valuable information to the existing knowledge of the eighteenth century transatlantic world.

If we turn to studies on other colonies, the use of networks in order to obtain desired consumer items have gained some attention among historians. The role of intermediaries is discussed in several of the articles in the anthology *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe*.<sup>157</sup> Consumers living in different parts of Europe all resorted to the ordering of goods from a distance; but they also relied on others for information about the latest fashions.<sup>158</sup> Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor has discussed the phenomenon of collaborative consumption in her book entitled *The Ties that Buy: Women and Commerce in Early Revolutionary America*. Her analysis shows that shopping was not only a frivolous activity, but also rather valuable work. Hartigan-O'Connor has studied the importance given to proxy shoppers in the North American colonies in the eighteenth century. She argues that the creation and use of networks can be seen as a natural part of life in the North American towns. The supply and demand of goods was irregular, but by making use of different contacts, a trader could sell his goods and the consumer could buy what he or she needed.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, the anthology *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, edited by Amanda Vickery and John Styles, is a good example of the growing interest in studies on material culture, on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>160</sup> Some of the articles in the anthology highlight the impact that contacts between friends and relatives across the Atlantic had on the purchase decisions of the settlers in the colonies. These contacts

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<sup>156</sup> Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*.

<sup>157</sup> Ilmakunnas & Stobart (eds), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe*.

<sup>158</sup> See f.ex. Ulla Ijäs, 'English Luxuries in Nineteenth-Century Vyborg', in Johanna Ilmakunnas and Jon Stobart (eds), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisitions and Boundaries*, London, Bloomsbury, p. 271–276; Marie Steinrud, 'Books, Wine and Fine China: Consumption Patterns of a *Brukspatron* in Early Nineteenth-Century Sweden', in Johanna Ilmakunnas and Jon Stobart (eds), *A Taste for Luxury in Early Modern Europe: Display, Acquisitions and Boundaries*, London, Bloomsbury, p. 179–196.

<sup>159</sup> Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, p. 130–131.

<sup>160</sup> Amanda Vickery and John Styles (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006.

were not only important for the purchases of luxuries, but also for matters important in everyday life such as food or medicine.<sup>161</sup> Because of the similarities between the North American colonies and those in the West Indies, it will be fruitful to ask similar questions for Jamaica.

## 1.5 Outlining the chapters

This thesis is thematically structured, and every chapter deals with a specific topic relating to the consumer behaviour of the white inhabitants in Jamaica in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These themes highlight the main questions of this thesis, the relationship between consumption, contacts and ideals.

Chapter 2 serves to create a context for the subsequent analysis. In the sub-chapters, the everyday life of the white settlers in Jamaica is outlined. The warm climate and various diseases in the West Indies created severe challenges for the aspiring Britons who wished to pursue a fashionable lifestyle. Above all, the fact that the society was based on slavery was troublesome and harmful to the status of the white colonist in the eyes of Britons, at least towards the end of the century.

Chapter 3 is a more in-depth study of the ways that the white settlers were both consuming items and displaying themselves as part of polite British culture, even if they lived far away from London. The chapter seeks to map out consumer items and forms of entertainment on the island that were connected to gentility by studying advertisements in local newspapers, the writings of the white settlers in letters and diaries as well as images. A number of places where the white inhabitants gathered to socialise will be discussed as stages for display and status consumption.

The topic of the fourth chapter is how the homes of wealthy white inhabitants reflected their struggle to keep up a polite appearance. In the chapter, the manner in which the colonists furnished their houses and adapted their surroundings is examined, as well as what they ate and drank and how they dressed. A discussion on the ways that the settlers received information about the current fashion in Europe is also included.

In the fifth chapter, the contacts that the settlers kept with their friends and relatives back in Britain across the Atlantic will be analysed. Despite the local storekeepers' ambitions to keep their stores well supplied, eager consumers could not fulfil all their desires in the stores on

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<sup>161</sup> Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*, p. 131.

the island. Therefore, the settlers had to use different strategies in order to obtain items that they needed. However, as the white inhabitants made their purchases in collaboration with others, the question of whose ideas about propriety with regard to taste, quality, and price lead to the final purchase decision becomes more complicated. By focusing on the transatlantic correspondence and the shipments of desired items sent from Britain to Jamaica, the role of proxies in the creation of a polite culture on the island of Jamaica will be studied.

The last chapter is a summary of the discussion in the previous chapters and an attempt to combine the results of the chapters in order to answer the main questions set in this thesis. The chapter aims at summing up the expensive living and costly entertainment of the white inhabitants in late eighteenth-century Jamaica.

## 2 Colonial white society

The number of people who travelled from Britain to the other side of the Atlantic increased sharply in the eighteenth century. By the mid-century, the colonies in North America reached from the Labrador Coast in the north to Florida in the south as Britain captured areas from the French and the Spanish. The expansion had been swift and the British Empire grew considerably in one hundred years, becoming five times as large. This development also meant a significant rise in both population and wealth in the British colonies. During the latter part of the century, the inhabitants of the West Indian and the North American colonies combined made up over two fifths of the population in England.<sup>162</sup> Among those who crossed the Atlantic at the time, we find members of the Bright-Meyler family.

In his first letters to Britain in the year 1752 Jeremiah Meyler (1729–1792), a young man in his twenties sent out to do business in the West Indies, described his feelings upon arrival in Jamaica. Initially he had fallen ill but after some time he felt better and his spirits lifted. He wrote a letter home stating ‘I find the island more agreeable than I imagined and what is in general represented. They live here almost as well as they do in England and have plenty of everything’.<sup>163</sup> He noted that the island had exceeded his expectations as ‘there is plenty of food and the people live here very well, so I hope with a sober and regular life to enjoy my health here which I shall observe above all things’.<sup>164</sup> In return, he got letters from relatives and business associates with news about events in Britain at large as well as within the family and instructions on business transactions, but also advice on a more general level. In one of his replies Jeremiah Meyler wrote ‘I cannot avoid reflecting and returning you my sincere thanks for all your past favours and also the promise of your future ones, provided my behaviour and conduct proves agreeable, which is as much as any

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<sup>162</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: the Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of British Culture*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1988, p. 8; Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 31–32.

<sup>163</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated February 15, 1752, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 242.

<sup>164</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Kingston, to Richard Meyler II, Bristol, letter dated February 17, 1752, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 243.

person can desire or imagine'.<sup>165</sup> So far, everything was well and he appeared optimistic about life in the West Indies and aware of the way that his own conduct affected his chances of succeeding.

However, after some time rumours about Jeremiah Meyler's behaviour spread across the Atlantic and the tone in the letters from Britain expressed concern. Despite Jeremiah's good intentions, his relatives in Bristol were unsatisfied with how things had turned out and were now accusing him of leading an unruly life. They suspected that he had lost money on 'gameing or some idle extravagante way' and cautioned him that he should take warning and remember all those young men who have ruined their reputation in the West Indies: 'consider how many of this city you may find in your island that by the misconduct cannot even appear in this kingdom. They are banish'd during life. To have people say he was a gentle, well adressed young man which is best words & wind, & on the least fault will ridicule & abuse to the utmost'.<sup>166</sup>

Following the reprimands, Jeremiah Meyler returned to England. However, he seems soon to have regained the trust of his relatives and travelled back to Jamaica. During this second stint in the West Indies, he became seriously ill after eating bad or poisonous fish. Taking advice from a local doctor, he decided to leave the island, hoping that a colder climate would cure him. He set out on a trip that took him from Jamaica to Havana, New York, Philadelphia and back to Kingston. This trip lasted about six months, and he returned to Jamaica in much better health.<sup>167</sup> Unfortunately, he after some time fell ill again and lost confidence in the affairs in the West Indies. He decided to leave the island and return home to Britain.<sup>168</sup>

The correspondence of Jeremiah Meyler and his relatives in Britain recount several features typical for travellers to British colonies in the eighteenth century. Firstly, the reason for Jeremiah Meyler crossing the Atlantic was trade; in his case the affairs of the Brights and the Meylers, two merchant families united by marriage and common commercial

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<sup>165</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Kingston, to Richard Meyler II, Bristol, letter dated August 5, 1752, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 263.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Meyler, II Bristol to Jeremiah Meyler, Savanna-la-Mar, letter dated September 16, 1754, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 307.

<sup>167</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Savanna-la-Mar, to Henry Bright, Bristol letter dated May 16, 1763, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 370.

<sup>168</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Savanna-la-Mar, to Henry Bright, Bristol letter dated April 7, 1764, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 390.

interests in the first half of the eighteenth century. Secondly, Jeremiah Meyler's letters show that he had made assumptions about what life in the West Indies would be like, and it seems that he had been warned beforehand of the dangers of going to the West Indies or maybe on his own part had imagined the island to be an unsafe place. Among other fears, he was worried about his health, and he also had fallen ill soon after his arrival in the Caribbean. Thirdly, the correspondence of the Bright-Meylers shows that there was some apprehension among the relatives and business associates of Jeremiah Meyler in England, with regard to the danger linked to life in the West Indies. Some of these risks seem to have been common knowledge and were illustrated in many satirical caricatures of the day, turning on the debauchery and luxury of the West Indian society.<sup>169</sup> Fourthly, all the letters discussed above were written by men. Previous studies show that most of the persons emigrating across the Atlantic during the eighteenth century were men and the colonial societies were male dominated. Also in Jamaica the population consisted mostly of men; in general there were few children, even fewer old people and not that many families.<sup>170</sup>

This chapter aims at creating a context for the subsequent analysis of the consumption patterns of the Britons with genteel ambitions in Jamaica. Since the emphasis in this study is placed on the white inhabitants and their consumption, there is a need for defining their place and role in the Jamaican society as well as in the wider Atlantic at the time. By moving from a closer examination of the white inhabitants in Jamaica to a wider comparison of British colonists on the rim of the Atlantic in general, this chapter is thematically structured. As this study centres on the purchases and amusements of a group of late eighteenth-century Englishmen living far away from home country, the family relations and contacts created and maintained across the Atlantic are of relevance. An examination of the ties that bound the colonists to Britain will show how the ideas about desirable purchases and their connection to a polite way of life travelled across the ocean.

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<sup>169</sup> Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, p. 98–99.

<sup>170</sup> Trevor Burnard, 'Evaluating Gender in Early Jamaica, 1674–1784', *History of the Family*, vol. 12, no. 12, 2007, p. 81.

## 2.1 White society in eighteenth-century Jamaica

Jamaica came into the English possession in the year 1655, when the British captured the island from the Spanish. Of the British colonies, it soon became the most prominent and profitable.<sup>171</sup> The island attracted many Europeans dreaming of becoming wealthy. About one hundred years after the seizure, the Jamaican historian and administrator Edward Long stated that 'every man who settles in our West India islands adds, while he lives, much more to the wealth and advantage of the mother country, than he might have done if he had remained in it'.<sup>172</sup> Historians have attempted to find out exactly how much wealth the colony created. According to Richard Sheridan, the capital stock or total value of Jamaica in the year 1774 was 18 million pounds. His study is based on an analysis of sugar planters' inventories, giving accurate information of the personal wealth of specific individuals. However, Trevor Burnard has underlined that in order to find out the entire wealth of the island also other aspects, such as non-plantation agriculture, should be taken into account. Therefore, the total wealth of the island was probably higher than in Sheridan's estimation; Burnard suggests that the sum of the total wealth was at least 50 per cent higher.<sup>173</sup> However, the wealth of the West Indies was unequally distributed. According to estimates, one per cent of the population on the island controlled more than three quarters of the capital. At the same time, the poorest 90 per cent had less than 4 per cent of the total wealth. There were also sharp differences between the West Indies and other British colonies and between the West Indian possessions and the mother country. Averagely speaking, a white in Jamaica was much wealthier than one in North America or in England or Wales.<sup>174</sup> The reasons behind the wealth of Jamaica were manifold. By the second half of the century, the island had hundreds of sugar plantations and many smaller estates growing other crops.<sup>175</sup> Sugar and rum, cotton, coffee, different kinds of wood, spices, fruits and tortoiseshells were sent from the

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<sup>171</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, p. 512.

<sup>173</sup> Trevor Burnard, 'Prodigious Riches': The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2001, p. 508.

<sup>174</sup> Burnard, 'Prodigious Riches', p. 520: 36, 6 times as wealthy compared to the thirteen colonies, 3 times as wealthy compared to England and Wales; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 22.

<sup>175</sup> Craton, 'Reluctant Creoles', p. 315–316.



island to Europe. Other goods significant to the Jamaican trade were cacao, Peruvian bark, balsams and bullion, goods that Jamaica received in trade with nearby colonies.<sup>176</sup>

Initially, Barbados had been the core of the British colonies in the area, producing mostly cotton and tobacco. Planters first introduced sugar on the island during the 1640's, with great results, and the commerce accelerated rapidly. The timing was perfect as there was a high and constant demand for sugar in Europe.<sup>177</sup> Initially, sugar was used as an ingredient in medicines for both external and internal use. However, soon it made its way into becoming a sweetener used in fashionable drinks such as tea, coffee and chocolate.<sup>178</sup> Barbados' heyday lasted only for a short while and in the 1670s the island was replaced by Jamaica as the most profitable colony.<sup>179</sup> The boom in the island's production of sugar reached its peak in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>180</sup> There were several reasons behind this success. The plantations in Jamaica were often larger than those in Barbados and the fertile soil in Jamaica meant that the planters there could better provide food for their slaves.<sup>181</sup> The high level of productivity in Jamaica was the result of a combination of the selection of crops, scale of production and the way that the planters managed their plantations. The production and export of produce employed a large proportion of the whites on the island, and it was in this way that eager immigrants usually found employment.<sup>182</sup>

Up to this date, Edward Brathwaite has made one of the most thorough and often-cited investigations into Jamaican society in the

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<sup>176</sup> Long, *A History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, p. 494–495.

<sup>177</sup> Dunn, Richard S., *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1973, p. 59, 62; Hornsby, 'Geographies of the British Atlantic World', p. 17; Jamieson, 'The Essence of Commodification', p. 275–276.

<sup>178</sup> Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 146–147; Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, New York, Viking, 1985, p. 101.

<sup>179</sup> Jack P. Greene, 'Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study', in Jack P. Greene, Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (eds), *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989, p. 216.

<sup>180</sup> Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*, London, Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 14–15.

<sup>181</sup> Justin Roberts, 'The 'Better Sort' and 'The Poorer Sort': Wealth Inequalities, Family Formation and the Economy of Energy on British Caribbean Sugar Plantations, 1750–1800', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2014, p. 460–461.

<sup>182</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 3.

eighteenth century.<sup>183</sup> In his conclusions he discusses the way he sees his study as different from earlier ones, in which the island has been seen as '[---] at best, a parody of the metropolitan, at worst, a disorganized, debased and uncreative polity'.<sup>184</sup> Instead, Brathwaite demonstrates how the Jamaican society, in a process that he calls *creolization*, developed into a unity. His starting point is that researchers should examine the way that the Jamaican society worked as a whole, instead of looking at the society as filled with conflicts between, for example, masters and slaves. This approach makes it easier to discover the resourcefulness of the plantations' milieu and of the social institutions of the island generally. However, according to Brathwaite, the white planters could not accept the abolishment of slavery and this in turn had consequences for the creole society and hindered its reaching its full potential.<sup>185</sup> The sociologist Mimi Sheller argues that becoming creole was closely connected with the creation of a home in a strange place. In her opinion, creolization was linked to the mixing of persons from various ranks and cultures speaking different languages.<sup>186</sup> This is a description that fits well onto the West Indies in the eighteenth century.

By mid-eighteenth century, the population of Jamaica had reached 142,000 persons. Of these, the overwhelming majority, or about 90 per cent, were slaves.<sup>187</sup> These numbers are representative, as the ratio between slaves and free people were similar in all the British Caribbean colonies. A further examination of the whites on the island shows that most of them were born there. According to a contemporary account, the ratio between the whites born on the island, the so-called creoles, and those born elsewhere was approximately 2 to 1.<sup>188</sup> Previous research does also show that nine out of ten of those who emigrated across the Atlantic originally came from England.<sup>189</sup> Even if the white settlers in Jamaica in the period in question can be seen as a homogenous group, they came from various backgrounds. They were not only from different social classes, but also from different religious backgrounds. In addition to

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<sup>183</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*.

<sup>184</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 306.

<sup>185</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 307.

<sup>186</sup> Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean. From Arawaks to Zombies*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 181–182.

<sup>187</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 2.

<sup>188</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 152.

<sup>189</sup> Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica', p. 778.

Christian Englishmen, there was a substantial group of Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin on the island.<sup>190</sup> Populations of Jews were present in other Caribbean colonies at the time as well. Many of the members of this community originated from Brazil, France, or the French colonies from where they had fled due to religious oppression. In the eighteenth century, the British on both sides of the Atlantic looked upon Jews with suspicion. This intolerance can also be seen in the correspondence of the Bright-Meylers. After his arrival on the island in 1765, Lowbridge Bright hired a Jew who would help him with the business. However, his letters show the prejudices of that time, as he hoped that this was only a temporary solution. Lowbridge Bright wrote to his relatives that, on the one hand, he felt that he could not trust the Jewish helper and found it annoying that he had to give him time off from his duties due to his religion. On the other hand, Lowbridge Bright found the Jew well connected and therefore of assistance until he had become better established in the local society.<sup>191</sup> Despite the prejudices, many Jews still succeeded in finding a living in the West Indies, as they engaged in the global trade on a local level. Also, the Plantation Act of 1740 strengthened the position of local Jews in Jamaica as it stated that those who had spent more than seven years in the colony would have the right to citizenship.<sup>192</sup>

Between 18,000 and 24,000 of the whites on the island found employment outside of the plantations. The majority in this group earned their living as minor traders, selling for example provisions or wine, while others were engaged as lawyers, doctors, and preachers.<sup>193</sup> In addition, various clerks, usually employed by wealthy merchant houses, belonged to this group. These bachelors were the most ambitious and fashionable men in the larger towns on the island, with money to spend and an interest in dressing according to the latest fashion. The clerks sent by the Bright-Meylers to the West Indies seem to fit the picture well; they were young, motivated men who dreamt about quick fortunes and social

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<sup>190</sup> Allan D. Meyers, 'Ethnic Distinctions and Wealth among Colonial Jamaican Merchants, 1685–1716', *Social Science History*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, p. 48.

<sup>191</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Kingston to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated July 6, 1765, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 395.

<sup>192</sup> Natalie Zacek, 'A People so Subtle': Sephardic Jewish Pioneers of the English West Indies', in Caroline A. Williams (ed.), *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World: People, Products, and Practices on the Move*, Farnham, Ashgate, p. 97–112.

<sup>193</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 136.

advancement.<sup>194</sup> As will be discussed in more detail throughout this thesis, the young men of the Bright-Meyler Family seem also to have been conspicuous consumers, spending money on fashionable clothes, horse-drawn carriages and gambling.<sup>195</sup>

In addition to the whites, the Jamaican society also encompassed a group of free people of colour. However, in comparison with French and Spanish colonies this was a numerously minor group. In general, their status in the Jamaican society was not that high, only slightly better than that of the slaves. However, there were also variations within the group, as some had more privileges than others did. For the free people of colour kinship with Europeans was of importance in their quest for privileged status. In addition, their status in society was also dependent on other factors, such as their economic situation and if they had received an education abroad.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, we have the largest group on the island, the slaves. As in the other colonies, the Jamaican economy was based on work done by slaves and the export of the crops they produced. Like their peers in other colonies in the Americas, the Jamaican planters imported slaves from Africa to perform all the hard labour on their plantations. The journey across the Atlantic and the subsequent work on the plantations was filled with danger, resulting in high mortality rates. Still, the number of imported slaves meant that the enslaved population on the island increased rapidly from the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>197</sup> Most of the slaves worked on the plantations producing sugar and other crops, a

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<sup>194</sup> Kenneth Morgan, 'Introduction', in Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West-India Connection, 1732–1837*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 14; Burnard, 'A Failed Settler Society', p. 164; Burnard, *Migration to Jamaica*, p. 770; Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, p. 91.

<sup>195</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 137; Richard Meyler II, Bristol, to Francis Bright, Kingston, letter dated December 3, 1748, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 216; Richard Meyler II, Bristol to Jeremiah Meyler, Savanna-la-Mar letter dated September 16, 1745, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 306.

<sup>196</sup> Daniel Livesay, 'The Decline of Jamaica's Interracial Households and the Fall of the Planter Class, 1733–1823', *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, p. 108–109; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 171, 186–187; Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of the Plantation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2003, p. 37, 42.

<sup>197</sup> Christer Petley, 'Legitimacy and Social Boundaries: Free People of Colour and the Jamaican Slave Society', *Social History*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2005, p. 483; Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 15.

monotonous and often dangerous job. For example, tasks such as boiling sugar and conveying of hot liquids were risky tasks that required skills on the part of the workers.<sup>198</sup>

Planters not only forced slaves to work on the plantations, they also employed them elsewhere in the Jamaican society. Domestic slaves attended to the needs of the whites, while skilled slaves worked as coopers, smiths and masons.<sup>199</sup> Slaves were the legal property of their owner, and there were few restrictions in the law about the way that slave owners could treat their slaves.<sup>200</sup> When a debate concerning the inhumanity of slavery began towards the end of the eighteenth century, the colonists found themselves in a tough position, caught between their way of life in the colonies and ideas about abolition. For Britain, Jamaica was by the 1820s no longer the most profitable colony; instead, slavery turned it into a place that presented a problem.<sup>201</sup> Settlers in other British colonies in America also felt this tension caused by the movement for the abolition of slavery.<sup>202</sup>

### *Towns and plantations*

There has been a growing interest in provincial towns and the economically important colonial port towns among historians in recent years.<sup>203</sup> In the British colonies in America in general, the port towns underwent many changes during the first half of the eighteenth century, becoming larger and more refined. Among the inhabitants in these towns, there was a high demand for imported consumer items and fashionable goods from Britain.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, p. 49.

<sup>199</sup> McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves*, p. 8.

<sup>200</sup> Petley, 'Legitimacy and Social Boundaries', p. 483; Elsa V. Goveia, 'The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century', in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds), *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, New York, Ian Randel Publishers, 1991, p. 353.

<sup>201</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 4.

<sup>202</sup> McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, p. 30.

<sup>203</sup> See f.ex. Jon Stobart, 'Leisure and Shopping in the Small Towns of Georgian England: a Regional Approach', *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2005, p. 499; Dries Lyna and Ilja Van Damme 'A Strategy of Seduction? The Role of Commercial Advertisements in the Eighteenth century Retailing Business of Antwerp', *Business History*, vol. 51, no. 1, p. 100–121; Hunter, *Purchasing Identity*; Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties that Buy*.

<sup>204</sup> Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2011, p. 17.



*Image 2: A Draught of the harbours of Port Royal and Kingston, Edward Long, The History of Jamaica (London 1774). The map shows two of the most important towns on the island in the eighteenth century, Port Royal and Kingston. The regular pattern of streets in Kingston, a feature that the town was known for also in Europe, can be seen in the map. Source: The British Library.*

In total there were about forty towns and villages in Jamaica by the second half of the eighteenth century, but according to the plantation bookkeeper J.B. Moreton, only a few of these were worth mentioning.<sup>205</sup> The main port in Jamaica in the eighteenth century was situated in Kingston, while Montego Bay, the third important urban centre after Kingston and Spanish Town, was a significant port town for the intra-Caribbean trade. By the mid-century there were in total nineteen ports on the island, spread evenly along the coast.<sup>206</sup> According to the contemporary account by Charles Leslie, it was rare to see less than 300 ships in the port of Kingston, a

<sup>205</sup> Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 33; Daive A. Dunkley, *Agency of the Enslaved: Jamaica and the Culture of Freedom in the Atlantic World*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2013, p. 159.

<sup>206</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 5; James A. Delle, *The Colonial Caribbean: Landscapes of Power in Jamaica's Plantation System*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 48.

comment that gives some hint about the size of the port as well as the town.<sup>207</sup> Kingston was the most important of the towns on the island. It was also the largest town, with a population of 8,500 white, 3,500 free people of colour and 18,000 slaves during the second half of the eighteenth century. Edward Long did not spare his words when he described Kingston as the most well-designed town in the world. Especially the ordered planning of the town, where the streets were laid out in a regular manner, was to his liking (see image 3). The town was well built also in other ways as two- or three storeyed brick buildings with well-furnished rooms were lined up on the streets.<sup>208</sup> The contemporary historian and narrator Bryan Edwards described Kingston as a place of 'great trade and opulence' with wonderful houses and an overstocked market that was 'inferior to none'.<sup>209</sup> At the foot of King's Street, near the harbour in Kingston there was an area that was important for trade. The market used by slaves was found in this part of town as well as merchant wholesaling, various shops and until the end of 1808 when slave trading was abolished, the slave vendors.<sup>210</sup>

Other accounts depict the everyday life in the town:

I have been spending ten weeks with Mary Ricketts at a Pen near Kingston, we were very gay there, a continual round of dancing, indeed so much that I was heartily tired of it. It is I think very warm in Kingston, but certainly the manners of the people and their mode of living resembles England, they keep late hours, have suppers, lay a bed long in the morning and what is still better the ladies and gentlemen associate very much together. For instance, soon as ever tea comes in, when we have dinner anywhere; the men will immediately join us.<sup>211</sup>

This quoted passage is taken from one of the many letters that traversed the Atlantic between the members of the Broadbent family. The account

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<sup>207</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, p. 15.

<sup>208</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2. p. 103; Renny, *An History of Jamaica*, p.103; Trevor Burnard, "'The Grand Mart of the Island": The Economic Function of Kingston, Jamaica in the Mid-Eighteenth Century, in Kathleen E.A. Monteith and Glen Richards (eds), *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture*, Kingston, University of Kingston Press, 2002, p. 225–241.

<sup>209</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies in two Volumes*, London, Printed for John Stockdale, Piccadilly, 1793, vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>210</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 137–138.

<sup>211</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 122.

was written by Jane Broadbent's sister, Ann Maria, and depicts a visit to Kingston and everyday life there; a life that she felt in many ways was similar to life in England.

The administrative capital of Jamaica was Spanish Town, a town with between 500 and 600 houses and almost 5,000 inhabitants, slaves and free persons of colour included.<sup>212</sup> In a contemporary account, Spanish Town is described in the following way, underlining the splendour and grandeur of the town and its inhabitants:

'[---] tho' a town of less business [than Kingston], has more gaiety. Here resides many persons of large fortunes, and who makes a figure proportionable; the number of coaches kept here is very great; here is a regular assembly; and the residence of the governor and the principal officers of the government, who have all very profitable places, conspire with the genius of the inhabitants, ostentatious and expensive, to make it a very splendid and agreeable place'.<sup>213</sup>

But in comparison to Kingston, the appearance of the town did not meet with the same approval. According to James Robertson, the reason for this was that Spanish Town had been built under Spanish rule and the construction of the town was therefore in a style unfamiliar to Britons.<sup>214</sup>

Spanish Town was the seat of the Governor, the highest-ranking man on the island and representative of the British crown. In addition, the court and the Jamaican House of Assembly were situated in Spanish Town. The House of Assembly had 45 members from all parts of the island, elected among the landed men on the island. These members gathered in the town annually, from October to mid-December. Usually, the members of the Assembly gathered for four days a week, and spent the rest of their time attending to private affairs and entertainment.<sup>215</sup> As was discussed in the introduction of this thesis, this was a festive time on the island. Not only the members of Assembly, but also their families and others gathered in Spanish Town and numerous forms of entertainment were arranged for their amusement.

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<sup>212</sup> Renny, *An History of Jamaica*, p. 101.

<sup>213</sup> William Burke and Edmund Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America*, vol. 2, London, printed for J. Dodsely, 1770, p. 79.

<sup>214</sup> Robertson, 'Giving Directions in Spanish Town, Jamaica', p. 720.

<sup>215</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 136; 144; Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 5–6; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 50–51.



By studying the paintings of the British architect James Hakewill, one can get a glimpse of what Jamaica might have looked like at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>216</sup> Hakewill depicted the King's Square, an open place in front of the Governor's residence in Spanish Town (see image 3). In the image, the Governor's house can be seen to the right and the House of Assembly to the left of the square. The large building in the centre housed a great monument in honour of Lord Georg Rodney, a naval officer who had won an important victory for Jamaica in a battle against France in 1782. The erection of the House of Assembly began in 1756 and even if parts of the building were in intended use before, it took approximately 30 years for it to be finished.<sup>217</sup> According to the historian Christer Petley, the positioning of the Governor's residence opposite to the House of Assembly, served as a constant reminder to the whites on the island that they stood under British rule.<sup>218</sup>

There are few people in this image. It seems that Hakewill's intention has been to show the town, houses and the landscape, rather than the inhabitants of the island. The idealised scenes leave out slaves and the brutality of slavery, for example, presenting the island as a calm and orderly place.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour*.

<sup>217</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 50.

<sup>218</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 66.

<sup>219</sup> Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour*, p. 3, 35; Jennifer Raab, *Frederic Church: the Art and the Science of Detail*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, p. 131; Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p. 86.



Image 3: King's Square, The illustration depicts the King's House to the right, a building frequently mentioned in Lady Nugent's journal. Source: James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica*, London, Hurst and Robinson, 1825, p. 24.

Outside of the urban centres lay the plantations, the main locus of production on the island. Even if the layout of a plantation was different from one to the next, they all had some common features. The owner of the plantation resided in a great house while the white plantation staff occupied more modest houses. The plantation grounds also included industrial works in which the crops were processed and villages for the enslaved.<sup>220</sup> On the plantations, the great house had symbolic meaning, and it was often built and maintained even if the planter happened to be an absentee proprietor. The transient nature of the British settlement in Jamaica was visible in the way that absenteeism was common among the planters, and increasing throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>221</sup> Even if some whites stayed on the island for long periods, or their whole lives,

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<sup>220</sup> James A. Delle, 'An Archaeology of Modernity in Colonial Jamaica', *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, p. 90–91.

<sup>221</sup> Cecilia A. Green, 'Hierarchies of Whiteness in the Geographies of Empire: Thomas Thistlewood and the Barretts of Jamaica', *New West Indian guide/Nieuwe West-Indische gids* vol., 80 no. 1 & 2, 2006, p. 14.

many wealthier plantation owners confided the care of their plantations to one or several attorneys and left the island to live as absentees in Britain. All kinds of people ended up as absentees. Those who inherited property on the island, children of British planters born in the island who moved to Europe to get an education and never returned, and traders who had spent some time on the island but returned home.<sup>222</sup> Previous research has shown that the more money a planter owned, the less likely it was that he would stay in the West Indies.<sup>223</sup> The Jamaican absentees played an important role in Britain as advocates for Jamaica and Jamaican interests. Some of the most eminent absentees, for example, served in Parliament. These powerful friends could in their turn aid those who stayed in the West Indies.<sup>224</sup>

The production system based on slavery made supervision a necessity, so when the planter decided to move to Britain, he needed to find someone who could manage his business and take care of the plantation for him.<sup>225</sup> Therefore, absenteeism also functioned as a way of providing work opportunities for individuals travelling to the West Indies. The attorneys, serving in place of the plantation owner, had complete authority to act as an agent on the absent planter's behalf. During the eighteenth century, the persons chosen for this task were all male, adult and free. They were also literate, an important aspect since they had to stay in close contact with the plantation owner by correspondence.<sup>226</sup> In general, taking the job as an attorney provided young European men with many opportunities to earn a fortune and in Jamaica especially so. The historian Douglas Hamilton has even argued that in comparison to other colonies, the high number of absentees in Jamaica left more room for social advancement for those willing to take a risk and come to the island.<sup>227</sup> The attorneys were often left in charge of a number of plantations and given part of the profits in payment. In addition, they could live on one of the plantations almost for free; according to the contemporary account by

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<sup>222</sup> Morgan, 'Introduction', p. 81.

<sup>223</sup> Petley, 'Legitimacy and Social Boundaries', p. 484; Dessens, *Myths of the Plantation Society*, p. 42-43; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850*, p. 17.

<sup>224</sup> Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 16.

<sup>225</sup> Smith, *Europe and the Americas*, p. 172.

<sup>226</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850*, p. 47; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: the American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, p. 9; Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 32.

<sup>227</sup> Hamilton, *Studies in Imperialism*, p. 161.

John Stewart, 'at no other expense than that of their wine'.<sup>228</sup> One well-known transatlantic correspondence between an absentee planter and an attorney is the letters sent by Simon Taylor in Jamaica to Chaloner Arcedekne, an absentee proprietor living in Suffolk in eastern England.<sup>229</sup> Simon Taylor later advanced from the position of an attorney to one of the most important landowners in Jamaica during the latter part of the eighteenth century and one of the most influential members of the Jamaican society. At the time of his death, he owned several plantations on the island, and his wealth would have placed him among the wealthy elite in Britain as well.<sup>230</sup> Absenteeism was not only adhered to by the colonists in Jamaica, also in the other West Indian colonies planters chose to live in Britain if they could.<sup>231</sup> In the Windward Islands, the number of people who chose absenteeism in the end of the eighteenth century was so high, that it even complicated the governing of the island.<sup>232</sup> This underlines the view of the Caribbean colonies as a temporary place of residence, a view that will be discussed in more detail next.

## 2.2 The adventures of Johnny Newcome and others

In his early nineteenth-century account John Stewart, a resident of the island for more than twenty years, describes white society on the island in the following way:

The Europeans who are settled in Jamaica come to it with one invariable view – that of making or mending their fortune. Some few, after obtaining this end, marry, and have families – in short, are domesticated as fixed inhabitants of the country. Such men, attached by a new train of connexions and endearments, seldom desire to return to their native country, to which, and to their relatives there, they become in time perfectly indifferent, as great strangers as they at one time were to this their second home. Another class continue fixed in the country by less reputable attachments, which have, however, the effect, in time, of weaning them from every hope and wish for home, and of a more happy

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<sup>228</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 185.

<sup>229</sup> Betty Wood, T.R Clayton and W.A. Speck, *The Letters of Simon Taylor of Jamaica to Chaloner Arcedekne 1765–1775*, Butler & Tanner Ltd, London, 2002.

<sup>230</sup> R. B. Sheridan, 'Simon Taylor, Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica 1740–1813', *Agricultural History*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1971, p. 285–296; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 140–141.

<sup>231</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, p. 4–5.

<sup>232</sup> Hamilton, *Studies in Imperialism*, p. 72.

and respectable course of life. But by far the greater number – certainly no less than four fifths – fall victims to disease before they have realized a sufficiency; while only a favoured few (perhaps not more than five or six in a hundred) ever return to their native country with a fortune, or competency.<sup>233</sup>

According to his own words, John Stewart set out to describe such features of life on the island that previous authors of accounts about the West Indies often had neglected.<sup>234</sup> The above-quoted excerpt from Stewart's work gives an overview of the lives of the white settlers in Jamaica. It is striking that despite the public view in Britain about wealthy West Indians, it seems that although a few made it, many more were struck down by disease, and only a minority of those that migrated to the West Indies returned to Europe with a fortune. Similar thoughts on the risks involved in life in the West Indies also appear in Theresia Phillips account of life on the island:

[---] there is nothing so common in that Country as to land this Day, three Days hence to sicken, die in twenty-four Hours, be buried in Six, and in Twenty-Hours more forgot. There are very Few Europeans whose Acquaintance with the Island exceeds a Week; which, [---] does not proceed so much from Unhealthiness of the Climate, as from free Living, Irregularity, and want of Management of them on their First Arrival, and until their Blood is properly thinned by the Heat of the Climate.<sup>235</sup>

This was a depressing description of a harsh environment far away from Europe. The historian James Robertson has noted that those who had recently arrived on the island often contrasted what they saw and experienced to the society they had left behind and were accustomed to. As these newcomers found neither rural paradises nor towns that were comparable to those in Britain, they often became discontented upon arrival in the West Indies.<sup>236</sup> Natalie Zacek has come to a similar

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<sup>233</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica* p. 179.

<sup>234</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica* p. ix–x.

<sup>235</sup> Theresia Constantia Phillips, 'An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Theresia Constantia Phillips', in Dianne Dugaw (ed.), *Memoirs of Scandalous Women*, London, Routledge, 2011, p. 139.

<sup>236</sup> James Robertson, 'Giving Directions in Spanish Town, Jamaica. Comprehending a Tropical Townscape', *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2009, p. 719–720.

conclusion, and writes that travellers to almost all of the West Indian islands felt the same disappointment with what they saw and experienced. In many of the early reports home, these travellers for example described the urban centres on the islands as unpolished and filthy with narrow streets and sheds for houses.<sup>237</sup>



Image 4: William Holland: Johnny New Come in the island of Jamaica, London, 1800. The satirical caricature depicts a story of a man who has newly arrived on the West Indies, his life in the island and subsequent quick death. Source: The British Museum, London.

Early modern Jamaica has been called ‘Britain’s Wild West’ and can in many ways be described as a frontier zone: there were by far more white men than women, and the way of life did not follow the standards set in London and Britain at large.<sup>238</sup> In her journal, Lady Nugent wrote about

<sup>237</sup> Natalie Zacek, ‘Rituals of Rulership. The Material Culture of West Indian Politics’, in David S. Shields (ed.), *Material Culture in Anglo-America*, Columbia, The University of South Carolina Press, 2009, p. 115–116.

<sup>238</sup> Petley, ‘Legitimacy and Social Boundaries’, p. 484; Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Metropole and Colony in English Imagination 1830–1867*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2002, p. 69; Jacob M. Price, ‘Credit in the Slave Trade and Slave Plantation Economics’, in

the lack of morals that she saw on the island. In her opinion, the white inhabitants only wanted to make money, disregarding the consequences of their behaviour. Another contemporary narrator, Peter Marsden, noted that the planters did not seem to have any religion at all. In his opinion, the quest for wealth was the only thing that kept most of the settlers in the West Indies.<sup>239</sup> The lack of religious interest among the white inhabitants is noteworthy. The leading congregation on the island was the Church of England, however, it was not that organised until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Up until then, the religious work on the island was mainly dependent on the effort of diligent individuals.<sup>240</sup> The contemporary narrator John Stewart mentions that the inhabitants of the towns on the island were more genteel than those living on the plantations, but that in neither place was churchgoing highly appreciated among the whites.<sup>241</sup> Other travellers gave similar reports. Peter Marsden noted that 'there are churches in every parish in this island; yet except in the towns I fear they are little frequented but on that awful occasion the burial of the dead.'<sup>242</sup> Lady Nugent wrote in her diary that the church in Spanish Town was crowded when she and her husband visited it for the first time, 'and all the world staring'.<sup>243</sup> If not religion, then the arrival of the new Governor was an occasion that attracted large crowds to the church.

The lack of morale, a lavish life and in many cases a subsequent quick death was also subject of one of the caricatures printed by William Holland (see image 4). This print, entitled 'Johnny New-Come in the island of Jamaica', depicts the life of a man in the West Indies in twenty-one small images. Johnny Newcome, a young man, leaving Europe to seek his fortune in other parts of the world, was a common figure in caricatures in the early nineteenth century. Several caricaturists drew the adventures of Johnny Newcome; the one discussed here was made by "S.J", a

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Barbara L. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 293.

<sup>239</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 131; Peter Marsden, *An Account of the Island of Jamaica with Reflections on the Treatment, Occupation and Provisions of the Slaves: To which is Added a Description of the Animal and Vegetable Productions of the Island: By a Gentleman Lately Resident on a Plantation*, Newcastle, printed for the author by S. Hodgson, 1788, p. 41.

<sup>240</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 23.

<sup>241</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 182.

<sup>242</sup> Marsden, *An Account of the Island of Jamaica with Reflections*, p. 41.

<sup>243</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 24.

pseudonym probably used by James Sayers (1748–1823). James Sayers, originally from Norfolk in the east of England moved to London in the beginning of 1780s to work as a caricaturist. During his career, he made several caricatures commenting on both politics and other phenomena in British society.<sup>244</sup> The print ‘Johnny New-come in the Island of Jamaica’ takes us from the arrival of a young, straight-backed man in the West Indies, via his battle with insects and illnesses, but also times of pleasure such as dancing and eating, to his making of a will and subsequent death. The small images all have their own subtitles, further explaining their meaning. Half of them are about sickness and death, underlining the dangers of life in the West Indies. Even if the print depicting Johnny Newcome’s life is a satirical caricature; the small images provide a summary of life for many of the white inhabitants of the West Indies. For example, the print is comparable to the letters of Jeremiah Meyler, and many of the same themes occur in both sources. In Britain, the print spread information about what life in the West Indies was like to those who saw it in William Holland’s store or printed in some other place. In general, the satirical caricatures printed by William Holland were produced in order to comment on, or criticise a current situation such as slavery and the luxurious lifestyle of the West Indians.<sup>245</sup> The prints depicting Johnny Newcome were published at a time when slavery became a topic for debate in Britain and uprisings among slaves in the West Indies became more common.<sup>246</sup>

In the previously-quoted passages from contemporary accounts depicting life in the West Indies, the high death rate was striking. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, life expectancy was low in the area.<sup>247</sup> Various calculations have been made of the death rate among the inhabitants of colonial Jamaica. The majority of slaves on the island were employed in the sugar plantations, the most hazardous job on

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<sup>244</sup> Karen Wilkes, *Whiteness, Weddings, and Tourism in the Caribbean: Paradise for Sale*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 107–107; Roger N. Buckley, ‘The Frontier in the Jamaican Caricatures of Abraham James’, *The Yale University Library Gazette* vol. 58, no. 3–4, 1984, p. 152–162.

<sup>245</sup> Roger Norman Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies: Society and Military in the Revolutionary Age*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1998, p. 180–181.

<sup>246</sup> Hermione de Almeida, ‘Dark Humor, Cartoon Strips and other Raw Material for Don Juan’, in Hermione de Almeida (ed.), *Nature, Politics and the Arts. Essays on Romantic Culture for Carl Woodring*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2015, p. 82–83.

<sup>247</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 331–334; Burnard, ‘Inheritance and Independence’, p. 99.



the island. Those working on plantations with other crops, had slightly better chances of survival and these slaves were also otherwise better taken care of by their owners. Also among the white inhabitants, the death rate was high, at times even higher than among the slaves, as the Europeans did not possess immunity to the tropical diseases such as yellow fever and malaria. Due to the high mortality rate, immigration was a necessity for the survival of the white population on the island. Without the influx of newcomers, this group would not have persisted over a longer period. According to the historian Vincent Brown, 50,000 persons immigrated to the island during the first half of the eighteenth century, but this resulted in an increase in the white population of only 5,000. By the middle of the century, the life expectancy of a white inhabitant in Jamaica was around 12 or 13 years, and an average immigrant was lucky if he reached more than 40 years old. However, mortality was in general high among settlers in the colonies, so the high death rate in Jamaica was not special. The high death rate among the inhabitants of Jamaica seems to equal the rates found in other tropical areas, such as the Gold Coast in Africa and the West Indian island of St. Domingue.<sup>248</sup> Peter Marsden elaborated in the following way on the numerous dangers on the island in his account about life in the West Indies:

I have before observed that fires are particularly dangerous, in country as well as town, if a cane-piece once takes hold, there is no knowing where it will end, particularly if there is a strong breeze. Earthquakes are frequent (though I only felt one whilst on the island) and sometimes very dangerous, especially near the sea. The hurricanes are tremendous visitations, and generally do much mischief. The lightning is oft-times awful and vivid beyond description, the heats and intense, exhaust the vital powers, and consequently shorten life.<sup>249</sup>

The fear of natural disasters and fires was well founded. As late as in the year 1692 the town of Port Royal in the south of the island, an important centre for trade, had been destroyed in an earthquake, and in the beginning of the following century, hurricanes demolished attempts to rebuild the town. Hurricanes were frequent; the Caribbean suffered at

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<sup>248</sup> Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 17, 51–52; Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica', p. 779; Burnard, *Master, Tyranny, Desire*, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>249</sup> Marsden, *An Account of the Island of Jamaica with Reflections*, p. 44.

least a dozen tropical storms each year. Among the greater disasters was a great storm in 1712, and then again in 1722 when it was reported that Port Royal had lost 400 inhabitants due to a hurricane. The storm also destroyed a number of buildings. For Port Royal, the hurricanes were troublesome also in a wider perspective as they harmed the town's status as a centre of trade, and eventually Kingston became the most important town on the island. On the plus side, the frequent hurricanes and other disasters created a constant need for skilled workers on the island such as carpenters, plumbers and bricklayers to repair destroyed buildings.<sup>250</sup>

In addition to a fear of natural disaster, there was also a more general concern among the whites in the West Indies relating to the climate in the area. Pessimistic eighteenth-century writers noted that the climate in the West Indies was so bad for the health of Britons that only the hope of gaining a substantial fortune could lure them across the Atlantic.<sup>251</sup> Climate was of immense importance to the British who wanted to colonize America, as they feared that their core, or what it truly meant to be a Briton, was in danger and could be harmed in a strange climate. Britons in Europe perceived British culture to be the product of a temperate climate, which fostered a civilised, well ordered society. It was commonly believed that an Englishman could thrive only in moderate temperatures and surroundings, at the mean of heat and cold, high land and low.<sup>252</sup> However, there were certain measures that emigrants could take in order to survive a tropical climate. Guidebooks intended for people leaving Europe instructed their readers to start their journey in the end of the autumn, as that would bring them to the West Indies in the winter, when the weather was dry and cool for a long period. Arriving in the West

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<sup>250</sup> Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624–1783*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005; Matthew Mulcahy, "'That Fatal Spot' the Rise and Fall – and Rise and Fall Again– of Port Royal, Jamaica', in George Bryan Souza (ed.), *European Expansion and Indigenous Response, Volume 11, Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment: Europeans, Asians Settlers and Indigenous Societies*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, p. 193.

<sup>251</sup> Anon. *American Husbandry, Containing an Account of the Soil, Climate, Production and Agriculture, of the British Colonies in North America and the West Indies with Observations on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Settling in them Compared with Great Britain and Ireland by an American*, London, printed for J. Bew, 1775, vol. 2, p. 113; Marsden, *An Account of the Island of Jamaica with Reflections*, p. 44.

<sup>252</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, 'The Puzzle of the American Climate in the Early Colonial Period', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 5, 1982, p. 1266.

Indies at that time would make the adjustment easier for a newcomer.<sup>253</sup> Another suggested solution was to spend long periods of time on board a ship in the tropics before entering the island. This method is described in the following quote from an eighteenth-century book on medicine:

Thus, if 400 or 500 seamen and soldiers sail from England to the West Indies and make a sudden transition from a cold climate to a very great degree of heat, many of them will be seized with diarrhoea [sic], and such of them as who drink immoderately of rum newly distilled, on their arrival at Jamaica, will probably die of violent fevers: but if the men are kept on board ships, and much at sea, if the ship especially during sickly season, does not put into any vary unhealthy port, after being twelve months in the West Indies, they will become perfectly seasoned to the climate, and enjoy as good a state of health as if they were in England.<sup>254</sup>

The quote above also points out another source for ill health among the Britons in the West Indies; alcohol. Alcohol is also featured in the caricature depicting Johnny Newcome. In the second of the small images, Johnny is standing surrounded by mosquitoes, and on the left side of the image, the back of a slave can be seen, handing him a large bowl. The subtitle says, “[Johnny Newcome] Damns all Mosquitoes and calls for Sangaree”. Sangaree was an alcoholic beverage common in the tropics, a mixture of wine, sugar and spices, and it can be seen in other satirical prints about life in the West Indies, such as “The West India Sportsman” also discussed later in this thesis.<sup>255</sup> On the topic of alcohol and drinking, the contemporary author Charles Leslie noted that ‘The Madera is a wholesome wine, and agrees perfectly well with ones constitution in this place’. This was mostly drunk by ‘the better sort’, while ‘servants and the inferior kind of people’ preferred Rum Punch.<sup>256</sup> Leslie felt that this beverage was the most fatal:

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<sup>253</sup> Renny, *A History of Jamaica*, p. 195.

<sup>254</sup> James Lind, *An Essay on Diseases Incidental to Europeans in Hot Climates. With the Method of Preventing their Fatal Consequences. By James Lind, Physician to his Majesty’s Royal Hospital at Haslar near Portsmouth, and Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh...*, London, printed for T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt 1771, p. 209.

<sup>255</sup> Craton, ‘Reluctant Creoles’, p. 355.

<sup>256</sup> Charles Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica Wherein the Antient and Present state of the Colony, its Importance to Great Britain, Laws, Trade, Manners and Religion, Together with*

Rum Punch is not improperly called Kill Devil, for thousands lose their lives by its means, when new comers use it to the least excess, they expose themselves to imminent peril, for it heats the blood, and brings on fevers, which in a few hours send them to their graves.<sup>257</sup>

Lady Nugent confided in her diary after one of the many parties that she attended on the island that the general bad health of the men on the island amazed her. One reason for this was their heavy drinking. According to a frequently quoted remark, she found that men on the island 'really eat like cormorants and drink like porpoises'.<sup>258</sup> However, although drinking was seen as a problem by many of the contemporary commentators in the West Indies, Edward Long who also in general wrote about the West Indies in a positive manner felt that times had changed. He noted that as life on the island had become more orderly than in the early days, men were not drinking as much as they used to. Long stated that 'in their heyday of carousing, the men of the island met in taverns, drinking and gambling, some of them lost all of their money and also the horse and carriage that they came in, thus being forced to leave on foot'.<sup>259</sup> This behaviour caused numerous fights, something that Long feels shortened many lives on the island. The most famous example of this kind is perhaps the incident that resulted in the trial of Mauritius Vale.<sup>260</sup> A quarrel in the back room of the King's Tavern in Spanish Town resulted in a murder and the subsequent trial of the suspect, Mauritius Vale.<sup>261</sup> The testimonies given by witnesses at the trial of this case show that arguments happened in the taverns and that this occasion was in that respect no different. One of the witnesses, a Captain, admitted that he might have missed some of the events as he was '[---] sometimes looking one way, and sometimes another, and thinking of other things, not imagining it was any more than a Beating-bout'.<sup>262</sup> This

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*the Most Remarkable and Curious Animals, Plants, Trees &c are Described with a Particular Account of the Sacrifices, Libations &c*, Edinburgh, printed by R. Fleming, 1740, p. 33.

<sup>257</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, p. 32.

<sup>258</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 108.

<sup>259</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 281.

<sup>260</sup> Mauritius Vale, *The Trial of Mauritius Vale, Esq. At His Majesty's Supreme Court of Judicature, at St. Jago de la Vega, in the Island of Jamaica ...*, London, printed for T. Cooper, 1736.

<sup>261</sup> Vale, *The Trial of Mauritius Vale*, p. 8.

<sup>262</sup> Vale, *The Trial of Mauritius Vale*, p. 14.

would suggest that fighting and drunken arguments were not that uncommon in the taverns on the island in the end of the eighteenth century.

Another at the time frequently mentioned danger involved in life in the West Indies was linked to sexuality and loose morals. In the eyes of most Britons in Europe, whites in the West Indies were promiscuous and frequently engaged in relationships with slave women. The opposite, sexual relationships between white women and slave men, seems also to have existed. However, as the topic is rather understudied, we do not know how widespread the practice was.<sup>263</sup> Sexual relationships between white men and black women is also a subject of the satirical caricature of Johnny Newcome, where Johnny, in the twelfth of the small images, can be seen dancing with a black woman to the tune of a fiddle. The subtitle says: "Johnny capers ala Samboese to the tune of Morgan Rattle-her". Life in the West Indies gave white men sexual freedom and their sexual ruthlessness can be seen as a marker of their dominance and high status in West Indian society. Even if some planters married white women and started a family with them on the island, many more lived in marriage-like arrangements with female slaves or coloured women.<sup>264</sup> One of the most well-known cases is the long-lasting relationship between the slave owner Thomas Thistlewood and a female slave named Phibbah. As Thomas Thistlewood kept a journal for most of his life, of which a considerable part was spent in Jamaica, much is today known about his everyday life in the West Indies as well as the local society and customs. His relationship with Phibbah lasted for several decades, during which time she gave birth to a mulatto boy. He was later freed and allowed to go to a local school and train as a carpenter. In his will, Thistlewood mentioned Phibbah and made her a legacy of land and slaves and desired her manumission.<sup>265</sup>

The print of Johnny Newcome was published in the year 1800, at a time when slavery was a debated topic in Britain. With that, the caricature

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<sup>263</sup> Natalie Zacek, *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands 1670–1776*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 184; Burnard, 'Inheritance and Independence', p. 111; Deirdre Coleman, 'Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2003, p. 180.

<sup>264</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 7; Burnard, 'Inheritance and Independence', p. 110.

<sup>265</sup> Trevor Burnard, "' Rioting in Goatish Embraces": Marriage and Improvement in Early British Jamaica', *The History of the Family*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2006, p. 185–197; Petley, 'Legitimacy and Social Boundaries', p. 489.

an also be seen as a comment on the maltreatment of slaves in the West Indies. Image number eleven shows Johnny Newcome beating a slave with a stick. The subtitle says, "Johnny gets wet & plays the Devil with Quashie". Quashie was a common slave name at the time, and it is also the name of the slave in the caricature entitled "The West India Sportsman" that will be discussed later in this thesis. The use of slaves on the plantations in the West Indies caused many dangers in the eyes of the white inhabitants on the island and the free population lived in a constant fear of slave rebellions. Rebellions were a regular occurrence, being more frequent towards the end of the century and many of the contemporary accounts include descriptions of such resistance by slaves against the oppression. One of the most well-known uprisings took place in 1760. This revolt, named after the leader Tacky, was an attempt of the slaves to become free of the whites on the island, and caused the death of at least 50 whites and ten times as many slaves. In addition, the expenses of the Government's attempts to quell the rebellion were heavy, according to one estimate as high as £100,000.<sup>266</sup> Even in times when slave rebellions did not take place, there was a constant tension and power struggles between the free and the enslaved inhabitants of the island. On the plantations slaves were often subjected to violent punishments for real or suspected misdeeds as a way for the plantation owners to enforce obedience through fear.<sup>267</sup> In similarity with other societies where slavery was used, there was a small community of maroons, that is, escaped slaves and their descendants in Jamaica. The maroons had their homes in the interior mountainous areas which were difficult to reach. From the 1740s onwards, they were a relatively closed group that increased in number because of their own reproduction. The maroons were in the forefront of the resistance to slavery and during the first four decades of the eighteenth century, there were constant wars between the maroons and the whites on the island. In the year 1740, a truce was reached and white families were encouraged to settle in such areas in the northeast of the island that had

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<sup>266</sup> Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica 1760–1890*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2007, p. 79.

<sup>267</sup> David Geggus, 'The Enigma of Jamaica in the 1790s: New Light on the Causes of Slave Rebellions', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1987 p. 275; Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 69; Jeremy Smith, *Europe and the Americas: State Formation, Capitalism and Civilizations in Atlantic Modernity*, Leiden, Brill, 2006, p. 173. Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 3; Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 7–9.

previously been controlled by the maroons. In the year 1799, the maroon population of the island consisted of almost 800 individuals.<sup>268</sup>

As the discussion above shows, the settlers in Jamaica met with a milieu that in many ways was different from the one that they came from. Still, as will be discussed in the later chapter of this thesis, they would try to maintain a British way of life by consuming specific items. However, before this analysis, the following subchapters examine the European emigration to the West Indies as a whole, and the status of the white West Indians in Britain at the end of the eighteenth century.

## 2.3 European emigration to the West Indies

The British colonies in America attracted persons from all ranks of the British society: traders, civil servants, adventurers and their families. Many of the settlers originated from England, but the colonies also drew people from Ireland and Scotland. From the 1770s onwards, the transatlantic trade was the core of Britain's economy. Therefore, many of the Britons who travelled to the colonies on the other side of the Atlantic were involved in trade. This trade had begun already in the seventeenth century, with Caribbean sugar and tobacco and slaves from West Africa. The most important good from North America was cod, captured in Newfoundland and sold as dried fish in Europe. Besides fishery, British merchants in North America were also involved in fur trade from London to Hudson Bay.<sup>269</sup> The long-distance trade relied on a number of contacts in various parts of the world. People from the same religious or ethnic background and relatives often chose to work together as contacts and partners. A comment made by one of the stakeholders in the Bright-Meyler venture illustrates this very well. The man wished for a new clerk to be sent to Jamaica, one that was able and in no need of constant instructions. He felt that his work in the West Indies was difficult, as he

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<sup>268</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 5; Candice Goucher and Kofi Agorsah, 'Excavating the Roots of Resistance: The Significance of Maroons in Jamaican Archaeology', in James A. Delle, Mark W. Hauser, Douglas V. Armstrong (eds), *Out of Many, One People: The Historical Archaeology of Colonial Jamaica*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2011, p. 146–147; Mair, Lucille Mathurin, Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary Beckles, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, Kingston, University of the West Indies Press, 2006, p. 33.

<sup>269</sup> Stephen J. Hornsby, 'Geographies of the British Atlantic World', in H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid (eds), *Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 17–18, 21.

had no one that he could trust there to assist him.<sup>270</sup> However, as the previously quoted correspondence of Jeremiah Meyler and his relatives show, the aid of kinsmen did not remove all the risks involved in the long-distance trade. For merchants involved in the trans-Atlantic trade of the eighteenth century, the most decisive factor was whom one could trust, for both money and information. In a time where the range of items of various qualities was constantly increasing, it was impossible for one trader to keep track of all the variations and therefore the network was important. If the partnership turned out badly, finding new companions was also difficult and a laborious task.<sup>271</sup>

If different groups of eighteenth-century British migrants are compared, similarities but also significant differences appear. Factors such as family connections and wealth might have provided the settlers with better opportunities, or in the lack thereof, made their adaptation to the new surroundings more difficult.<sup>272</sup> In New England the colonists were mainly free people, with some capital and possessions that were useful in their adaptation to new surroundings. These colonists also often travelled in family groups, a circumstance that might have made a move across the Atlantic easier to endure. In the Chesapeake area, on the other hand, the colonists were often young and poor. Many were indentured servants who stayed in the colony after their contract had ended.<sup>273</sup> Also in the West Indies, indenture was common. In Jamaica one third of the white inhabitants by the middle of the eighteenth century were indentured servants. These servants, mostly men, were usually bound by their agreement for four years and when the contract ran out they became part of the lower class of free white people. During the second half of the century, the number of indentured servants moving to the West Indies seems to have been decreasing.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston to Henry Bright Bristol, 14 July 1748, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 208.

<sup>271</sup> Pierre Gervais, 'Neither Imperial, nor Atlantic: a Merchant Perspective on International Trade in the Eighteenth Century', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2008, p. 467–468.

<sup>272</sup> Morgan, 'Introduction', p. 16; Trevor Burnard, 'A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1994, p. 164.

<sup>273</sup> Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen*, p. 4.

<sup>274</sup> Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change, 1692–1962*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1975, p. 6; David W. Galenson, *White Servitude in*



The Britons who travelled to the other side of the Atlantic took with them ideas about what a society should look like. Despite the many hardships these men and women, at least initially, tried to reshape the colonies according to British ideals about how a society was to be organised, as well as the British culture more generally. The introduction of English as the language of authority was perhaps one of the clearest outer expressions of this way of thinking, but Britain was also model for changes in lifestyle in the colonies in general. However, in the colonies the settlers met with many challenges, and the societies that they created were, despite their intentions, new in many ways. Over time, the development of the various colonies also took different directions.<sup>275</sup> In the Caribbean, the differences between the islands in size, climate and location made some of them more suitable for the production of specific crops than others. These variations were in turn significant for the emigrants when they were thinking about where to settle and start a plantation.<sup>276</sup>

Due to several circumstances it is difficult to find any exact numbers for the European emigration to the West Indian colonies. In general, historians have paid more attention to the colonies in North America than those in the Caribbean. Furthermore, the task of calculating the number of emigrants is associated with technical difficulties due to lack of data. There is simply not enough sources from the eighteenth century that have survived to this day.<sup>277</sup> However, one in-depth study can shed some light on the question. The historian Bernard Bailyn has carried out one of the few studies on British emigration and American

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*Colonial America: an Economic Analysis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 171; Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica'.

<sup>275</sup> Jack P. Greene, 'Liberty, Slavery and the Transformation of British Identity in the Eighteenth Century West Indies', *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post Slave Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2000, p. 1–2; Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, 'Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behaviour in the Colonial Chesapeake', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 105; Karin Calvert, 'The Function of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 278–279; Trevor Burnard, 'Inheritance and Independence': Women's Status in Early Colonial Jamaica', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 48, no.1, 1991, p. 93.

<sup>276</sup> Douglas Hamilton, *Studies in Imperialism: Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, 1750–1820*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 33.

<sup>277</sup> Burnard, *European Migration to Jamaica*, p. 770.

immigration during the pre-Revolutionary era.<sup>278</sup> His research concentrates on a few years, 1773–1776, but can be suggestive for the development during a longer period. Bailyn has made his estimates based on a listing of every person officially known to have left Britain for America during the years in question, usually via a London harbour.<sup>279</sup> According to his analysis, emigrants to the West Indies left Britain in a small but constant stream in the 1770s, on average there were only three passengers on each one of the 500 ships in the register destined for the West Indies during the years examined. Between December 1773 and March 1776, 9,868 persons travelled to the Western Hemisphere, of these 491 were going to the West Indies. Of these almost 10,000 travellers, the majority stated emigration as their reason for travelling, while 206 of those registered gave other explanations, such as pleasure, health or temporary business. However, the sum of emigrants and others travelling across the Atlantic in the mid-1770s was probably higher. There are several lacks in the British Register of Emigration as a statistical source. The British shores were not guarded and it was not mandatory by law to register all emigrant ships. In addition, many passengers in cabin accommodation were omitted from the lists. Despite these flaws, the study gives some guidance to the number of people involved in the British emigration in the pre-Revolutionary era.

As was previously mentioned, the majority of emigrants heading towards the British colonies in America were men. Therefore, they have been at the centre of most previous studies, and there is not that much known about the white women who travelled to the West Indies at the time.<sup>280</sup> Many of these women were illiterate or did not have the need to communicate with others in writing, and therefore they have left few written sources.<sup>281</sup> However, some studies do exist. Initially, contemporary accounts often depicted white women in the West Indies as

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<sup>278</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, New York, Vintage: Reprint edition, 1986, p. 91.

<sup>279</sup> Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, p. 228.

<sup>280</sup> Hilary McDonald Beckles, 'White Women and a West India Fortune: Gender and Wealth during Slavery', in Howard Johnson and Karl Watson (eds), *The White Minority in the Caribbean*, Kingston, Ian Randall Publishers, 1998, p. 2; Burnard, 'Inheritance and Independence', p. 98.

<sup>281</sup> Natalie A. Zacek, 'Searching for the Invisible Woman: The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Britain's West Indian Colonies', *History Compass*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2008, p. 333.

prostitutes or criminals. Towards the end of the century, the image shifted and the women who ventured across the Atlantic were more often idealised and seen as persons in need of protection from the harsh life in the tropics.<sup>282</sup> The few studies that have been done on women in the West Indies show that women were, especially in the towns, important to the local economy. These women engaged in various economic activities, such as miscellaneous businesses, selling goods, food or keeping hotels. Research based on probate records shows that, even if many women left legacies that in general were smaller than those left by men, a few women are found among the wealthier whites in Kingston. A study of the prosperity of the inhabitants on the island shows that there were six women among the top ten per cent of the Jamaican inventories, in comparison to 128 merchants or esquires and a small number of tradesmen, doctors and mariners.<sup>283</sup> Furthermore, it seems that a few white women on the island supported themselves outside of the towns, as small-scale settlers in the Jamaican countryside.<sup>284</sup> Some of the women who came to the West Indies were indentured servants. A few of these might have managed to improve their position in society by marrying a local planter or through other connections; if not, they joined the ranks of the poor, but free, whites after being freed from their contract.<sup>285</sup> Finally, there are a few women whose lives in the West Indies are better accounted for. One of these is Lady Maria Nugent, whose journal writings are examined in this thesis. Furthermore, the correspondence of the Fenwicks, a British matriarchal family that travelled to Barbados in the beginning of the nineteenth century has survived. In the West Indies, the daughter of the family, Eliza Fenwick, performed at the local theatre, while the mother opened up a school for girls. Their experiences in the West Indies are recorded in letters that they sent to a friend in Britain.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Trevor Burnard, "'Gay and Agreeable Ladies': White Women in Mid-Eighteenth Century Kingston, Jamaica', *Wadabagei*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2006, p. 29; Craton, 'Reluctant Creoles', p. 340–341.

<sup>283</sup> Burnard, "'The Grand Mart of the Island'", p. 228–229.

<sup>284</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 146; Christine Walker, 'Pursuing Her Profits: Women in Jamaica, Atlantic Slavery and a Globalizing Market, 1700–60', *Gender & History*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2014, p. 481–484.

<sup>285</sup> Beckles, 'White Women and a West India Fortune', p. 2.

<sup>286</sup> Beckles, 'White Women and a West India Fortune', p. 4–6. The correspondence of the Fenwick's can be found in A.F. Wedd (ed.), *the Fate of the Fenwicks. Letters to Mary Hays 1798–1828*, London, Methuen, 1927.

## 2.4 The status of Jamaica and the white settlers in Britain

In tracing the status of Jamaica and the white settlers in Britain, this subchapter examines metropolitan attitudes towards Jamaica and the white settlers on the island during the eighteenth century. As will be discussed these attitudes were, at least at times, connected to consumption and the wealth that enabled the white settlers to spend money on showy and lavish items.

According to the historian François-Joseph Ruggiu, the British in Europe set the criteria for refinement and taste and the colonial gentry were not always easily accepted as part of this group. There were many reasons behind this exclusion, for example that the whites in Jamaica often lacked titles and a place in the network of families that made up the British gentry.<sup>287</sup> Especially towards the end of the eighteenth century, the public image in Britain of West Indian settlers became a very unflattering one. The white settlers were made mockery of in numerous theatrical performances, newspapers and satirical prints. In Richard Cumberland's play *The West Indian* (1771), one of the main characters, Mr Belcour, is described as a vain and whimsical West Indian.<sup>288</sup> In accordance with the public prejudice of that day he is extremely wealthy, that is 'so rich that his baggage does compare to that of an ambassadors family with all [their] smuggled goods' and he has 'rum and sugar enough belong to him, to make all the water in the Thames into punch'.<sup>289</sup> Some years earlier, another popular play featured another West Indian with many of the same characteristics.<sup>290</sup> In this play by Samuel Foote, the leading character was called Sir Peter Pepperpot, a play on words referring to a spicy dish common in the Caribbean. He was described as a cursing, slave owning, self-righteous 'man of overgrown fortune'.<sup>291</sup> Wealthy, uneducated, violent men, lacking in taste and manners and with a soft spot for slave

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<sup>287</sup> François-Joseph Ruggiu, 'Extraction, Wealth and Industry: The Ideas of Noblesse and of Gentility in the English and French Atlantics (17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries)', *History of European Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2008, p. 444–455.

<sup>288</sup> Richard Cumberland, *The West Indian. A Comedy: As it is Performed at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane*, Belfast: printed by Henry and Robert Joy, in High Street, 1771.

<sup>289</sup> Cumberland, *The West Indian. A Comedy*, p. 5.

<sup>290</sup> Samuel Foote, *The Patron: A Comedy in three Acts. As it is Performed at the Theatre in the Hay-Market*, London, printed for G. Kearsley, 1764.

<sup>291</sup> Foote, *The Patron: A Comedy in three Acts*, p. 5.

women, to state it concisely, were represented as typical of the white West Indians in Britain during the eighteenth century.

Previous studies seem to at least partly support the image of the rich but uneducated and rough white settlers. However, the most obvious difference between Jamaican and British society in the eighteenth century had to do with slavery. The planters forced slaves to do much of the hard labour on their plantations and in total over 6 million individuals were forcibly shipped across the Atlantic during the century.<sup>292</sup> Even if the focus in this thesis is on the golden lining of everyday life of the white inhabitants in the colony, it is evident that it was the slaves' hard labour that facilitated the white inhabitants' lavish lifestyle. The result of the slaves' work on the sugar plantations could be turned into money, enabling the plantation owners to buy fashionable consumer goods and imported novelties for themselves and their families. However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, Jamaica began experiencing a decline in several areas, politically, socially and culturally. Starting in the 1870s, the abolitionist movement grew stronger, giving rise to a transatlantic debate about slavery and emancipation. This debate caused further tensions between the colony and the metropolis.<sup>293</sup> In 1807, the abolitionist movement succeeded in their struggle and a law banned the transatlantic slave trade. The full abolition of slavery took place in 1833.<sup>294</sup>

Even if historians are still debating the numbers, the white inhabitants of the West Indies seem to, on average, have been wealthier than people living in Europe. Most of this wealth the planters accumulated in the production of and trade in sugar.<sup>295</sup> In addition, the lack of education seems to have been a prevailing feature of West Indian life. To compensate for the lack of schools, the white settlers often sent their children back to Britain to get an education, as in the case of the Broadbents in the opening chapter of this thesis. Many of these children with Jamaican connections chose to stay in Britain and get married after graduation, rather than

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<sup>292</sup> Simon D. Smith, *Slavery, Family and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: the World of the Lascelles 1648–1834*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 1.

<sup>293</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 95

<sup>294</sup> Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2008, p. 98.

<sup>295</sup> For different estimates of the wealth of the West Indians, see for example: Richard Pares, 'Merchants and Planters', *Economic History Review*, Supplement 4, 1960; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

returning to the colony. In many cases, these marriages strengthened the colonists' status and provided them with much needed connections in Europe.<sup>296</sup> When it comes to lack of refinement among the white settlers, at least in the eyes of the Englishmen living in England, many stories supporting this statement can be found as well. Lady Maria Nugent wrote in her diary about the deficiency in table manners of the guests at one of the first breakfasts that she attended upon arrival on the island. She added: 'I wish Lord Balcarres [the resigning Governor] would wash his hands, and use a nailbrush, for the black edges of his nails really make me sick'.<sup>297</sup>

Notwithstanding the criticism the white inhabitants of Jamaica had to endure due to their wealth and the practice of slavery, they mostly saw themselves as Englishmen who just happened to live far away from London, fully comparable to the gentlemen living in the British countryside.<sup>298</sup> Based on lifestyle, two different groupings can be found in white society in the Caribbean. On one hand, there was the white elite, consisting of planters and merchants and on the other the poor workers. When it comes to lifestyle, the clearest division among the free population can be seen between the farmers and the rich owners of plantations. The poor farmers could not spend their money on furniture made of exotic wood, or dress up in fine clothes made of silk brought from Asia. Differences between the richer parts of the population could also be seen, a minority had a luxurious lifestyle but many lived comfortably.<sup>299</sup> Many of those travelling to the island reported a conspicuous consumption of furniture, food and dress. Occasionally, this consumption was unintentionally comical.<sup>300</sup> The previously cited quotation by Edward Long, where the women in Jamaica were said to be wearing winter clothes in the warmest months only because it was fashionable, can be seen as an example of this behaviour.

To sum up, at the outset of this chapter it was described how Jeremiah Meyler, a young Englishman, experienced his first months in Jamaica. Like so many before him, he had arrived in the West Indies with

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<sup>296</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 23; Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 387, 438; Green, 'Hierarchies of Whiteness in the Geographies of Empire', p. 16.

<sup>297</sup> Lord Balcarres was the Governor of Jamaica between the years 1793 and 1801.

<sup>298</sup> O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, p. 3–4.

<sup>299</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 268; Styles and Vickery, 'Introduction', p. 5–6; Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, p. 161.

<sup>300</sup> Zacek, 'A People so Subtle', p. 118.

the intention of making a fortune and thereafter travelling back to the calm and familiar surroundings in England. The typical settler in eighteenth-century Jamaica was a young man, and there were many risks involved with life in life on the island, a place described in the Bright-Meylers' correspondence as 'wicked', trying to lead men astray from being part of 'the righteous lot in Sodom'.<sup>301</sup> In addition to the threats posed by the climate and numerous diseases, there was a fear among the white inhabitants of the island of slave rebellions and natural disasters. From the British horizon, the high level of alcohol consumption in the colonies, the relationships of white men and their female slaves and towards the end of the century, the practice of slavery were features that made clear that life in the colony was harmful and morally questionable. Of those settlers who survived their stay on the island, many preferred absenteeism or at least to send their children away to Europe to become educated. However, a substantial number chose to stay on the island, trying to lead a life in the tropics that was, at least partially, similar to that of Englishmen in England. One way was through consumption. In the following chapters, the luxurious way of life of the white inhabitants in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica will be discussed in more detail, starting with various forms of entertainment available on the island.

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<sup>301</sup> Richard Meyler II, Bristol, to Francis Bright, Kingston, letter dated December 3, 1748, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 216.

### 3 Places of consumption and costly entertainment

When the aged William Hickey had settled himself in the English countryside in the end of the eighteenth century, he started to reminisce about old times. This resulted in several hundreds of written pages, printed for the first time in the early twentieth century. The memoirs are a detailed account of his upbringing and education to become a lawyer, as well as of his later life and travels around the world. In his youth, William Hickey had led quite a disorderly life, which prompted his father to enrol him as a cadet for the East India Company in order to start afresh. The English East India Company, established in the year 1600, was involved in trade on the Coromandel Coast in southeast India, bringing spices and textiles to Europe. Indian calicoes, mainly middling-quality woven cotton cloths that were suitable for printing, were especially desired in Europe.<sup>302</sup> His employment with the East India Company took William from London to Madras and Canton where he mostly passed his days making new acquaintances, touring the towns and being entertained by the Europeans living in the area. However, due to the poor chances for advancement in the military he soon decided to return to England,<sup>303</sup> choosing another career path, and in the beginning of September 1775, he left England for Jamaica, hoping to find work as a lawyer there. He

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<sup>302</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World 1550–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 78–111; Prasannan Parthasarathi, 'Cotton Textiles in the Indian Subcontinent 1200–1800', in Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (eds), *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles 1200–1850*, Pasold studies in textile history 16, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 33; Bishnupriya Gupta, 'Competition and Control in the Market for Textiles: Indian Weavers and the English East India Company in the Eighteenth Century', in Giorgio Riello and Tirthankar Roy (eds), *How India Clothed the World: The World of South Asian Textiles, 1500–1850*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 281; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 52–53; Styles, *The Dress of the People*, p. 112–113; Trentmann, *Empire of Fashion*, p. 64.

<sup>303</sup> William Hickey, 'Memoirs', in Alfred Spencer (ed.), *Memoirs of William Hickey, 1749–1745*, London, Hurst and Blacket, 1782, vol. 1, p. 177.



reached the island at the end of the following month when the ship anchored outside Kingston.<sup>304</sup>

Soon after his arrival in Jamaica, Hickey discovered that the island was already full of lawyers and that it would be difficult for him to be employed in that way. The difficulty with finding occupation in the West Indies was also noted by other contemporary commentators. In John Stewart's experience as a resident of the island for several years 'a young man of merit may toil for many years to very little purpose' without the help of a friend to introduce him into West Indian society'.<sup>305</sup> While deciding on what action to take next, Hickey joined a friend of his father, a Mr Richards, on his travels around the island. In his memoirs, William Hickey describes an ordinary day in his life in the West Indies in the following way:

After spending three days as merrily and happily as any of my life we returned to Kingston. Here the journal of one day furnishes the history of all. I arose about seven; at eight breakfasted, after which I either rode out on horseback or walked down to the wharfs by the seaside to look at the busy scene of shipping or landing goods, &c. At ten commenced the round of coffee houses and taverns, reading the newspapers and conversing the general topics. This usually occupied about two hours. From thence, we lounged among the different stores (shops or warehouses where trade is carried on), or I attended Mr. Richards in his morning visits to families of his acquaintance until towards two in the afternoon, when we went home to dress for dinner, which meal, whether at home or abroad, filled up the space until it became time to attend the theatre, assembly, concert, or private party, as previous engagement or inclination led, retiring to sleep, in common, about midnight. This sort of life necessarily required cash. The heaviest expense, I felt, was clothes, the inhabitants of the island being fond of finery in dress, and as I had not such a stock in my possession as upon my eastern voyage, I was obliged to apply to a Jamaican taylor, a set of men who know how to make out a bill as quite as well as the most fashionable fellow of St. James's Street. A second application to Mr. Richards therefore became necessary, who advanced another hundred pounds.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> William Hickey, 'Memoirs', in Alfred Spencer (ed.), *Memoirs of William Hickey, 1749–1775*, London, Hurst and Blacket, 1782, vol. 2, p. 20, vol. 1. p. 338.

<sup>305</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 180.

<sup>306</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 46.

At first glance, this account might give the impression that Hickey was a quite lazy man, not doing any 'proper work' in Jamaica. However, the account shows that his days were filled with leisured activity and offered several opportunities for conspicuous consumption. He spent a substantial part of the day socialising with friends and acquaintances and visiting different forms of entertainment. His desire for fashionable clothes shows that the outward manifestation of a person was of importance at the gatherings he attended. And, I would argue, that he had a desire to fit in and show that he had the knowledge and money to dress in an appropriate manner. The introductory statement about the similarity of one day and the next, does perhaps hint that he found his life in the West Indies a bit monotonous. Nevertheless, based on Hickey's account, there seems to have been a number of activities by which a British gentleman could divert himself in Jamaica.

However, the author of another contemporary narrative on the subject of Jamaica, Robert Renny, tells a slightly different story than Hickey. According to Renny:

[The inhabitants of Jamaica] do not spend much of their time in amusements. When the business of the day is concluded, they, according to the English custom, sit down to dinner, and generally pass the evening, in conversation, smoking and drinking. However, they occasionally play at cards, back-gammon, and billiards, the latter of which, from the moderate exercise which it requires, is admirably adapted to a warm climate, and is one of the most healthful, and last pernicious amusements, in which they could possibly engage. In the level parts of the island, they have even sometimes horse-races; but this amusement requiring violent exertion, is neither regular, nor frequent. They are passionately fond of horses, and pay great attention to the breed and rearing of this noble animal. Of single horse chaises, which is their favourite mode of conveyance, they have vast numbers.<sup>307</sup>

In contrast to Hickey, Renny's account gives the impression that there were not that many opportunities for recreation on the island. One reason for this lack of interest in arranging leisure activities was the Europeans' motive for coming to the West Indies in the first place. According to

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<sup>307</sup> Renny, *A History of Jamaica*, p. 216.

Renny, the desire to acquire money speedily and then leave hindered the settlers from spending any hard-earned cash on amusements.<sup>308</sup> This sentiment is echoed in other descriptions of life in eighteenth-century Jamaica. John Stewart even goes so far in his criticism of the state of affairs on the island as to call the conditions 'a vandalism of taste'. According to Stewart, this was manifested by a general lack of interest in culture in the form of literature, poetry and art.<sup>309</sup> These were harsh words in an age where the consumption of culture was becoming a decisive feature of a person's quality.<sup>310</sup>

Robert Renny mentions the settlers' fondness for horse races. Horses also played an important part in another social activity, described in the following by the plantation bookkeeper J. B. Moreton:

Every one of those grog shop keepers keep a horse and kitterine, that is, a one horse chaise, and on Sundays drive about the town and country, like ladies and gentlemen, superbly decorated in fineries: the spoils of war, plundered from infatuated tars; this is quite common; nay, people of every rank and denomination, to their shame, devote the Sabbaths to every kind of vice and dissipation; driving like madmen in kitterines, to and from Spanish Town, round Kingston, to Rochfort, Liguanea, and the beautiful village of halfway Tree, feasting, drinking, gambling or in the company of lewd mongrel women.<sup>311</sup>

As in the account by William Hickey, here too, the clothes and general appearance of the people, both men and women, is emphasised. Moreton does also seem to have been annoyed by the intermingling of persons from various ranks in society and their interest in gambling and drinking. As a whole, all the pastimes described in the quotes above raise questions relating to conspicuous consumption and public sociability in the construction and maintenance of gentility in eighteenth-century Jamaica. Previous research by the historian Simon Gikandi has demonstrated that the buying of luxuries was commonly seen as a way of maintaining a sense of being British in the West Indies. Therefore, wealthy planters and others

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<sup>308</sup> Renny, *A History of Jamaica*, p. 213.

<sup>309</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 175.

<sup>310</sup> Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 18.

<sup>311</sup> Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 36.

spent large sums of money on luxury goods and novelty items.<sup>312</sup> The aim of this part of the study is to provide an analysis of the entertainment available to the aspirational gentlemen on the island. However, in order to create the necessary context for this discussion, I will start by examining the role that sociability and hospitality played in the lives of the people in centre of this study.

### 3.1 Sociability and hospitality

Sociability has been discussed in several recent studies on material culture and the history of today's consumer society. Scholars have researched specific items, their origins and uses, as well as the activities that surrounded them and their role and function in social interaction.<sup>313</sup> The historian John Brewer has argued that politeness was a feature in the eighteenth century that could only be visible in company; without the presence of others, there was no one around to see the self-display. Politeness was also an essential aspect of various places; instead of the old focal points of the church and the court however, politeness was increasingly exercised in towns where people from various ranks in society came together.<sup>314</sup> Places such as coffee houses, theatres, taverns and other venues where people intermingled, are of equal importance to the actual act of buying a specific item if we want to understand the connection between consumption and self-display. In the eighteenth century, being there – at the right moment and in the right dress – gave away a person's gentility.<sup>315</sup>

To make amends for the paucity of public amusements, convivial and social parties are much encouraged here. Wherever there is a meeting of the inhabitants on any public business, there must be a dinner. [...] On these occasions no expense is spared to render the entertainments costly and splendid, every luxury is catered up for the purpose and copious

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<sup>312</sup> Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, p. 114.

<sup>313</sup> Sweeney, 'High Style Vernacular', p. 1–58; Cary Carson, 'The Consumer Revolution in Colonial America: Why the Demand?', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 483–700.

<sup>314</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 102–103.

<sup>315</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 359.

libations of various wines and other liquors are poured forth to the jolly good of good fellowship.<sup>316</sup>

In the quote above, taken from a contemporary account of life in the West Indies, the author explains how the planters compensated for the lack of public amusements by opening their homes for the entertainment of guests. This was a common feature of life in the West Indies, and the hospitality of the planters was well known on the other side of the Atlantic. The contemporary historian Bryan Edwards wrote in his account that 'in no part of the globe is the virtue of hospitality more generally prevalent, than in the British sugar islands. The gates of the planter are always open to the reception of his guests'.<sup>317</sup> The sociologist Thorstein Veblen has argued that throwing grand parties is one form of display and conspicuous consumption.<sup>318</sup> Therefore, an analysis of how the white inhabitants in late eighteenth-century Jamaica came together, and their incentives for these gatherings, is needed.

As was previously discussed, the company of others affected decisions regarding dress and purchases. The sources analysed in this thesis contain many references to this kind of behaviour. Lady Nugent 'held a council with the ladies' where she and her friends discussed their dresses for the festivities before one of the many balls. She even lent the younger women in her company her maid so that they would be properly dressed for the evening.<sup>319</sup> Mrs Broadbent, in turn, relied on her daughter in England for information about dresses and fashion in general. In one of her letters, she begs for a long letter in reply, with 'all the news, fashions, etc. for in this dull place we do not know much of either'.<sup>320</sup> In a subsequent letter, she wrote that 'whenever you write to me from home remember to give me some account of the fashions, for tho' I do not attend to them much myself yet I would not wish to be altogether out of them, so as to look ridiculous [---]'.<sup>321</sup> This statement shows her interest in British fashion, but also a fear of appearing unfashionably dressed or too vain.

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<sup>316</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 208–209.

<sup>317</sup> Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies*, vol. 2, p. 8.

<sup>318</sup> Veblen, *Den arbetsfria klassen*, p. 49–50.

<sup>319</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 121.

<sup>320</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 43.

<sup>321</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 98–99.

An interest in the activities of others also had a negative side. The actions of others were under constant scrutiny among the whites on the island, something that was not always appreciated. Mrs Broadbent complained that Jamaica was a 'very different place in every respect to poor England, for you can hardly put your nose out of the door here but all the town knows it'.<sup>322</sup> Lady Nugent felt the interest of others in all her doings, and friends told her that her and her husband's 'every word, look and action, and article of dress' were being closely observed. She also reminded herself that, as the other inhabitants on the island paid her actions so much attention, she should avoid having favourites among the staff as that would cause bad feelings.<sup>323</sup> Another contemporary female traveller to the West Indies, Teresia Constantia Phillips, also touched on the subject in her memoirs. At the time, Phillips was well known on both sides of the Atlantic due to her conspicuous consumption and relationships with numerous men. In 1738, she followed one of these lovers to the West Indies where she stayed for a few years.<sup>324</sup> She wrote about her coming to Jamaica that '[the] arrival in that country made the usual noice: these islands are like country towns, where every person knows his neighbour; and to fill up their vacant hours, are generally obliged to employ them in other people's affairs'.<sup>325</sup> The close observations and gossip also spread across the Atlantic. In the correspondence of the Bright-Meylers, one of the clerks is told that his actions in Jamaica are the topic of some discussion in Bristol as 'everything which happens with you is soon known here and frequently magnified'.<sup>326</sup> The descriptions of Jamaican society as a place where almost no one was anonymous and everyone was interested in gossip also fits the description of other British colonial societies at the time. Whether at some form of entertainment such as a ball or in the theatre or out in the streets, the inhabitants in general were noticing and evaluating each other.<sup>327</sup>

Many of the amusements in eighteenth-century Jamaica took place in the towns. The poor state of communications on the island presented

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<sup>322</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 30–31.

<sup>323</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 236–237.

<sup>324</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 131, 136.

<sup>325</sup> Phillips, 'An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Theresia Constantia Phillips', p. 143.

<sup>326</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Bristol, to William Saunders, Kingston, letter dated March 15, 1776, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 484.

<sup>327</sup> Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, p. 16; Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 283.

some challenges to the willing participants. Moreover, the fact that many of these events were held when the Assembly was in session further emphasised that not only the place, but also the time was of importance: 'our gay time has just begun, and we are led to expect a pleasant Session. Several young ladies who reside in the distant parishes are to visit the metropolis, therefore we shall see some of the belles, which have never graced Spanish Town before' wrote an expectant Mrs Broadbent to her daughter.<sup>328</sup> In later letters too, she comes back to the seasonality of the amusements on the island, and especially the way that the entertainment would enliven the lives of the young persons on the island.<sup>329</sup> She herself was also kept busy, as the time of year brought so many persons to the town and visitors to their house that she hardly found time to write her letters.<sup>330</sup> The meetings of the House of Assembly were generally held for four days a week from October to December, unless some unforeseeable event called for a special assembly.<sup>331</sup> Other events such as military parades and elections were also reasons for the white inhabitants to come together and celebrate.<sup>332</sup> Under normal circumstances, the Assembly's meetings left time for the members and their relatives to take part in the social life in the town. However, life in the West Indies was uncertain and deaths happened frequently. In 1791, the Session gaieties were postponed due to the death of the Governor's wife, Lady Effingham. That year, instead of dancing in the ballroom in Spanish Town, the inhabitants of the island could pay their last respects to her as she lay in state in the room usually reserved for dancing.<sup>333</sup>

For the aspiring young Britons who came to the island, admission to these social activities was a test of their position within the social hierarchy, but also a way of reaffirming this place. Activities that brought the middle classes and the elite together, such as dining, drinking tea, playing cards and visiting plays supported the gentility of the

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<sup>328</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 45.

<sup>329</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 71.

<sup>330</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 47.

<sup>331</sup> Braithwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 50.

<sup>332</sup> Petley, *Gluttony, Excess and the Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean*, p. 88.

<sup>333</sup> Theodora Elizabeth Lynch, *Years Ago: A Tale of West Indian Domestic Life of the Eighteenth Century*, London, Jarrold and Sons, 1865, p. 16; Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 95; Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle for the year MDCCXCI*, vol. LXI, London, printed by John Nichols, 1791, p. 1234.

participants. However, not only were the activities important, also the setting mattered. In the following, this notion will be examined in relation to the hospitality of the white inhabitants on the island.

### *Making visits in style*

One of the caricatures printed by William Holland describing life in the West Indies shows a scene connected to hospitality in the West Indies (see image 5). In the caricature printed by William Holland and entitled 'On a visit in style – taking a ride – West India fashionables' a well-dressed couple can be seen sitting in a small horse-drawn carriage, perhaps on their way to a planter's house. A horse carriage was a necessity for respectable families on the island, as well as riding horses for all members of the family.<sup>334</sup> Many contemporary accounts mention the white inhabitants' fondness of horses. Horse races were a common form of entertainment, and the plantation bookkeeper J.B. Moreton wrote about the way that the men in the island 'rode around as madmen' in their small horse-drawn wagons as an amusement on Sundays.<sup>335</sup> The man in the caricature by Holland has an enormous hat, while the woman uses a green umbrella to shield herself from the sun. Her maid can be seen sitting at the back of a carriage, carrying a box in her lap. A black man, who may be suspected to be a house slave because he is a bit better dressed, wearing a high hat and a waistcoat, leads the horse. Another slave is sitting in the driver's seat of the coach with the bridles in his hands. Behind the wagon two additional slaves are walking, carrying large boxes on their heads. This was a common way of transporting goods on the island, for small as well as large items. Lady Nugent wrote in her journal that 'every thing is put upon the head, from the largest to the smallest thing; even a smellie bottle I believe would be carried in the same way. I have often, on our tour, seen twelve or fourteen negroes in one line of march each bearing some article for the toilette on his head'.<sup>336</sup> The caricature also shows another scene in which horses are involved, entitled 'West India fashionables'. This image shows a fashionable couple out to take the air on horseback. In the background of the illustration, a group of slaves are working. A slave leads the woman's horse and both the man and the woman have slaves

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<sup>334</sup> David Lambert, 'Master–Horse–Slave: Mobility, Race and Power in the British West Indies, c. 1780–1838', *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2015, p. 623.

<sup>335</sup> Moreton, *West India Customs and Manners*, p. 36.

<sup>336</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 132.



following their equipage, depicted holding a firm grip of the horses' tails. According to David Lambert, this was an actual practice that was common in not only the West Indies but also other colonies during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The attempts of a slave footman to keep up with his master on horseback in the illustration can consequently not only be seen as criticism of life in the West Indies, but also a depiction of actual practices. Other contemporary accounts show that the practice of a slave following a white person on horseback holding on to the horse's tail was not an uncommon sight. Lambert argues that the practice should be seen as one of the ways that slavery was visible in the everyday life on the island.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, the large hats used as covers against the sun might also be based on the actual practices in the West Indies. White women in the area were known for guarding their complexions by wearing masks or large hats.<sup>338</sup> In comparison to other cases where their dress did not show any adaptation to the climate, the wearing of large hats were consequently one way of adapting to the local circumstances. The image does not indicate where the nicely-dressed couple are going, but the caption implies that they are about to go on a visit to see someone, and as is illustrated by the image and the caption, this visit is done in fashionable style.

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<sup>337</sup> David Lambert, 'Master-Horse-Slave', p. 619.

<sup>338</sup> Coleman, 'Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire', p. 178.

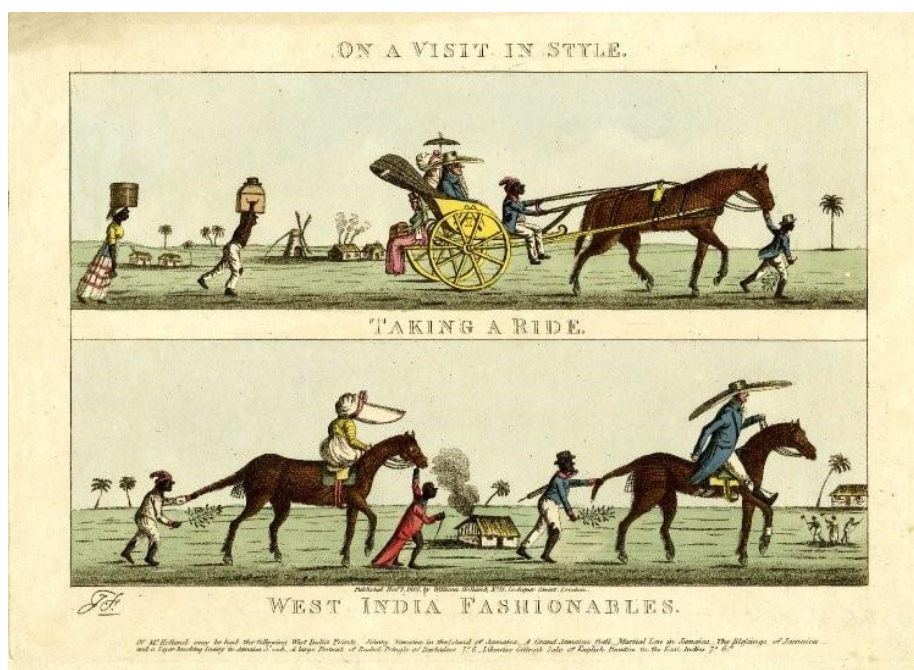


Image 5: William Holland, *On a visit in style – taking a ride – West India fashionables* (London 1807), Hospitality was a common feature of life in the West Indies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and so widely known that it also became the subject of a satirical caricature. Source: The British Museum, London.

Hospitality has been defined by the historian Cynthia Kierner as ‘the offering of food, drink, lodging and entertainment to unknown and familiar persons of varying status’.<sup>339</sup> For many colonists hospitality was the clearest sign of gentility and leadership within the household.<sup>340</sup> The planters in Jamaica frequently met to dine, show solidarity and tighten the bonds within their group as well as to display wealth and status.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>339</sup> Cynthia A. Kierner, ‘Hospitality, Sociability and Gender in the Southern Colonies’, *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 62, no. 3, 1996, p. 449–480.

<sup>340</sup> Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia*, Chapel Hill, Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p. 269; Burnard, ‘“The Grand Mart of the Island”’, p. 220.

<sup>341</sup> Petley, *Gluttony, Excess and the Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean*, p. 85–106; Kierner, ‘Hospitality, Sociability and Gender’, p. 451.

According to William Hickey's memoirs the display of hospitality was common even if the planter was not at home:

Customary for all travellers to stop for refreshments and rest at gentlemen's plantations, there being scarcely an inn or house of public reception in a distance of a hundred miles. Whether the proprietor be present or not is never considered, for if absent, the head overseer or manager does the honours of the mansion with equal hospitality as the owner'.<sup>342</sup>

In addition, the contemporary author Bryan Edwards noted that a proper inn was not to be found in Jamaica due to the hospitality of the plantation owners.<sup>343</sup> This statement could perhaps also be turned around, that is, because of the lack of inns, the plantation owners took on the absent innkeepers' role. The inns on the island had generally a bad reputation, but there were some exceptions. When William Hickey came to the West Indies a friend of his recommended that he should settle in a famous lodging house in High Street that was kept by an elderly widowed woman. In this house, he was installed in a handsome bedchamber with a small dressing-chamber next to it.<sup>344</sup> Lord Adam Gordon, who visited the island in the 1760s mentions that he had been invited to many homes in both the town and country. In his opinion, the owners seemed to live well, being

[---] able to entertain their guests in every respect better than people of the same property can do in Europe, particularly where one stays all night. There are few horses and carriages to be hired, and the inns in general a poor place, and of bad entertainment, owing entirely to that hospitality which takes universally – in so much that every gentlemen you visit, offers you his carriage or horses to convey you wherever you please to go.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 87.

<sup>343</sup> Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies*, vol. 2, p. 8.

<sup>344</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>345</sup> Adam Gordon, 'Journal of an Officer's [Lord Adam Gordon's] Travels in America and the West Indies', in Newton D. Mereness (ed.), *Travels in the American Colonies Edited under the Auspices of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1916, p. 379.

It was customary for persons touring the island to halt at the plantations along their way, where they would be treated as guests and offered refreshments.<sup>346</sup> The dinners and other social events provided the white settlers with the opportunity for much more than nourishment; taking part also meant that they would find out about the latest news and gossip, do business, make new contacts and take part in polite conversation.<sup>347</sup> As many of these diversions took place in people's homes, in one way it could be understood to be a non-public event, and therefore different for the other leisure activities discussed in this chapter. However, since the hospitality of the white settlers in the West Indies had many traits that can be seen as markers of self-display and conspicuous consumption, I see it as an important aspect of answering the research questions.<sup>348</sup>

The historian Nathalie Dessens has argued that one reason for this great hospitality among the Jamaican planters was that their impoverished social lives in the West Indies resulted in them being starved of new contacts. Therefore they gladly entertained guests in their homes, especially if their visitors had recently arrived in the West Indies and could tell the latest news from Europe or other colonies.<sup>349</sup> The hopes were often set high for news from Britain. Lady Nugent spent a large part of her evening on one occasion discussing England, but she was disappointed about the amount of information that she received in return, 'alas! Our new comers don't know any of our friends'.<sup>350</sup>

The entertainment of guests was filled with expectations in other ways, also. Soon after her arrival in the West Indies Lady Nugent entertained a large number of guests, but confided to her diary that as she found them not to be able to keep up a learned discussion, it would be better in the future if the evenings were spent dancing.<sup>351</sup> During the eighteenth century, people started commenting on their surroundings more than they had previously done. In writings from that time one can see that for example streets, buildings, furniture and the decoration of homes, were scrutinised and compared to authors' ideals. In the colonies,

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<sup>346</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 87.

<sup>347</sup> Holger Hooch, 'From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artist's Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1-2, 2003, p. 28.

<sup>348</sup> Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs*, p. 267.

<sup>349</sup> Dessens, *Myths of the Plantation Society*, p. 51.

<sup>350</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 137.

<sup>351</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 21.

the people who subjected themselves and their environment to these changes crossed the line into polite society, a significant boundary in culture at the time.<sup>352</sup> In relation to the question of display and conspicuous consumption, the opening up of one's home and showing hospitality involved taking a risk. On the one hand, the hosts placed their house and furnishings, as well as their behaviour, under the scrutiny of the invited guests. On the other hand, the hospitality also placed expectations on the guests. The hosts expected the guests to behave genteelly and show how grateful they were for the invitation.<sup>353</sup> This might explain why William Hickey, cited in the introductory quote of this chapter, felt the urge to invest money that he did not have in new, expensive clothing in accordance with the people he met in the island. In order to fit in, or perhaps improve his chances of advancement, he had dress the part, so to speak.

### 3.2 Places to eat and drink

One of the satirical caricatures printed by William Holland depicts a scene where white inhabitants in early nineteenth-century Jamaica have come together in order to enjoy food, drinks and tobacco (image 6). When the white inhabitants came together, food and drink often played an important role, a significance that went far beyond their nutritional value. Even today, food and foodstuffs are not only to be seen as nourishment, they can also be understood as a means of expression. In different settings, only certain foodstuffs are accepted, and certain combinations are preferred rather than others. Availability and boundaries made up by social status affect the choices made by consumers in relation to food.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 222; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 186.

<sup>353</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches & Anxious Patriarchs*, p. 270.

<sup>354</sup> Andrew Sherratt, 'Alcohol and its Alternatives: Symbol and Substance in Pre-industrial Cultures', in Jordan Godman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt (eds), *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 11–46.

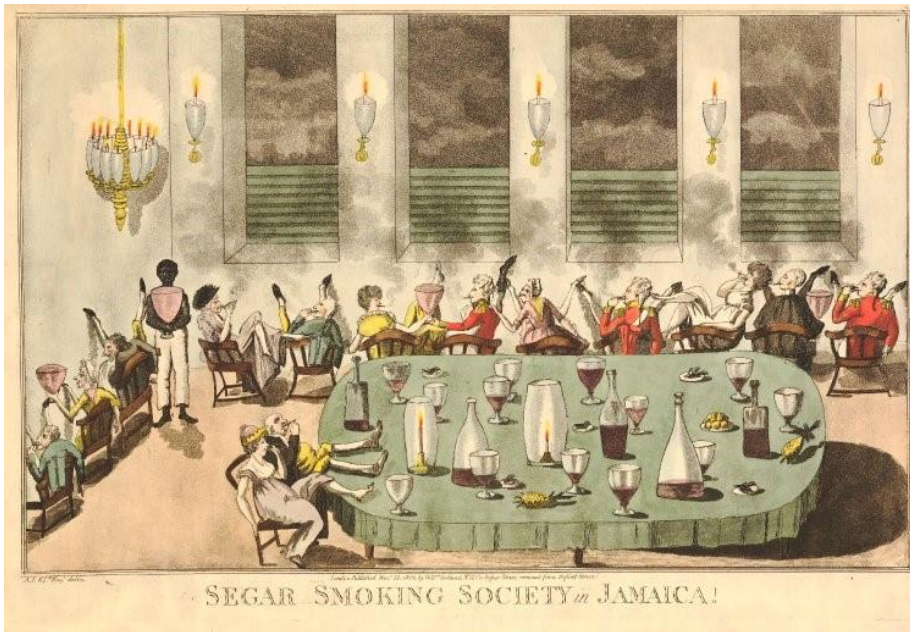


Image 6: William Holland: *Segar smoking society in Jamaica* (London 1802). This caricature shows white inhabitants of Jamaica relaxing and smoking tobacco, one of the crops exported from the island. Source: The British Museum, London.

Similarly to the way that West Indian colonists were known in Europe for their hospitality, they were also famous for their grandeur and abundance in food and drink. The contemporary commentator Bryan Edwards noted that:

‘Nothing can be more striking than the vast disparity between their tables and their houses. Their side-board is loaded with plate, and choice wines, their dinner is served up in twenty covers, and all this in a howel worse than an European barn. The negro attendants are numerous, but meanly habited; none but the principal servant wears shoes or stockings when they wait at table’.<sup>355</sup>

Lady Nugent wrote in her diary that she ‘laughed like a ninny’ at the sight of the overloaded dinner table with ‘a shoulder of wild boar stewed, with forced meat, &c as an ornament to the centre of the table’.<sup>356</sup> For a newly-arrived Englishman the eating practices on the island seemed a bit odd at

<sup>355</sup> Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies*, p. 126.

<sup>356</sup> Nugent, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, p. 88.

first. This event took place at the house of Simon Taylor, the richest man in the West Indies during the early nineteenth century. Even if he had money, he seemed, at least in the eyes of Lady Nugent, to be lacking in his understanding of refinement and taste.

Today, a few different copies of the satirical print depicting the 'Segar smoking society' exist, the variations being mostly in the colours of the image.<sup>357</sup> Abraham James, an army officer who spent several years in the West Indies at the end of the eighteenth century, probably made the caricature depicted above. It is not known if James had been educated in painting before entering into the army. After leaving the West Indies he was sent to India, where he stayed for almost 20 years. During that time he wrote and illustrated several books, *The Military costume of India* (1823) being his most well-known work. The scene for this feast entitled 'Segar smoking society in Jamaica' is a large room, lit up by chandeliers. A sizeable table covered with a tablecloth, filled with glass candleholders, wineglasses and half-empty bottles, as well as a pineapple and some other fruit, has been placed in the middle of the room. Some of the people depicted are holding large glasses, filled with a red drink, probably wine. As was discussed in connection with the dangers involved in life in the West Indies, a high level of alcohol consumption was common the West Indies in the eighteenth century. In general, both men and women drank wine, even if women were said to prefer cordials. Wine drinking was also a sign of luxury at the time.<sup>358</sup> In that sense, the image could be seen as yet another critique of the luxury of the wealthy West Indians. The caricature was printed in 1802, at a time when the lavish lifestyle of the colonists in the West Indies was being debated. The four large windows are covered with jalousies and the people are sitting on chairs made of dark wood, probably mahogany. The majority of the persons depicted are men, but some women are also present. Almost all of the guests, including the women, are depicted smoking. Tobacco was closely connected to the transatlantic trade in the eighteenth century. It was among the first exotic crops brought to Europe from the other side of the Atlantic in the early

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<sup>357</sup> See f.ex. <http://images.library.yale.edu/walpoleweb/oneitem.asp?imageId=lw1pr10319> [1.6.2017]; <http://collection.hht.net.au/firstthtpictures/fullRecordPicture.jsp?recnoListAttr=recnoList&recno=39613> [1.6.2017].

<sup>358</sup> David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 308–309.

modern era, and soon acquired an important role in European culture. Culturally, the use of tobacco was linked to ideas concerning sobriety and rational masculinity, and it was commonly agreed at the time that respectable women did not smoke, at least not in public. Tobacco was seen as dirty and smelly and therefore not suitable for women who were supposed to appreciate cleanliness.<sup>359</sup> In the caricature, grey clouds of smoke are rising from the cigarettes, something that further casts a shadow of dubiousness on the women depicted.

The guests are well-dressed; some of the women wear dresses decorated with lace, whilst the men are wearing either red army coats or blue jackets, and a priest in a black gown is also portrayed. The common feature for all of those attending the party, except for the black servant, is that they have raised their feet up from the floor, resting them either on the wall or on the large table in the middle of the room. This strange posture, which was also shown in the caricature depicting the life of Johnny Newcome, could be a means by which the artist shows that the people attending the feast are extremely relaxed; the pose can be compared to a remark by Edward Long about the planters lifting up their feet while they rest.<sup>360</sup> It is also possible that the image depicts the attendants at this gathering sitting in so-called 'planter's chairs', referring to a type of chair that had extensions that could be folded out and used for resting one's feet. These chairs became popular in the tropical regions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>361</sup>

With the availability of new and exotic consumer items, many of the foodstuffs were turned into drinks; drinks that were associated with many meanings. The historian David Hancock has studied how this affected the use of wine. He points out that the ways in which wine was drunk and the setting in which it was consumed were considered markers of refinement.<sup>362</sup> The contemporary Charles Leslie wrote in his account on the subject of drink and rank in society that 'the common drink here is

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<sup>359</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 166; Jordan Goodman, 'Excitantia: or How Enlightenment Europe Took to Soft Drugs', in Jordan Goodman, Paul E. Lovejoy and Andrew Sherratt (eds), *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 126–127.

<sup>360</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>361</sup> Louis P. Nelson, *Architecture and Empire in Jamaica*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2016, p. 207–209.

<sup>362</sup> David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 372–375.



Madera Wine or Rum Punch, the first, mixed with water, is used by the better sort, the latter by servants and the inferior Kind of people'.<sup>363</sup> In addition, Edward Long, elaborated on the subject of alcohol, and noted that the white men in Jamaica used to drink heavily, but in his opinion, this was no longer the case towards the end of the century. Instead of spending their evenings with the bottle, the men in the genteel families had begun socialising with the women and, according to Long, the evenings were now spent drinking tea or coffee and playing cards.<sup>364</sup> Lapses from expected behaviour occurred at times, and as such, they were special enough to be written down in diaries and letters. Lady Nugent commented for example on the drinking habits of the men on the island, after one of the dinners that she attended, in the following, unflattering way: 'Almost every man of the party was drunk, even to a boy of fifteen or sixteen, who was obliged to be carried home. His father was very angry but he had no right to be so, as he set the example to him'.<sup>365</sup> As I previously discussed in relation to the caricature of 'Johnny Newcome' in chapter 2, the white inhabitants on the island generally consumed large quantities of alcohol. However, writers of books on etiquette often saw drunkenness as a problem, and something that was not compatible with a refined way of life.<sup>366</sup>

In the wake of the increase in use of foodstuffs such as sugar, rum, tea, chocolate and coffee came an increasing number of establishments where people came together. These places can be exemplified by the description of an ordinary day in Kingston by William Hickey, where he mentions spending hours every day in the taverns and coffee houses, catching up on news and discussing current topics. As has been demonstrated in previous studies many other gentlemen, both in Britain and in the colonies, shared these pastimes.<sup>367</sup> Notable for their wide appeal and informality, persons from all ranks in society gathered in coffee houses in the eighteenth century, making them excellent examples of places where ambitious gentlemen could see and be seen, improving themselves and hopefully their standing in society. The refreshments on offer in the coffee houses and taverns varied from caffeinated drinks like

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<sup>363</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, p. 32.

<sup>364</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 281.

<sup>365</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 108.

<sup>366</sup> Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, p. 344.

<sup>367</sup> Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists', p. 467–496.

tea and coffee to alcoholic beverages. Gentlemen also frequented taverns, places that in comparison to coffee houses were seen as more lively and joyous, partly because of the alcohol that was served in them.<sup>368</sup> However, especially in the colonies, where the number of establishments was limited, the difference between a coffee house and a tavern was minor.<sup>369</sup> The use of public spaces for genteel events prompted a change of attitude among those frequenting these events. In earlier centuries, taverns in America had been places for disorder and drinking, characteristics that did not go well together with polite entertainment. In order to attract a genteel clientele, they now had to make sure that their place had the right appearance, was nicely furnished, clean and served food of high quality.<sup>370</sup> In addition to nourishment, coffee houses and taverns also provided newspapers for their guests. Scribner mentions that English publications such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* were especially interesting to the colonial readers as they brought the colonists closer to the English Club culture.<sup>371</sup>

Advertisements placed in the Jamaican newspapers by keen tavern keepers and coffee-house owners reveal something about the activities that went on in these establishments. The tavern keeper Frances Bendick's offered a 'stock of liquor of the first quality' at her newly-refurbished tavern at Port Henderson in the southeast of the island and in Spanish Town a Francis Pitt offered 'liquors of first quality'.<sup>372</sup> Food was also sold in the taverns. Archibald Simpson of Kingston advertised in the local paper that he served 'coffee, tea and chocolate; soup and steaks. Dishes of any kind dressed for simillies on the shortest notice'.<sup>373</sup> William Hickey visited a tavern where, according to the owner, a group of 'gentlemen of the first rank in the island' would meet up several times a week to dine and drink wine.<sup>374</sup> According to the Jamaican law, persons who kept taverns or other places where they sold strong liquor were to pay for a licence every year. The types of alcohol listed in the law include wine from a number of origins as well as brandy, beer and cider. Several newspaper

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<sup>368</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 141, 145.

<sup>369</sup> Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists', p. 469.

<sup>370</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 161–162.

<sup>371</sup> Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists', p. 474.

<sup>372</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, issue 40, 22 January 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>373</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, issue 90, 1781, Bodleian Library.

<sup>374</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 23.

advertisements list these drinks among the goods being imported to the island from London.<sup>375</sup>

During the eighteenth century, there was an increase in the variety of drinks available. This development also had practical implications. The drinking of wine required glasses and decanters, as are found on the large table at the centre of the room in the illustration of the 'Segar smoking society of Jamaica'. Furthermore, the various decanters and bottles had to be recognisable. One way of achieving this was by adding decanter tags or bottle tickets indicating what was inside of the bottle. Initially made of expensive materials, these small plates were, together with the glasses and other paraphernalia, markers of status, as the owner showed that he or she knew what was correct and could afford the expense of it (image 7).<sup>376</sup>



*Image 7: A Bottle ticket, probably made in Sheffield in 1780. Bottle tickets were used to mark various bottles so that their contents would be known. Rum was one of the most exported products of Jamaica. Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

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<sup>375</sup> Anon., *An Abridgment of the Laws of Jamaica, in Manner of an Index*, London, printed for Curtis Brett and Comp., 1756, p. 35.

<sup>376</sup> Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, p. 355.

The subject of alcohol is also present in one of the satirical caricatures printed by William Holland. The caricature entitled 'A West-India Sportsman' shows the sportsman – a white man sitting in the shade of a large parasol – making himself ready to shoot some birds (image 8). One man, probably a slave, based on his skin colour, dress and task, is trying to protect a table filled with food from flies, as another man is serving the white man a drink. A considerable number of bottles as well as caskets filled with alcoholic drinks, both empty and full, are shown in the image. The subtitle reads 'Make haste with the Sangaree, Quasihie, and tell Quaco to drive the birds up to me – I am ready'. In addition to Sangaree, the planter seems to have been enjoying various other sorts of alcohol, based on the empty bottles and jars surrounding him. Towards the back of the picture, another leisured man can be seen resting on a sofa; next to him a slave woman is standing with another wide parasol, offering some protection from the sun. Illustrations such as this one, depicting the white men in Jamaica as extravagant and lazy, probably supported the view in Europe of the West Indian inhabitants as idle and spending money on pastimes rather than working. This print was published in 1807, the same year that saw the abolition of the slave trade in Britain.<sup>377</sup> Consequently, it dealt with a current topic that is audience would recognise from the public debate.

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<sup>377</sup> Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 118.



Image 8: William Holland, a West India sportsman (London 1807). The caricature sums up many of the views in London on the white West Indians. Source: The British Museum, London.

The activities of drinking, reading, discussion and gossip took in many cases place in a fine milieu in eighteenth-century Jamaica. Many of the advertisements mention the genteel furniture and elegant surroundings of the taverns and coffee houses. According to the eighteenth-century historian Edward Long, the taverns on the island were large and well supplied:

In the two principal ones called Ranelagh and Vauxhall, are long rooms for concerts, balls, and public entertainments. [---] The tavern called Ranelagh is a large, lofty building commanding a fine view of the town, harbour and shipping. Here the balls and concerts are usually exhibited and the company are numerous and elegant in their appearance.<sup>378</sup>

This suggests that the taverns were multipurpose; that is to say that they were used for a number of different kinds of amusement. The names of

<sup>378</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 117–118.

the taverns, Ranelagh and Vauxhall, are redolent of the connection to England. The originals of Ranelagh and Vauxhall were public pleasure gardens in London, established in 1742 and 1732.<sup>379</sup>

Specific coffee houses soon became meeting places for individuals with similar interests, such as involvement in the same trade or other business.<sup>380</sup> The merchants of Kingston for example, gathered close to the harbour in the *Kingston Coffee House*, from where they could watch their ships come in with a spyglass.<sup>381</sup> Information networks were of crucial importance to those wishing to conduct business in the West Indies and across the Atlantic. For these people the marine lists kept in the coffee houses were helpful. Keepers of coffee houses and other establishments also kept up-to-date lists of incoming and outgoing ships, which was an important way of attracting customers. They even took pride in having the most accurate list, and made sure to mention this in their published advertisements: 'attention shall be paid to the marine list, which shall be kept in the most exact and correct manner, and every possible precaution taken, that no intelligence shall be offered to the public but what is authentic'.<sup>382</sup> In addition, various clubs met in the taverns. One of those who advertised in the local papers was called the *European Club*. The newspaper *The Royal Gazette* printed an advertisement for the association in 1781. The advertisement addressed persons who had stayed a shorter time than 30 years on the island to come to the club's first meeting at Mr Allen's tavern. The purpose of this meeting was to work against the 'ill-grounded prejudices, which have hither to operated as a considerable check to her population and prosperity'.<sup>383</sup> According to a subsequently published report from the meeting, 38 gentlemen had turned up and spent

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<sup>379</sup> Vauxhall Gardens was reopened in 1732, it had also existed in the previous century. Ranelagh Gardens was opened to the public in 1742; Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 254.

<sup>380</sup> John E. Willis Jr., 'European Consumption and Asian Production in the Eighteenth Century', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 141.

<sup>381</sup> B.W. Higman, 'Jamaican Port Towns in the Early Nineteenth Century', in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (eds), *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture and Society in the Atlantic World*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1991, p. 140.

<sup>382</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, issue 44, 19 February 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>383</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 3, issue 100, 1781, Bodleian Library.

their evening drinking a 'number of loyal, patriotic and commercial toasts'.<sup>384</sup>

In her journal, Lady Nugent described her first visit to the retiring Governor Lord Balcarres' farm as a disaster. The place was a 'scene of dirt and discomfort' and the visit came to an abrupt end as she was informed that there were not enough teacups and plates for the whole party. Therefore, neither she and her husband nor the rest of their company would be able to sit down and have a meal that was worthy their rank in society. Instead, they all had to return to the Governor's residence in Spanish Town for breakfast.<sup>385</sup> This short anecdote documents just one of the several occasions when Lady Nugent mentions tea and tea drinking, alongside chocolate and coffee in her journal.<sup>386</sup> The number of mentions shows that these drinks were part of her everyday life in the island, either as refreshment or as part of a social activity, as her evenings often followed the same pattern of 'tea, coffee and cards and to bed at nine'<sup>387</sup>.

The import of porcelain and other exotic goods to Europe in the eighteenth century was supported by an increase in global trade, a development that had begun 300 years earlier. Many goods, such as the caffeinated drinks coffee, tea and cacao that today we take for granted, came to Europe through this trade. For Europeans and the European colonists the consumption of tea, coffee and chocolate, as well as suitable vessels of porcelain to serve the drinks in, were a significant part of the changes in consumer patterns that took place during the early modern era. These commodities were initially associated with foreignness and luxury and formed some of the new ways of eating that were taken up in Europe and the colonies at this time. However, they soon became more common and were seen as natural aspects of a civilised lifestyle; as necessities for the polite society of the eighteenth century – not only in their function as foodstuffs but also as elements of a social and cultural life.<sup>388</sup> Lady Nugent rejoiced in her diary shortly after her arrival on the island that 'at dinner

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<sup>384</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 3, issue 103, 1781, Bodleian Library.

<sup>385</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 22.

<sup>386</sup> See e.g. Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 32, 37, 73.

<sup>387</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 73.

<sup>388</sup> Maxine Berg, 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution', in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Egers (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 239; Willis, 'European Consumption and Asian Production', p. 140–142.

every thing in best order. Our English china etc. etc. All very nice'.<sup>389</sup> And in the Broadbent letters, tea drinking was described in a positive manner, as one of the many similarities between England and Kingston and as an example of a feature that united the two places despite their geographical distance.<sup>390</sup> Domestic tea drinking was an important part of the social life of the elite and middle classes during the eighteenth century. Especially for the hostess or mistress of the house, the ceremony around making, serving and drinking tea was an opportunity for display, as she got to show off not only her knowledge of the rituals, but also her possession and mastery of the necessary equipment such as spoons, teacups and teapots. But also the guests were expected to play their part and the invitation was a chance for them to show off their good manners and social skill.<sup>391</sup>

A number of items connected to the proper serving of food and drink can also be found in the local newspapers:

This day is opened by Will. Aikman at his shop in King-Street a chest of Hyson tea high-flavoured and of superior quality. Who has for sale a variety of super fine and half-ell white and coloured Jennetts, narrow and Dutch corded dimity cotton sattinets, Best bandannoe spotted silk handkerchiefs exceeding low for cash. A fresh importation of Keyser pill's, in boxes and half boxes and the best mogul and Henry VIII playing cards by wholesale or retail. He has also just opened a trunk of M'Intoshes best plain shoes.<sup>392</sup>

As can be seen in the advertisement cited above, William Aikman's shop in King's Street in Kingston sold fashionable fabrics, ready-made clothes and playing cards, as well as fine-quality tea in the year 1780. The shopkeeper seems especially to have wanted to highlight that the tea was fresh and the box recently opened. Hyson, the tea mentioned in the advertisement, was a green tea popular at the time.<sup>393</sup> As can be understood from the advertisement, the freshness of the tea seems to have

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<sup>389</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 27.

<sup>390</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 122.

<sup>391</sup> Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, p. 15.

<sup>392</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, 12 February 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>393</sup> Helen Saberi, *Tea, a Global History*, London, Reaktion Books, 2010, p. 161; Yong Liu, *The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757–178. Monographs on the History of Asian –European Interaction*, vol. 6, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. 69.



been a significant selling point, and therefore it was stated in many of the advertisements mentioning tea that the seal on the container had only recently been broken. In this particular advertisement, china is not mentioned, but it was also imported to Jamaica in large quantities and various pieces of china for all occasions were sold in the island's shops. In the advertisements, these were commonly described with adjectives such as 'elegant' or 'fine'.<sup>394</sup>

In eighteenth-century Jamaican society there was a connection between certain foodstuffs, their setting, and a polite way of life. Food and drink were served in a similar manner in the West Indies and in Britain, using the same types of vessels and utensils.<sup>395</sup> However, Christer Petley has suggested that dining was culturally more important to the white settlers in Jamaica than to their counterparts in Britain.<sup>396</sup> Mrs Broadbent, commented on this social side of drinking tea in her letters to her daughter in England and discussed the way that socialising over a cup of tea was a form of recreation on the island. She seems to have been appreciative of the way that the drink brought men and women together in the same room after dinner to be sociable, instead of, as had previously been the custom, spending the evening in separate rooms.<sup>397</sup> On the other hand, Mrs Nugent on several occasions confided in her diary that she was glad that there had only been men to dinner, so that her company was not expected by the guests at the socialising afterwards.<sup>398</sup> This emotion was probably connected to her official role as the Governor's wife on the island; a role in which she was constantly under the scrutinising gaze of others.

### 3.3 Theatres and exhibitions

In October 1780, an advertisement was printed in the Jamaican newspaper *The Royal Gazette* offering a substantial reward to anyone who could help in solving a crime. The advertisement stated that someone had stolen a

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<sup>394</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, issue 42, 20 February, 1780, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>395</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 166–167; Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500–1800*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012, p. 214–216; Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650–1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*, London, Routledge, p. 273, 275–277.

<sup>396</sup> Petley, 'Rethinking the Fall', p. 86.

<sup>397</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 122.

<sup>398</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 37, 41

number of valuable clothes from the men's wardrobe at the theatre in Kingston. Among the garments listed as lost were several coats and waistcoats in different colours, trimmed with substantial amounts of silver and gold lace. Since the wardrobe had not been checked for some time there was uncertainty about exactly when this crime had been committed; however, the clothes had been seen one month ago.<sup>399</sup> The advertisement was placed in the newspaper by Lewis Hallam Jr., the manager of an, at the time, famous travelling theatre company called the *American Company of Comedians*. According to the historian Errol Hill, the author of one of the few books written on West Indian theatre, Lewis Hallam Sr. founded the company, initially calling it the *Company of Comedians*. Between 1755 and 1758 and again from 1775 and 1785, at the time when a thief had emptied the wardrobe, the company spent a total of thirteen years in Jamaica.<sup>400</sup>

An understanding of how the audience acted and interacted in the eighteenth-century theatres gives insight into a society as it changed both economically and culturally. Previous studies have shown how theatre audiences can be seen as cultural consumers whose attitudes and behaviour change over time. The individuals who attended the plays did so for a number of reasons. They were not only at the playhouses to be entertained, but also to meet friends and acquaintances, engage in trade and the activities surrounding it, and also show off their fashionable dress and other apparel as well as observing how others were dressed. In this way, the theatres gave opportunities for a new type of public sociability.<sup>401</sup> Kathleen Wilson discusses the role of the colonial Jamaican theatre as she describes how the playhouses on the island brought together persons from different parts of the local society, and the important role that the theatres had in the definition, performance and dissemination of Englishness. The theatre buildings, the plays acted in them and the style of performance were all part of an effort to transplant British culture into Britain's colonial

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<sup>399</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 78, 6 October, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>400</sup> Errol Hill, *The Jamaican Stage, 1655–1900*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, p. 6.

<sup>401</sup> Lauren Clay, *Stagestruck: the Business of Theatre in Eighteenth-century France and its Colonies*, New York, Cornell University Press, 2013 p. 164–165; Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 325–326; Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, 'The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates', in Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (eds), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century. Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 7–27, p. 20; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment. Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, London, Penguin, 2001, p. 38.

possessions, and the players performed primarily for a European clientele.<sup>402</sup> William Hickey mentions in his memoirs that he and his friends visited the theatre on the island as they desired to see not only the play, but all the beauties in the audience.<sup>403</sup> The interest in the other persons attending a play, as much as the play itself, has been seen as an explanation as to why not only theatres in London, but also the theatre salons, began lighting themselves up.<sup>404</sup> In Kingston, candelabras hanging from the ceiling, and candles strategically placed on the sidewalls and in the boxes, provided the theatre with light. In addition, candles sunken into the front of the stage were used as illumination. As the candles were without protective glass covers, they were dangerous. In 1785 a newspaper reported a fire in a Jamaican theatre as 'lamps in the front of the orchestra, being overcharged with oil, set fire to the wooden channel in which they were enclosed'.<sup>405</sup>

In addition to giving a glimpse of the theatrical activity on the island, the advertisement for the stolen goods cited in the introduction to this sub-chapter, does reveal that there was a common understanding of what constituted fashion at the time. Due to this common understanding, it was possible for L. Hallam to describe some of the lost items as 'old fashioned' or 'pompadour costumes'.<sup>406</sup> The building of specific rooms for theatrical use and the tours of travelling theatre companies were, according to Theresa Saxon, typical features in the British colonies in general during the early and middle parts of the century. However, this activity was largely dependent on the way that the travelling companies were received and how capable the colonists were of financially supporting the building of a theatre.<sup>407</sup> Two or three groups of travelling actors arrived annually on the island. One group consisted of around ten persons; actors as well as other workers. In Jamaica a lack of economic resources was often a great concern for those wanting to keep up the theatrical life on the island.<sup>408</sup> In addition to the venture of Lewis Hallam

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<sup>402</sup> Wilson, *The Politics of Fashion*, p. 163; Black, *Culture in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 110.

<sup>403</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 82.

<sup>404</sup> Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 125.

<sup>405</sup> Hill, *The Jamaican Stage*, p. 28.

<sup>406</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 78, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>407</sup> Theresa Saxon, *American Theatre: History, Context, Form*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011, p. 81–82.

<sup>408</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 117.

Jr., there were also other influential theatre companies in the colonies, bringing themselves forward as commercial theatres. Local amateur and professional actors performed on the stages in the West Indies and theatres were erected in many of the main colonial towns. Charles Leslie describes in his account the amusements to be had in Spanish Town, stating that a playhouse has been recently opened in the town, 'where they retain a set of extraordinary good actors'.<sup>409</sup> His conclusion was that from the perspective of entertainment, the inhabitants in the town 'live as happily as if they were within the verge of the British court'.<sup>410</sup> William Hickey described the theatre in Spanish Town in a positive manner:

[---] commodious, neatly fitted up, and had a more tolerable set of actors then recently arrived from New York, in America, which city they had quitted in consequence of the popular commotions and probability of hostilities commencing with the Mother country. The manager was a Mr. Hallam, brother to Mrs. Mattocks of one of the London theatres.<sup>411</sup>

Hickey described himself as very well entertained at the play.<sup>412</sup> In time, the theatre in Jamaica was doing so well that the island produced trained actors who could travel to work in theatres abroad.<sup>413</sup>

Various events, such as wars or natural disasters often obstructed the work of the travelling companies of actors.<sup>414</sup> Variations in the economic situation were also a factor that could either support or restrain the theatre activity on the island. This is exemplified in a statement made by Edward Long, who in his account wrote that, 'in the lower part of town is a very pretty theatre, exceedingly well contrived, and neatly finished. Dramatical performances were exhibited here during the last war, at which time there was a considerable amount of prize money in circulation; but in times of peace, the town is not able or not disposed to support so costly an amusement'.<sup>415</sup> In times of economic scarcity the theatre was none the less an important feature on the island. This can be divined from an advertisement placed in the *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly*

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<sup>409</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, p. 28.

<sup>410</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica* p. 28.

<sup>411</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 33.

<sup>412</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 33.

<sup>413</sup> Saxon, *American Theatre. History, Context, Form*, p. 96; Hill, *The Jamaican Stage*, p. 20, 127.

<sup>414</sup> Hill, *The Jamaican Stage*, p. 6–8.

<sup>415</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p 117–118.

*Advertiser* in January 1780 where a scheme is proposed to ‘the friends and patrons of liberal arts’ for the funding of a theatre. A calculation added to the advertisement reveals that the expected expense for keeping the theatre open one night and support the actors would be £75. The actors would perform 24 plays.<sup>416</sup> The prices for the tickets to the theatre in Jamaica varied. In the pricing and the admission to the theatre, the sharp divide between groups in the society is clearly visible. The cost of a ticket was higher for whites than for children and people of colour. In the theatre, there were different seats designated to different people and in some cases, the whites and coloured were to visit the theatre at different times altogether.<sup>417</sup>

The general harsh conditions on the island and the warm climate affected the theatres as well. Advertisements in the newspapers placed by theatre keepers stated that they were sorry for the indisposition of the actors and the bad weather that lately had disturbed the performances and caused the theatre to close.<sup>418</sup> The situation seems not to have improved over time since later an advertisement was placed in the newspaper stating that some ‘gentlemen of the army’ had ‘from a degree of politeness to give the public entertainment’, decided to perform on the stage.<sup>419</sup> In many of the British colonies, the soldiers at the newly-established military bases were involved in the local theatrical activity.<sup>420</sup> Moreover, when the actors performed they were criticised for the late hours and disturbed by a loud mob outside the theatre.<sup>421</sup>

If the owners of the theatres kept them closed for some reason, the wealthier inhabitants on the island could still take part in theatre culture. Jamaican newspapers frequently reprinted plays from the London stages so that the readers in Jamaica could be familiar with them.<sup>422</sup> Furthermore, the local storekeepers sold copies of plays, alongside other types of literature such as books on cooking, religious matters, surgery, astronomy,

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<sup>416</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, issue 41, 24 January 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>417</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 187; Hill, *The Jamaican Stage*, p. 35.

<sup>418</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 6, 1780, Bodleian Library; *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 3, issue 118, 1781, Bodleian Library; *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 3, issue 125, 1781, Bodleian Library.

<sup>419</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 02, issue 75, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>420</sup> Saxon, *American Theatre. History, Context, Form*, p. 96.

<sup>421</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 03, issue 117, 1781, Bodleian Library; *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 03, 1781, issue 123, Bodleian Library.

<sup>422</sup> Hill, *The Jamaican Stage*, p. 132.

history and poetry.<sup>423</sup> Closely linked to these printed plays was the standing of literature on the island. In general, reading was seen as an important sign of gentility during the eighteenth century.<sup>424</sup> However, according to the long-time resident John Stewart, 'literature is little cultivated in Jamaica; nor is reading a very general favourite amusement'.<sup>425</sup> He felt that most of the literate inhabitants of the island were more interested in reading newspapers than books, as either business or amusements otherwise kept them occupied enough. Stewart went on to criticise the few circulation libraries that he knew of on the island, stating that their selection of books was inadequate, and that many books sent to the island were publications of little value, written only in order to gain money. According to Stewart, there was a great need on the island for a publication that would combine good literature and useful information. Attempts at this had been made, but the inhabitants were reluctant to pay the price for the magazines, as it was much higher than the price for the most valuable magazines imported from England.<sup>426</sup> However, from other sources we know that books and newspapers found their way into the hands of the white colonists in many ways, as they were printed and circulated on the island as well as imported there.<sup>427</sup> This would suggest that there were at least attempts to keep the whites on the island supplied with printed matter; however, their interest in purchasing books and reading seems to have been variable.

Advertisements printed in the Jamaican newspapers at the time show that the theatre buildings and various larger halls on the island were also used for other kinds of performances and exhibitions. For example, a satirical lecture accompanied by music, entitled 'A lecture on heads' was given in Jamaica in the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>428</sup> In this performance, the actor was dressed in various life size cut-outs of famous people or other characters.<sup>429</sup> In addition, a travelling magician visited the

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<sup>423</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 28 December 1779, Bodleian Library; *The Daily Advertiser*, 11 December 1789, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>424</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 41; Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 190; Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 268.

<sup>425</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 171.

<sup>426</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 172, 204.

<sup>427</sup> Petley, *Slaveholders in Jamaica*, p. 41.

<sup>428</sup> *The Royal Gazette* 1781, vol. 3, issue 92, Bodleian Library.

<sup>429</sup> Ron Byrnside, *Music in Eighteenth Century Georgia*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1997, p. 37–48.

island; according to his advertisement, the show had previously pleased the elite in the West Indies, America and Europe. Other magical tricks could be seen at 'Green's optical exhibition' entitled 'the power of imagination'.<sup>430</sup> Furthermore, a certain Mr Mahon, inspired by similar exhibitions in London, advertised in the local papers that he had 'spared no expenses' in his attempt to 'entertain and enliven the town' by arranging a form of puppet theatre called 'the Microcosm, or the World in Miniature'. According to the advertisement, this was a form of entertainment that had previously never been seen in the island.<sup>431</sup> In addition, a couple of acrobats who had previously performed in various courts in Europe found their way to the island. They performed 'on tight & slack rope, also in leaping, tumbling and balancing'.<sup>432</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know how the audiences responded to these events. However, Lady Nugent describes in her diary how one day she visited Spanish Town to see what she calls 'an exhibition' by a Mr Cussan. The show drew a substantial crowd from all ranks of Jamaican society, but Lady Nugent and her entourage did not like the show and thought it unworthy of a gentleman.<sup>433</sup> This was possibly a sung performance, but from Nugent's writings it does not become clear why she disliked the show. However, with her background, she was probably accustomed to high-quality performances, and those entertainers who resorted to travelling to the colonies often did so because they could not find enough employment in Europe.

### 3.4 Dances and balls

In the eighteenth century, dancing was a favourite pastime of many, both in Britain and the colonies.<sup>434</sup> However, dancing and balls were not only a matter of passing the time; it was also seen as the ultimate test of the genteel graces. Zara Anishanslin mentions that in the North American colonies, balls were not only arranged for fun, they also provided an

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<sup>430</sup> *The Royal Gazette* vol. 15 issue 9, 1793, Bodleian Library; *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* vol. 1, issue 11, 1779, Bodleian Library.

<sup>431</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 1790, issue 139, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>432</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* 1790, issue 68, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>433</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 193–194.

<sup>434</sup> Whitman, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World*, p. 88.

opportunity for the women to compete for appreciation of their splendour and refinement.<sup>435</sup> Also Veblen underlined the role of women, and especially their dress, in his theory on the conspicuous consumption of the so-called leisured class. According to him, women were seen as representatives of their families, and their dress was seen as a sign of the family's wealth.<sup>436</sup>

In the eighteenth-century ballroom, dancers and spectators often scrutinised other dancers' dress, manners, ease and general behaviour.<sup>437</sup> In a contemporary guidebook to dancing, the art is described as almost a necessity for any gentleman who wishes to appear with 'proper grace'.<sup>438</sup> The same book starts by instructing the reader on the correct way to walk in a genteel manner, showing the complexity of appearing genteel not only in manners but also in conduct. According to the rules, 'the head must be straight, the chin drawn back without stiffness, the shoulders a proper fall, the body perpendicular, and the knees and toes turned outward from the body going through steps like bending and rising, courtesies and bows'.<sup>439</sup> Against this background, it is easy to understand the importance of the dancing masters who sought work in Jamaica, wanting to teach the proper dances and cultivate a polite and refined society.<sup>440</sup> Newspaper advertisements show that the dancing masters in Jamaica were versatile and offered several services, not only dancing lessons. A Mr Goodwin advertised that in addition to the minuet and country dances he also taught musical instruments as well as offering 'particular instructions [...] to the young ladies and gentlemen [---] in regard to their behaviour to parents and strangers, at home and abroad'.<sup>441</sup> A Mrs Vincent advertised that at her school for the education of young ladies she offered the services of both music and dancing masters.<sup>442</sup> At the time, the minuet was considered the most important dance among polite society; the historian

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<sup>435</sup> Anishanslin, *Portrait of a Woman in Silk*, p. 217–218.

<sup>436</sup> Veblen, *Den arbeidsfria klassen*, p. 95.

<sup>437</sup> Calvert, 'The Function of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America', p. 272.

<sup>438</sup> S. J. Gardiner, *A Definition of Minuet-dancing, Rules for Behaviour in Company &c. A Dialogue between a Lady and a Dancing-master*, Madeley, printed by J. Edmunds, 1786, p. iii.

<sup>439</sup> Gardiner, *a Definition of Minuet-dancing*, p. 33.

<sup>440</sup> Anne Bloomfield and Ruth Watts, 'Pedagogue of the Dance: the Dancing Master as Educator in the Long Eighteenth Century', *History of Education*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2008, p. 605–606; Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* p. 546–547.

<sup>441</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* issue 31 1779, Bodleian Library.

<sup>442</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* issue 4 1779, Bodleian Library.



Karin Calvert has described it as the formal behaviour of the court set to music.<sup>443</sup> Likewise, country dances were popular on the island, but neither quadrilles nor waltzes, for some reason, were liked in the West Indies, even if they were popular dances in Europe at the time.<sup>444</sup>

Eighteenth-century travel journals and diaries from Jamaica contain several narratives of balls and dancing. These accounts reveal that the balls were popular amusements, often drawing together a large crowd. According to John Stewart, the creole ladies were extremely fond of amusements and especially the frequently-arranged balls in the towns gathered large crowds from various parts of the island. He estimated that families would travel up to 40 miles to attend these gatherings.<sup>445</sup> William Hickey spent one evening at a ball at which all the principal persons of the town, and several from Kingston, were present.<sup>446</sup> Lady Nugent describes how she and her husband took part in a number of public entertainments during their stay in the West Indies. Her writing includes several descriptions of balls and the role of the Governor and his wife at these events: 'General N. and I both began the ball. He at the head of one set, and I at the head of another, and my partner was so anxious to exhibit me, that I was obliged to jig to the very bottom of the dance, which consisted of no less than thirty-one couples'.<sup>447</sup> Nathalie Zacek has pointed out, concerning the Leeward Islands, that the Governor there had an important role as a representative of the monarch, therefore his behaviour was under scrutiny; misbehaving or not behaving with the expected pomp and grandeur would have harmed not only his reputation but also that of the King. In order to be appreciated by the inhabitants, the governor of a West Indian colony had to take part in rituals that gave the audience a sense that they were English and belonging to the higher ranks in society. Therefore, lavish display on the part of the governor was a necessity. In the Leeward Islands, the governor had a large group of slaves and horses following him when he moved around the island, as part of his performance of wealth and luxury. In addition, balls arranged on the island gave the same opportunity for lavishness and self-display.<sup>448</sup> Similarly, it can be assumed

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<sup>443</sup> Calvert, 'The Function of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America', p. 273.

<sup>444</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 206.

<sup>445</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 205.

<sup>446</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 28.

<sup>447</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 122.

<sup>448</sup> Zacek, 'Rituals of Rulership', p. 120–122.

that the dancing partner's motive for making her dance across the room was twofold; not only to exhibit her, but also perhaps to display himself as someone who was allowed to interact with a noble person. In her role as one of the most highly-ranked persons in Jamaica, her presence at these events was a conspicuous occurrence.

Balls were a seasonal event and much anticipated by the younger people on the island as Mrs Broadbent pointed out in her letter, quoted in the introduction to this thesis. In a later letter, she states that she is 'really glad for the sake of the young folks that we are to have few amusements soon'.<sup>449</sup> And in another account 'our session of Assembly is to commence in the course of a fortnight or three weeks, when I suppose Spanish Town will be gay and lively, at present it is purely stupid for the young folks who are fond of amusements'.<sup>450</sup> These amusements also gave the attendants something to talk about afterwards; Lady Nugent noted that 'a great many gentlemen called in the morning, to make enquiries after the ball'.<sup>451</sup> At the time of the year when the Jamaica Assembly was in session, Lady Nugent's everyday life was much taken up by balls and other forms of amusement. Once, she was asked to decide what form of entertainment should be arranged for the pleasure of the white inhabitants on the island. She chose a ball, to which she went dressed in her finest clothes, and wore a gold tiara and feathers, attempting to make herself look as magnificent as she could.<sup>452</sup> Later she described the events at another ball in her honour, underlining the formal side of the festivities:

The ball they are to give to me occupies every one. A hundred messages from the stewarts in the course of the morning. What hour shall the ball begin? What door shall I enter? &c. &c. Please the ladies, by making my maid arrange their dresses for the evening. [---] Start for the ball at 8, with a grand cavalcade. Received at the door with a great ceremony, led in by two stewards, and followed by a large party of gentlemen, the music playing God save the King. Immediately on my being seated on the state sofa, all the company came up, and paid their compliments. I then opened the ball with Mr. Henry one of the members of the parish and really a gentlemanlike man. After dancing a little, the carriages were

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<sup>449</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 71.

<sup>450</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 119–120.

<sup>451</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 109.

<sup>452</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 56–57, see also p. 175 for description of a ball gown.

ordered, but first I walked about the room with my suite, and after curtseying and making fine speeches, took my leave, with the same ceremonies with which I entered.<sup>453</sup>

As the quote from the journal shows, balls required a great deal of arrangement, and their success was the result of much work and preparation. In Jamaica, events such as balls, dinners and concerts took place in a number of places. In addition to public halls, private homes were also used for public entertainment events. In his account of this time in the West Indies, the Reverend Thomas Coke tells the story of how he managed to borrow a sizeable room in one of the houses of a gentleman in Port Royal, as it became evident that he would draw larger crowds than expected for his preaching. He estimated that more than 600 persons had come to listen to him, however, some of them remained on the outside of the house. He was given the second largest room in the town, a room that the inhabitants previously had used as a concert hall.<sup>454</sup>

Several of the contemporary narrators depicting amusements on the island mention the climate in the West Indies as a challenge. Robert Renny noted that billiards was an excellent pastime in the area, as it did not require that much physical activity. In addition to this he observes that ‘the only exercises which are proper for strangers, are, riding and walking, and these ought chiefly to be taken in the cool of the morning. Dancing ought to be avoided, as it occasions a too profuse perspiration: And strangers who attend assemblies are unavoidably exposed to the moist air of the night, while returning home, as is almost universally the case in their open carriages’.<sup>455</sup> Mrs Broadbent was looking forward to the season, but acknowledged that the climate posed a challenge: [---] there is only one thing against the Dancing and that is the intense heat of the weather, but I trust as this is one of our rainy seasons, we shall get cooler weather from a plentiful fall of showers’.<sup>456</sup> Lady Nugent also suffered greatly from the heat in the tropics. In one of the first remarks in her journal upon arrival on the island, she recalls how she met a number of persons who had come to greet her, however, later she could not remember their names,

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<sup>453</sup> Nugent, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, p. 109.

<sup>454</sup> Thomas Coke, *A Journal of the Rev. Coke’s Visit to Jamaica, and of His third Tour on the Continent of America*, London, s.n., 1789, p.2.

<sup>455</sup> Renny, *An History of Jamaica*, p. 197.

<sup>456</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 71.

only how they all looked warm and flustered due to the heat. Later she wrote about one dinner that she attended during which 'the heat was dreadful and the crowd so great [...], that there was scarcely room for the servants to change the plates'.<sup>457</sup> William Hickey who described a dinner that he attended in the following way echoes her thoughts in his description of another event: 'I was surprised to see the rooms precisely like those in England, windows sashed, glazed, and no larger than in Europe. The heat consequently was intense, even to oppression, as may be conceived in such a description of an apartment with a load of hot victuals upon the table, and twenty-five guests, besides servants. So profuse a perspiration for two hours I never underwent'.<sup>458</sup> John Stewart noted that in other tropical areas dancing and the arranging of balls was avoided during the warmest months, but that this was not the case in Jamaica:

It rather astonishes a stranger to see, in a hot room, during one of the most sultry months of the year – where even the sedentary spectator pants for the refreshing air – a group of charming well-dressed young women toiling, as he thinks through the fatigue of a long country dance, yet, animated by a gayety and a love of the amusement, renewing again and again the grateful toil.<sup>459</sup>

The reason that these women were able to enjoy themselves at the ball despite the heat was, according to Stewart, their late hours. In Jamaica at the time, balls usually lasted for several hours past midnight, but as the women could sleep and refresh themselves all day, they were ready to attend another ball the next evening.<sup>460</sup>

An annually-recurring event on the island was the King's ball, which, according to Long, prompted the inhabitants of the island dress in their finest:

[---] the appearance of company on this occasion is generally brilliant, the ladies vying with one another in the richness of their dress; every one makes a point of exhibiting a new suit of finery; and this regulation is so lavishly indulged, that such a ball is seldom attended with less than three

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<sup>457</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 18, 121.

<sup>458</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs' vol. 2, p. 20–21.

<sup>459</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 206.

<sup>460</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 206.

or four thousand pounds expense [sic] to the guests, which however, is so far excusable, as it is laid out in British manufactures.<sup>461</sup>

This description is backed up by others, but it can also be somewhat contested, as other accounts show that not everyone that took part in this event had the means, or willingness, to dress in their finest. According to Lady Nugent, 'everyone that can afford a dress is allowed in'<sup>462</sup> while an advertisement in *The Royal Gazette* stated that 'no gentlemen can possibly be admitted in boots, or otherwise improperly dressed'.<sup>463</sup> It does not become clear in the account in Lady Nugent's diary how *a dress* should be understood in this respect, but her observations do show that the range of participants with regard to wealth was wider than Edward Long gives us to understand. Furthermore, the fact that those who placed the advertisement in the newspaper felt it necessary to include a line about the dress code might suggest that there was a fear that someone would try to enter the ball dressed in an inappropriate way.

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<sup>461</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 33.

<sup>462</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 177.

<sup>463</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 239.

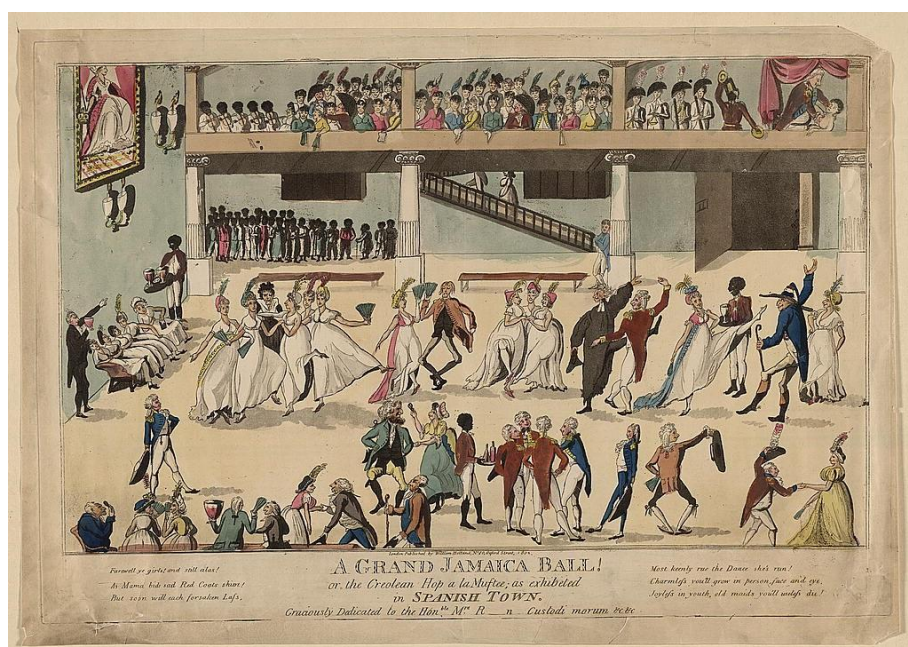


Image 9: A grand Jamaica ball! or the Creolean Hop a la Muftee; as exhibited in Spanish Town. The illustration shows a ball in Jamaica, with numerous guests dancing, conversing or looking at the scene. Source: British cartoon prints collection. Library of Congress.

A colourful etching (image 9) depicts a ball in Jamaica. The caricature is credited to the Scotsman Abraham James, and William Holland printed it in 1802, the same year as the caricature entitled 'The Segar smoking society'. As with that one, this print also criticises the wealthy West Indian planters for their luxurious and lavish lifestyle. It is not known if the caricaturist Abraham James was an educated artist, but he came from a family of printers. He was part of the 67<sup>th</sup> South Hampshire Regiment of Foot, and relocated to Jamaica from Saint Domingue in 1798. He left the island a few years later. The caricatures made by James depict Jamaican society, rather than its politics. In addition to "A grand Jamaica ball", he also made caricatures that ridiculed the climate on the island. It has been suggested that the caricature depicts an actual event; the farewell party of the 67<sup>th</sup> Regiment in the end of 1798.<sup>464</sup>

<sup>464</sup> Buckley, 'The Frontier in the Jamaican Caricatures of Abraham James', p. 153–154.

The subtext is a warning to women, that everything is perishable, even their youth:

Farewell ye girls! And stall alas!/As Mama bids sad Red Coats shine/ But soon will each forsaken lass/ Most keenly rue the dance she's run/Charmless you grow in person face and eye/Joyless in youth, old maids you youthless die.

The illustration shows a scene from a ball arranged in Spanish Town at the turn of the nineteenth century. The grandest room in the town at that time was situated in the Governor's house, and was of the dimensions of about seventy three by thirty feet.<sup>465</sup> In the caricature, the room is decorated with a painting and sizeable candelabras are attached to the wall. The room has Doric pillars, supporting a large upper gallery and a staircase leading up to it. A number of persons from different ranks in society are depicted; lavishly dressed white or light coloured individuals dancing and chatting to their companions, men from the military, a priest and a number of servants. A man and a woman are entering the staircase, probably about to join the group standing on the gallery watching the people dancing. In the right upper hand corner, on a nook in the balcony, a man dressed in a red army coat is trying to seduce a woman. Next to the amorous couple, a number of musicians are standing and in the opposite corner, a group of black fiddlers are standing, apparently providing music for the dancers. It was common to send for fiddlers when music was desired at the social gatherings of the white inhabitants on the island. At times, strings for the fiddles were not easily obtained, and if they broke this caused distress at parties. Stewart, who described music at the balls on the island as 'very indifferent' also mentions the use of other instruments at balls, such as tambourines, drums and triangles. According to him, the noise of the beating of the drum often could be overbearing, but it seemed not to disturb the dancers.<sup>466</sup>

Most of the people depicted dancing in the caricature are women wearing light-coloured dresses and with feathers stuck into their hair, bonnets or bandanas. They are wearing shoes and stockings, and several of them are holding green coloured fans. The men are mostly dressed in

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<sup>465</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 7. According to the metric system, the room would have been about 22 meters x 9 meters.

<sup>466</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 21, 80.

red or blue army coats, stockings and trousers, some of them seem to be wearing boots, and others have shoes. As in other British colonies, the society in Jamaica was highly militarised and higher ranks in the militia played an important role, compensating for the lack of people of high social rank.<sup>467</sup> Down to the right of the picture a man in a blue coat is standing erect in profile; the lavish lace frill of his shirt is clearly visible. The fact that there were more men on the island than there were women at times harmed social life. At times the lack of sufficient dancing partners obstructed the inhabitants' attempts to arrange balls.<sup>468</sup> However, the opposite also occurred. Mrs Broadbent wrote in one of her letters that 'I have had four dances given me since I have been here, the officers of the sixty-second regiments generally make some of the party; without them there would be very little dancing for there are not many young gentlemen here'.<sup>469</sup> In this latter case, it seems that the social standing of the men was the problem, rather than their actual number.

On the benches surrounding the dance floor attendants are sitting looking at the dancers, chatting with each other or enjoying a glass of wine. The servants waiting on the guests with stemware and bottles are dressed in livery wearing light coloured trousers and red coats. It is difficult to determine whether they are wearing shoes or not. One of the men sitting with his back towards the viewer of the etching has a proportionally enormous glass in his hand, the size of his head. This detail was perhaps a way for the artist to indicate the heavy drinking on the island during the eighteenth century. In the centre of the caricature, one of the dancing couples stands out from the rest. The woman is wearing coloured clothes; a green dress, yellow top and a white cap with a red ribbon. The man has yellow pants, a black vest and a green coat. He is wearing a wig, but his hair is sticking out from underneath it, and his unshaven face is clearly visible. This couple seems, then, not to be as neat and lavishly dressed as the others attending the ball. I would suggest that this illustrates the diversity of the guests attending the balls on the island.

A mass of people have also gathered in the gallery, from where they have a good view of the activities in the room. These individuals are standing, laughing and chatting to each other and one of the spectators

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<sup>467</sup> Ruggiu, 'Extraction, Wealth and Industry', p. 449; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 28.

<sup>468</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 135.

<sup>469</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 30-31.



seems to point out something interesting to his company. In the background of the picture, on the first floor of the room, a man is casually leaning against one of the pillars, looking on at the action on the dance floor. To his right a group of black people have gathered. They are standing in a corner at the back of the room, apparently looking at the dancers as well. Their facial expressions are hard to distinguish. Edward Brathwaite has noted that, except for in the theatre, the various ranks in Jamaican society led their own separate lives and consequently would not encounter each other at social events.<sup>470</sup> If this was the case, it might be that the artist Abraham Jones wanted to include black people in the caricature to underline that the image depicts an event in Jamaica where slaves were common. However, as Jones was familiar with life in the West Indies, he might also have included the slaves because he had seen for himself that slaves at times were present at social events. At a more general level, the crowd acting as an audience supports an interpretation of the balls on the island as arenas in which the guests came to perform certain roles and present themselves to the scrutiny of other members of the society. The caricature portrays the white inhabitants on the island as extravagant and prone to display and conspicuous consumption, but also underlines that despite their best efforts, there was still room for improvement for some of the inhabitants on the island.

### 3.5 Local shopping

[---] it is custom there for Ladies to go shopping when the gentlemen very often strole in and have a little pleasant conversation; if ladies are going out a visiting any where the gentlemen will attend them in the carriage, in short my dear Jane their manners reminded me of England and that was quite enough to make me fond of the inhabitants.<sup>471</sup>

Up until now, the subjects discussed, such as theatre, dinners and dancing, were all quite established forms of entertainment during the eighteenth century. This sub-chapter focuses on a pastime that was new to a majority of British people during the era; namely shopping. In the letter quoted

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<sup>470</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 186.

<sup>471</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 188.

above, Mrs Broadbent tells her daughter in England about the amusements arranged in Jamaica and she mentions shopping as an enjoyable activity. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *shopping*, defined as ‘the action of visiting a shop or shops for the purpose of making purchases or examining the goods exposed for sale’ was used for the first time in the year 1764.<sup>472</sup> Some decades later, John Stewart describes this as a pastime that was much to the liking of the women on the island:

The ladies residing in the towns (particularly Kingston where there is generally something or other offered as an amusement) have greatly the advantage of their sisterhood of the country; as besides the variety of objects before them, they can occasionally relieve their tedium of existence with a *shopping*, that is a rummaging of every shop, without any intention, perhaps, of buying any thing, an *amusement* which females here are as partial to as those of the first fashion in the British metropolis.<sup>473</sup>

As the quote shows, there were, in Stewart’s view, other ways in which the women on the island may have passed their time, but they found shopping enjoyable and therefore wanted to spend time in the shops, without necessarily buying anything. This second quote echoes Mrs Broadbent’s words; both underline the fact that it was mostly the women on the island who went shopping. The notion of shopping as an activity that especially appealed to women was common at the time and the increase in goods in the early modern era has been said to empower women. According to Amanda Vickery, genteel women found shopping to be something that was most effectively taken care of by themselves. Husbands were not expected to interfere with the daily organisation of household consumption, but it is likely that they had the final say about extraordinary purchases and things that were more expensive. Therefore, they too in many cases had the necessary knowledge concerning the latest trends in fashion.<sup>474</sup>

After his arrival in Jamaica in 1765, Lowbridge Bright of the Bright-Meylers rented a store in Kingston for £140. He listed a variety of goods among the things that he thought would sell in the store: foodstuffs

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<sup>472</sup> Oxford English Dictionary [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [12.4. 2015]

<sup>473</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 192–193.

<sup>474</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 166–167.

such as bacon, ale and cheese, but also clothes for slaves and various other fabric goods. He worried a lot about the location of the store. His desire was to have one in Port Royal Street, but the only spaces that were available were at the west end of the street, a place that he thought too far away and therefore bad for business (image 10). In addition to the expenses for the rent, he hired a well-connected Jew to help him in the store for the sum of £75 and later he hired a few slaves. He found these expenses to be heavy but unavoidable, and would therefore try to keep his other costs down by sleeping in the store and eating in town, a practice that was common among the clerks sent out to the West Indies.<sup>475</sup>

John Stewart has given one of the few extant descriptions of the inside of a Jamaican store at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He describes the setting and the doings in the store in the following manner:

The retail store-keeper's shop, or store, as it is called, contains a strange medley of all sorts of articles. In one part of it may be a customer bargaining for a cheese, a ham, a pound of tea, or a dozen of wine or porter; in another, a gentleman may be fitting himself with a pair of boots or a hat, or cheapening a saddle; while a party of ladies, elsewhere, are trying on bonnets, gloves, &c. selecting ribbons, laces, and other fancy articles, or culling some valuable articles of jewellery.<sup>476</sup>

This account reveals that there was plenty of activity in the Jamaican stores around the year 1800. The customers, both male and female, amused themselves with examining the supply, disputing the prices and examining the latest fashions. The shop described above seems not to have specialised in a particular type of goods, which was the direction that shops in Britain took at the time, but rather to be able to please most types of customer.<sup>477</sup> Many of the commodities for sale mentioned in the description do also fit the definition of semi-luxuries. They were new, of good quality but not so expensive that only the wealthiest in society could afford them. Semi-luxuries were the result of imported raw materials from the colonies, technological development and British manufacturing and they were often styled and intended for a refined way of life.<sup>478</sup>

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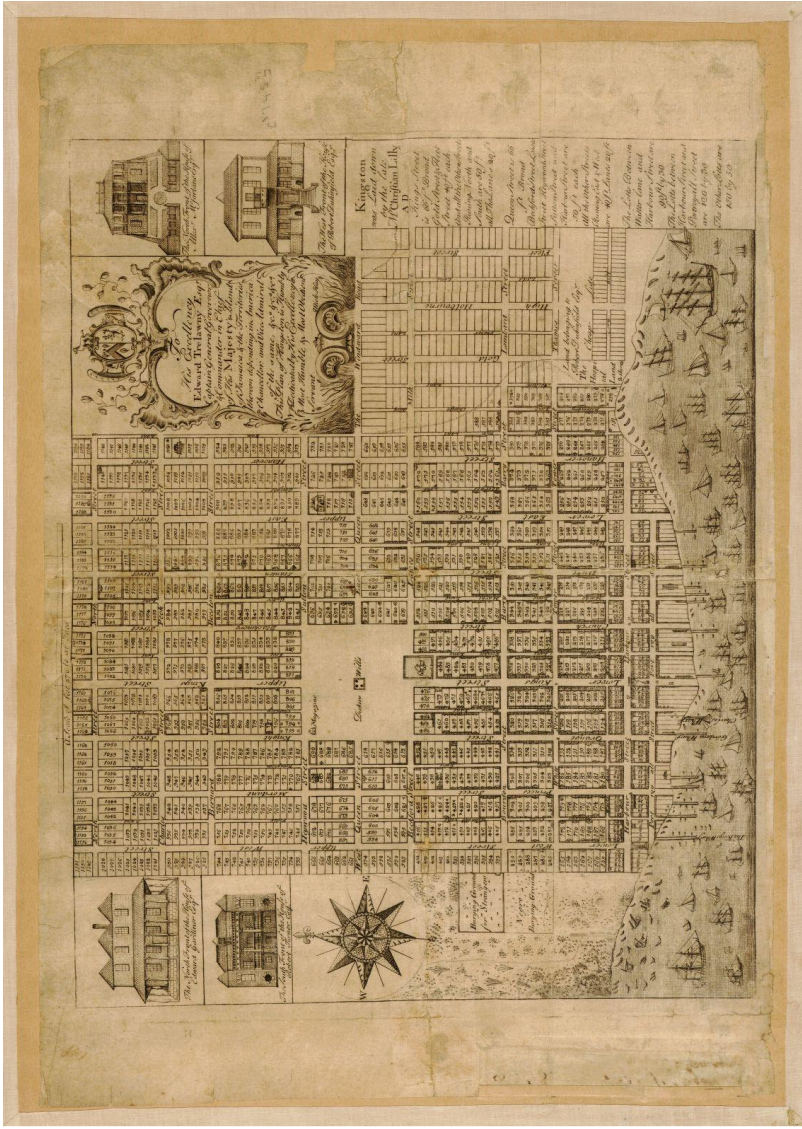
<sup>475</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated July 6, 1765, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 395.

<sup>476</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 199–200.

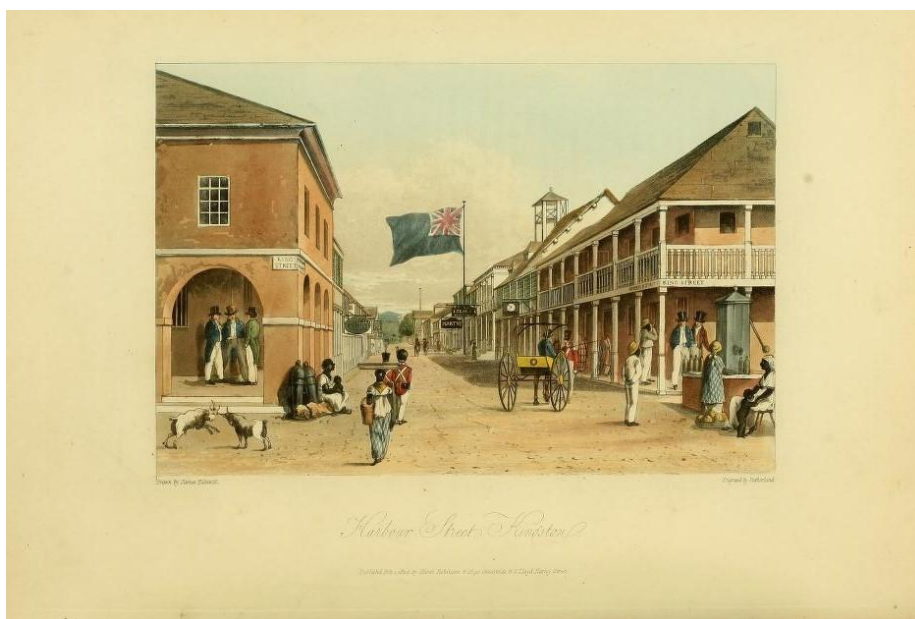
<sup>477</sup> Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 14.

<sup>478</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 7, 19–20.

Image 10: Michael Hay, Plan of Kingston (Kingston 1745?). The most important shopping streets of late eighteenth-century Jamaica can be seen on the lower half of the map. Harbour Street is the second street from the bottom, King's Street is the seventh street from the left, a broad street leading to the open square in the middle of the map, Source: Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.



The goods for sale in the Jamaican stores came from various parts of the world. Patrick Browne's contemporary account includes a compilation of the ships that came to Jamaica in the year 1752, as well as their cargoes. According to this list, the majority of the ships arrived in Jamaica directly from different ports in England, but there were also ships from Ireland and Africa. The ships from Britain mainly provided the storekeepers with a supply of dry and manufactured goods, but also mahogany, cotton and wines came to the island in this way. In addition, a large number of ships from North America came to Jamaica in the year in question. These were smaller than the ships from Europe, and according to Browne, they carried 'the most useful and the most necessary' goods. By means of these shipments, various foodstuffs, animals and building materials such as planks and bricks ended up for sale in Jamaica.<sup>479</sup>



*Image 11: Harbour Street, Kingston. The illustration shows one of the most popular shopping streets in Kingston. Source: James Hakewill, A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica, London, Hurst and Robinson, 1825, p. 28.*

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<sup>479</sup> Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, p. 19–20.

One of the Hakewill's illustrations (image 11) shows the crossing of King's Street and Harbour Street in Kingston. These were two of the most important streets on the island if one wanted to make purchases of imported goods.<sup>480</sup> In the image, the roads seem not to be paved with stones, but rather covered with sand. Two-storeyed houses are lined up next to the streets, with covered galleries around providing shade and protection against the sun. Many of the houses are carrying signs suggesting some kind of businesses. According to the captions, these are stores, a tavern and place for public entertainment. In an age when literacy was rare, signs such as these ones were valuable aids in directing customers to the right places.<sup>481</sup> There are a number of people in Hakewill's illustration; some of them seem to be spending time in the street, while others are purposefully on their way somewhere. The white persons are all men, some of them dressed in light coloured trousers and black jackets, wearing black high top hats. Others are wearing military uniform, pointing to the military presence in the town.<sup>482</sup>

Places of entertainment and shops were often built in the same areas during the eighteenth century.<sup>483</sup> The settlement in West Indian port towns had developed around the harbours, and at the minor shipping points the merchants had built their houses and stores nearby. In larger towns, such as Kingston, the streets were regularly laid out and the merchants lived further away from the shoreline.<sup>484</sup> Here the areas for shopping and other forms of entertainment were clearly separated from other areas of the town.<sup>485</sup> Shopping and other forms of entertainment were similar in other ways as well. The theatre, assembly halls, shops and other arenas of commercialised leisure brought the rural gentry and urban elite of tradesmen and professionals together in the same setting. Lady Nugent mentions shopping as a leisure activity on a few occasions. During her stay in Jamaica she spent a day shopping in Kingston and an afternoon 'a-shopping with the ladies' in Montego Bay. On this latter occasion, she notes that 'all the shop-keepers wives shook hands with the ladies of my

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<sup>480</sup> Edward E. Crain, *Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1994, p. 15.

<sup>481</sup> Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 53.

<sup>482</sup> Craton, 'Reluctant Creoles', p. 326.

<sup>483</sup> Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making', p. 154.

<sup>484</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 137.

<sup>485</sup> Hamilton, *Studies in Imperialism*, p. 41; Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, p. 279–280, 307.

party, and appeared perfectly on a footing with them'.<sup>486</sup> This shows the familiarity amongst the small group of white people on the island.

According to historian Clare Walsh, the conversations engaged in during shopping expeditions were as important as the actual buying of things. The consumers' social network influenced their thinking about goods, and this network was in turn part of a broader cultural and social framework.<sup>487</sup> For the colonial storekeepers, the consumer's level of knowledge about possible purchases, materials and desired cuts could at times be a cause of anxiety. If the customers were well aware of the latest changes in fashion, they could easily discern whether or not the items for sale met their criteria. Therefore, the storekeepers had to keep a wide range of goods of varying quality for sale, as well as a stock of basic goods of items that customers often bought, such as ironware.<sup>488</sup> The making of purchases and the relationship between consumers and merchants has been examined in a number of recent studies on consumption during the eighteenth century. Ann Smart Martin sums up the development that took place in the stores at the time. According to her, merchants increasingly had to pay attention to the display of items and make sure that the goods for sale were fashionable. At the same time, they had to create a milieu that spurred consumption and made the customers want to spend even more money.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 120.

<sup>487</sup> Walsh, 'Shops, Shopping and the Art of Decision Making', p. 154; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 243.

<sup>488</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, p. 131.

<sup>489</sup> Martin, *Buying Into the World of Goods*, p. 146.

## REPOSITORY

*For the most extensive and elegant Assortment of*

Linen-Drapery, Woolen-Drapery, Manchester Cottons, Haberdashery, Hosiery, Shoes, Hats, Gloves, Saddlery, Jewellery, Silver and Double-Plated Articles, Hardware, Cutlery, Ironmongery, Mahogany - Furniture, Glass, China, and Queen's Ware, Stationary, Musical-Instruments, Perfumery, Drugs, Groceries, Preserved Fruits, Pickles, Oils, Yorkshire Hams, &c.

**Charles Forbes,**

**H**AS for Sale, on a reasonable Advance, at his STORES in *Kingston* and *Spanish-Town*, very late Importations of the above

**MERCHANDIZE,**

Selected from the most approved MANUFACTORIES in ENGLAND.

N. B. To enumerate the variety of Articles comprised in said Cargoes would far exceed the limits of an Advertisement; suffice it to remark, his Assortment is so general, that Catalogues specifying the particulars, are given at said Stores.

**ib ALSO ON SALE,**

For CASH, or PRODUCE the ensuing Crop, Very choice LONDON PARTICULAR

**MADEIRA WINE,**

At SIXTY POUNDS *Currency the Pipe.*

LONDON MARKET WINE,

OF THE FIRST GROWTH,

At FIFTY-FIVE POUNDS *Currency the Pipe.*

And lesser Quantities, in HOGSHEADS, or QUARTER CASKS, at an equal proportion.

*Image 12: Daily Advertiser, January 4, 1790. An advertisement for a store on the island, having numerous imported, fashionable items for sale. Newspaper advertisements, fashion magazines and other printed material helped to spread the word about current taste and fashion. Source: British Library Newspapers.*

The growth in the British economy had been visible from the closing years of the seventeenth century. Initially, the old handicraft industries did their best to meet the growing demand, but soon it was clear that they could not deliver all the desired items. At that point venture capitalists and eager



merchants stepped in and new modes of production and improved sales techniques soon increased the volume of trade even further.<sup>490</sup> During the eighteenth century, with the diversification of items available, consumption became a question of making choices, of choosing one item over others from a wide array of goods.<sup>491</sup> The advertisement above illustrates the number of alternatives an eighteenth-century consumer met with when wanting to make a purchase (image 12). Researchers have provided us with several explanations for the diversification of consumer items. In the eighteenth century, consumers became increasingly interested in refinement and politeness, but also more aware of personal hygiene and comfort, creating demand for more items.<sup>492</sup> Changes in patterns, trimmings and colours were also all potential ways of producing variety of choice for the consumers. One example of such an innovation by British manufacturers was the creation and marketing of gender-specific furniture.<sup>493</sup> In order to enhance their sales, the traders often underlined both variety and novelty in their advertisements and displays. By advertising and publishing long lists of items for sale, the merchants disseminated information about their supplies.<sup>494</sup> Fashion dolls (see image 13) were a more visual, three-dimensional way of spreading information about fashion. These dolls of varying sizes, made of wood, cloth or wax and dressed in fashionable clothing could be used to demonstrate the latest trends in fashion on an international market.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> Timothy H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth century', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 449; Cary Carson, 'The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?', in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds), *Of Consuming Interest: the Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1994, p. 488.

<sup>491</sup> Breen, "'Baubles of Britain'", p. 252.

<sup>492</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 150.

<sup>493</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Fashion Difference in Georgian England: Furniture for Him and for Her', in Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500–1800*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 342.

<sup>494</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 87.

<sup>495</sup> Stearns, *Consumerism in World History*, p. 17; Cecilie Stöger Nachman, 'The Queen of Denmark: an English Fashion Doll and its Connections to the Nordic Countries', in Tove Engelhardt Mathiassen, Marie-Louise Nosch, Maj Ringgaard, Kirsten Toftegaard and Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (eds), *Fashionable Encounters: Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, p. 135.



*Image 13: Fashion doll, England, 1755–1760. By studying British fashion dolls, the inhabitants of the colonies became aware of the latest changes in fashion. Source: Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

Giving expression to the variations in quality of fabrics and other items was a way for the storekeepers to arouse the demand of the consumers by keeping them informed of the available distinctions. By printing information about available colours and patterns, various weaves, textures and qualities, the sellers hoped to charm a broad range of consumers, from those with only a little money to spare to the wealthy

elite with plenty of spending money.<sup>496</sup> However, as will be discussed later on in relation to consumption by proxies, neither the information about possible options, nor the conversation about current fashion took place only in the shops and advertising copy, but also in the letters that crossed the Atlantic.

### **3.6 Conclusions: places of consumption and costly entertainment**

Let us return to where we began, to an old man reminiscing about the good times that he experienced during his stay in Jamaica. In his memoirs, William Hickey depicted the island, or at least the town of Kingston, as a place of much amusement for a leisured man at the end of the eighteenth century. Many of his chosen pastimes were such that would have attracted a polite crowd in Europe as well. Eighteenth-century travel journals, diaries and letters show that there were a number of amusements on offer on the island, such as dinners, plays, exhibitions and balls. However, their frequency seems to have varied from one time to another. For example, the theatres were greatly dependent on itinerant companies, who visited the island irregularly, making this form of entertainment periodical. The sessions of the Jamaican Assembly brought its members into Spanish Town together with their families who were eager to visit friends and attend balls and dinners. However, for the greatest part of the year, the Assembly was not in session, and the planters and their families were at home on their plantations in the countryside.

Outside of the towns, the planters and their families came together on each other's plantations. During the eighteenth century hospitality was highly regarded among the white inhabitants of the island to a degree where absent planters ordered that guests and visitors should be received and entertained even though they were not there. Expressions of hospitality involved supplying the guest with lavish dinners during their stay and lending them well-rested horses for transportation. During these visits, the planters and their guests shared news about various topics relating to local as well as global events, something that strengthened their relationship. My analysis shows, that the hosts often invited visitors from

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<sup>496</sup> Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion*, p. 19.

Europe to these gatherings, hoping that the newcomers would bring news from overseas. This desire for information from Europe underlines the link between the colony and the mother country. The Englishmen of Jamaica were not only interested in finding out about the latest developments in politics, but also information about the changes in fashion and matters concerning common acquaintances was of interest.

Previous studies have underlined the way that planters used hospitality in the colonies to display their wealth and status. This was also something that was picked up on by the printer William Holland, whose caricature of a nicely-dressed couple on their way to pay a visit was discussed in this chapter. The caricature touched upon several of the subjects discussed in this chapter. From the perspective of conspicuous consumption, the importance of an audience has been highlighted. Events such as performances at the theatre, dinners, balls, and shopping brought together people from different ranks of society and gave them an opportunity to mingle with their peers and those of higher social standing. The intermingling of people of different social standings offered good opportunities for display and emulation of the latest trends and fashions. In early nineteenth-century Jamaica the Governor's wife, Lady Nugent, seems to have been especially under scrutiny during public events. As a member of the absolute elite on the island, it was her duty to show herself at these events and perhaps give them a hint of metropolitan glamour. My analysis of her descriptions of her role at dinners and balls shows that she was well aware of these expectations, and, at least according to her own account, did her best to meet them. During public events such as balls, the wives' role was in general important, as they were not only attending for their own enjoyment, but also to demonstrate their family's worth and respectability. Knowledge about the latest fashions was an important part of this display and I have argued that is against this background that we should understand the eagerness of the white inhabitants in eighteenth-century Jamaica to receive their shipments of fashionable clothes from England in good time. Based on my analysis of the sources, I would argue that for many of the Britons on the island, image was everything when it came to dress. The warm climate and natural disasters continually troubled the inhabitants on the island, making the gathering for amusements more difficult. Also, when they did meet, the desire to dress in a way that was not adapted to the climate put many restraints on the participants, making them feel over warm and uncomfortable.

In addition to visiting public amusements or intermingling in the homes of other planters, the white inhabitants met in the stores on the island. The larger towns on the island boasted stores with an abundance of imported items. The local storekeepers advertised a wide array of goods in the local newspapers, selling as they were everything from books and other printed matters, to fashionable textiles and pieces of ready-made clothing, as well as foodstuffs.

The fashionable customers gathered in these stores to buy items and to discuss their purchases with the storekeeper and each other. In this way, the white inhabitants of eighteenth-century Jamaica with money to spend were informed about changes in fashion and possible purchases that they could make.

## 4 Houses and apparel as signs of an expensive lifestyle

In his widely-read work on Jamaica, the eighteenth-century historian Edward Long described the ambitions and dreams of the West Indian planters. Long wrote that once having spent money on the establishment and running of the plantation, these men if they had any money left, desired 'more than the conveniences in life'.<sup>497</sup> This statement echoes one made by the contemporary travel writer Patrick Browne about the West Indian planters being 'remarkably fond of grandeur and distinction'<sup>498</sup> and gives rise to a number of questions. What kinds of items were included in this strong wish for abundance among the white settlers in Jamaica? Of what did the splendour of the white settlers consist? According to Edward Long's detailed account, the superfluities desired by the planters on the island comprised three groups related to everyday life: transportation, clothing and food. Long mentions a craving for

[---] chaises, coaches, chariots and the like, together with all sorts of wearing apparel, but chiefly of the finest and costliest fabric [---] provisions such as cheese, hams, bacon, tongues, salmon, onions, refined sugars, confectionary and grocery wares, spices, pickles, beer, porter, ale and cyder, in vast quantities; and flour, and biscuits, when they are cheap.<sup>499</sup>

Patrick Browne did not go into the same level of detail in his account, but notes that the planters and others on a similar economic level in the West Indies live in affluence, spending money on buildings, furniture, clothes and food to a degree that at times caused them substantial debts. This situation was aggravated by the instability that dominated the West Indian money supply, as the planters were dependant on the crops that were produced on their plantations.<sup>500</sup> However, generally speaking the

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<sup>497</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, p. 492.

<sup>498</sup> Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, p. 21.

<sup>499</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, p. 492–493.

<sup>500</sup> Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, p. 21.

planters in Jamaica were, in Browne's opinion, not only 'men of good taste' but also of 'as much learning as and as well acquainted with the world, as may be met with in any part of Europe'.<sup>501</sup>

This present chapter is an attempt to take a closer look at the things ranking above convenience for the planters and elaborate on the reasons behind the white inhabitants' fashionable consumption, their interest in splendour of appearance and signs of distinction between different ranks in society. The chapter is not a study of the material culture of settlers in Jamaica per se, as others have previously studied the topic, e.g. Douglas F. Mann in his doctoral dissertation on material culture in Kingston.<sup>502</sup> Instead, the chapter draws on a range of sources where attitudes towards different goods can be detected. Newspapers, diaries and letters are analysed in order to show how the white settlers in Jamaica used their possessions as markers of gentility. In this, the chapter has two objectives, important in answering the main questions of this thesis. The first objective is to discuss different types of commodities that the white settlers linked to status, starting with the interior of houses and moving on to foodstuffs and connected household utensils and appearance. These items were all part of an increase in worldwide trade during the eighteenth century, but they were also connected to gentility. The second objective is to examine the role of fashion in relation to these items and if and how distinction among the white settlers was created by differences in quality and appearance of the items that they owned or used.

## 4.1 Homes for show

In the contemporary travel writer Patrick Browne's opinion, this lavish behaviour of the planters and others of similar social standing in the West Indies was necessitated by their attempt to mark the difference between themselves and people of lower rank.<sup>503</sup> In an eighteenth-century context, the idea of one's consumption needing to reflect one's standing in society was far from new. Sumptuary laws, aiming at the regulation of consumption, were already in place during Antiquity in order to ensure that different ranks in society would not dress in a manner that was

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<sup>501</sup> Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, p. 22.

<sup>502</sup> Mann, *Becoming Creole*.

<sup>503</sup> Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*, p. 22.

considered above their standing. In Britain, where these laws were only applied to apparel made of silk or fur, the sumptuary legislation had been more or less forgotten by the end of the sixteenth century, but people did not instantly change their behaviour. In the British colonies, the sumptuary laws were retained, although there too it became hard to enforce them in the end.<sup>504</sup> It has been argued that during the eighteenth century, the sumptuary laws took on a new form as widely-read etiquette books replaced them as guidelines as to what to wear and how to behave at certain levels in society.<sup>505</sup> The authors of the conduct literature had both the individual and the society in mind, describing an ideal world. Still the courtesy books mostly dealt with behaviour in formal entertainment situations such as dinners and balls, situations where the display of refinement and fashionableness came to a head rather than clothing.<sup>506</sup>

The changes in consumer behaviour in the eighteenth century in Britain and the British colonies at large, is visible in satirical caricatures from that day. The caricaturists depicted the irrationalities of those that they saw as social climbers, or made fun of the latest changes in fashion.<sup>507</sup> The satirical caricature shown below, made by the signature 'Monogrammist JF' and printed by William Holland, can be seen as a criticism of much of this luxury and lavish lifestyle (image 14). All the small pictures show a white inhabitant on the island lazing around, starting on the top left with a 'West India Nabob' resting on a sofa with his feet put up on two chairs, surrounded by a group of people. Most of these are black, probably slaves, but a few white women are also present. During the eighteenth century, the word 'nabob' was used to describe a wealthy person with a conspicuous way of life, who had earned his fortune in the colonies. Commonly, British colonists in India were referred to as nabobs, and like the West Indian colonists, they often sought to make

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<sup>504</sup> Buckridge, *The Language of Dress*, p. 31; Michael J. Braddick, 'Civility and Authority', in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic World 1500–1800*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 95.

<sup>505</sup> Marcia Pointon, 'Women and their Jewels', in Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Women and Material Culture 1660–1830*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 12; Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 343, Peck, *Consuming Splendor*, p. 6, 10; Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, p. 63.

<sup>506</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 109.

<sup>507</sup> Donald, *The Age of Caricature*, p. 79, 98–99; Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 80–83.



a swift exit with a fortune.<sup>508</sup> In Britain, the nabobs were met with suspicion and ridiculed as they tried to improve their social standing with the help of the money earned abroad. The image in the middle of the top row has a dialogue further underlining the laziness of the white creole women. Under the heading of “creolean pastimes” a white woman can be seen instructing a house slave to tell another slave to come and pick up a needle that she has dropped on the floor. However, it turns out that the slave in question has gone to the market, and will not be back for several hours. Instead of picking up the dropped needle herself, the creole woman is then lamenting the fact that she has to wait for three hours before she can continue with her handiwork. The same kind of excessive idleness is expressed in the small image to the right in the top row, where a woman is looking out through a window and ordering a slave standing nearby to come and help her get her head back in. The two images in the lower row shows a planter being taken care of by his slaves, to the left a group of male house slaves are helping him getting his shoes off, to the right he is being pampered by a group of women, getting his feet washed and hair done.

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<sup>508</sup> Oxford English Dictionary online [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [14.4. 2015]; Renu Juneja, ‘The Native and the Nabob: Representations of the Indian Experience in Eighteenth-Century English Literature,’ *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1992, p. 184.

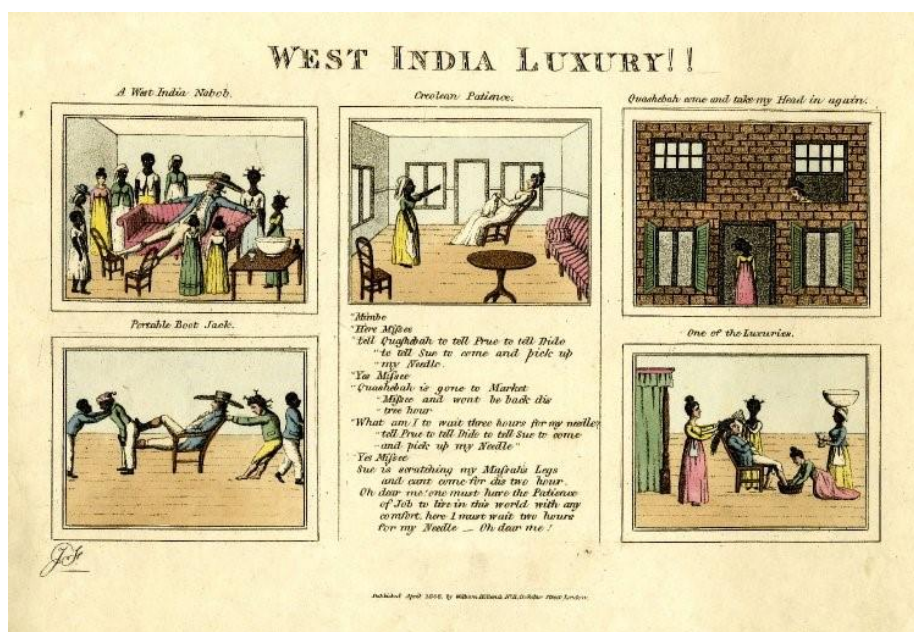


Image 14: A print entitled *West India Luxury!!* produced by Monogrammist JF, printed by William Holland (London 1808). The satirical caricature depicts several scenes where the laziness and luxury of the colonist are criticised. Source: The British Museum, London.

In the caricature the lazy colonists are all depicted indoors. In the following, I am discussing West Indian luxury in relation to houses and homes. As people were judged based on manners and possessions, houses, furnishings and furniture became of increasing importance as markers of refinement.<sup>509</sup>

While elaborating on the topic of luxury consumption, Thorstein Veblen, asserted that a knowledge of, and good taste in, architecture was one way for 'the leisured man' to distinguish himself from his peers.<sup>510</sup> During the eighteenth century, the way that people thought about houses changed. Prior to the eighteenth century, most rooms had been

<sup>509</sup> Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings*, London, Routledge, 2005, p. 77–78; Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, p. 146; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 320; Sweeney, *High-Style Vernacular*, p. 5, 12; Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade*, p. 307.

<sup>510</sup> Veblen, *Den arbetsfria klassen*, p. 49.

multifunctional, but now this arrangement had to give way to a situation where individual rooms were dedicated to specific usages. In fashionable homes, rooms where guests could be entertained became the new centres of action. Some scholars have portrayed these changes of the interiors of homes as a divide between public and private, but the rearrangement has also been described as one between committing some rooms for the recreation of the closest family members, and others primarily for display.<sup>511</sup> According to the historian Raffaella Sarti, the rearrangement of homes had an effect not only on how various rooms were used, but also on the relationship between the inhabitants and the guests that were invited to their homes. For those running the household, this new way of structuring meant that they had to rethink the meanings that various rooms of the house conveyed. Attention had also to be paid to how this meaning was perceived by possible visitors.<sup>512</sup> The historian Margaret Ponsonby has suggested that this process of rearrangement was more complex than just a question of comparing yourself to your neighbours, as factors such as the background, profession and desires on the part of the owners to advance in society affected the way that they altered their houses.<sup>513</sup> As people were judged on the basis of manners and possessions, houses, furnishings and furniture came to be of increasing importance as markers of refinement.<sup>514</sup> Houses went from merely offering a place to eat, sleep, and be protected from the rain, wind and sun to being places of performance.<sup>515</sup> In addition, the French historian Daniel Roche has shown how furniture can tell us about a society, not only in terms of how pieces of furniture were used, but also about the associated culture and customs. He charts the progress of tables as places of social situations, not merely

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<sup>511</sup> Styles and Vickery, 'Introduction', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p.10.

<sup>512</sup> Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home: English Domestic Interiors 1750–1850*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, p. 13; Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500–1800*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, p. 138–139.

<sup>513</sup> Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, p. 2.

<sup>514</sup> Clive Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes: A History of the Retailing and Consumption of Domestic Furnishings*, London, Routledge, 2005, p. 77–78; Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, p. 146; Hancock, *Citizens of the World* p. 320; Sweeney, 'High-Style Vernacular', p. 5, 12; Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade*, p. 307.

<sup>515</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 132.

places for eating, and of bedrooms with beds as opposed to shared rooms, and individual seats as opposed to benches as examples.<sup>516</sup>

### *Physical comfort*

Lady Nugent made a hasty note in her diary in April 1802 after a visit to Bryant Hall, a great house that had once been the residence of the historian Bryan Edwards. At the time of the visit, it was the home of a Mr and Mrs Galloway, he being of the magistracy of Trelawney. Lady Nugent found the house 'a good one, and tolerably well furnished' but the thing that especially stood out to her, in addition to the beautiful surroundings, was a Turkish carpet, that she called 'an extraordinary sight in this country'.<sup>517</sup> This is just one of the many records in her diary where she makes a remark about her surroundings: the interior of a house she visited, the dress of people that she met, or the food that she was served during the grand dinners on the island. Unfortunately, the diary does not reveal more details about this specific home and its furnishings, but from her other account we know that some of the inhabitants on the island refurnished their homes in advance of a visit by such distinguished guests. A visit from the Governor and his wife was a perfect opportunity to display one's knowledge about a polite and refined way of life.

During the eighteenth century, homes were used as markers of the family's refinement and an outward manifestation that the owners understood the importance of politeness.<sup>518</sup> Based on the writings of contemporary commentators in the West Indies, it seems that there were some variations between how the wealthy inhabitants of the colonies thought about their homes. Either they would spend large sums of money on their house, building something similar to a British manor, or they would invest most of the profit in maintenance of their plantations, leaving less money for the building of a fashionable house.<sup>519</sup> Establishing and keeping a sugar plantation required a lot of money. The planter not only had to buy suitable land, but also build mills and boiling houses

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<sup>516</sup> Roche, *A History of Everyday Things*, p. 174–175.

<sup>517</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 112.

<sup>518</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 251; Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 78–79.

<sup>519</sup> Marsden, *An Account of the Island of Jamaica with Reflections*, p. 8.; Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 185; Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 22; Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies*, vol. 2 p. 9–10.

where the crops would be processed, as well as finance the labourers. For a planter with small economic means the building up of a workforce was a long and slow process. He often had to reinvest the profit from the year before into the plantation.<sup>520</sup> In such cases little, or no, resources that could be spent on conspicuous consumption were left.

A duality in the living accommodations of the wealthy white inhabitants in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica is in many instances visible in the sources. The contemporary narrator John Stewart described in his account the 'wretched intermixture of handsome and spacious houses with vile hovels and disgraceful sheds' that made up the scenery in the towns on the island during his years of residence there.<sup>521</sup> Similarly, Edward Long mentioned that it was only during the second half of the eighteenth century that the planters had become interested in building elegant houses and spending money on decorating them according to the latest fashion. In his opinion, many of the settlers had previously made do with quickly erected sheds as places in which to live; huts that at times were so bad that they were harmful to their health.<sup>522</sup> These temporary early buildings can be contrasted with some of the finer houses described by Stewart, consisting of numerous rooms; 'a large hall, sometimes a recess as a sitting-room, or boudoir, a pantry, a closet and bed-rooms'.<sup>523</sup> These houses often had a kitchen in a separate building, an arrangement based on a desire to minimise the risk of fire and avoid the discomfort caused by fumes and smoke.<sup>524</sup>

The notion of physical comfort became increasingly important in the discussion on the living environment during the eighteenth century.<sup>525</sup> People began commenting on darkness and light. In Jamaica the storekeepers in the local stores sold candles of various qualities and sizes, made of either tallow or wax.<sup>526</sup> The Bright-Meyler venture exported

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<sup>520</sup> Burnard, *Master, Tyranny, Desire*, 2004, p. 64; Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, p. 42; Price, 'Credit in the Slave Trade', p. 294.

<sup>521</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 14.

<sup>522</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 22.

<sup>523</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 14.

<sup>524</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 14; Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>525</sup> Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, p. x.

<sup>526</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 69, March 1780, Bodleian Library.

candles to the island, among their other goods.<sup>527</sup> Tallow candles were cheap, but they burnt unevenly and left a smell. They were also affected by the warm climate of the West Indies, and their melting properties made them difficult to use. Therefore, candles made of wax were preferred, even if they were more expensive and by many regarded as luxury items. In the previously-discussed satirical caricatures printed by William Holland, light is provided by candleholders of a fair size attached to the walls, as well as candelabras (see image 6 and 9). As with many of the other consumer items of the time, candles came with numerous items of paraphernalia. Expensive wax candles necessitated storage boxes, with keys carefully kept by the housekeeper in a safe place.<sup>528</sup> Storekeepers on the island also offered a wide range of candlesticks. Their popularity was partly also due to the importance of the setting and the attractiveness of amusements that took place late in the evening.<sup>529</sup> In the inventory of Francis Bright, one of the clerks of the Bright-Meyler family, who died in 1755, '1 pair silver candlestick snuffers & stand' is mentioned, valued at the price of £28 and eighteen and a half shillings. After an English horse, valued at a little over £48, the candlesticks were his most valuable asset.<sup>530</sup> At times, Lady Nugent mentions in her journal that she has dressed by candlelight. The fact that she mentions this suggests that the action was something out of the ordinary, that she usually did not need artificial light at the time of getting dressed. On another occasion, she mentions that it was impossible to read at night, as so many insects were drawn to the candles in her room, despite the large glass covers, and so she put them out.<sup>531</sup>

The notion of comfort extended to the climate in the West Indies as well. As was previously discussed in relation to the dangers on the island

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<sup>527</sup> Henry Bright, Kingston, to Richard Meyler II, Bristol, letter dated July 30, 1743, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 181–182; 205, 213, 265.

<sup>528</sup> Lisa White, 'The Impact of Historic Lightning', in Michael Forsyth and Lisa White (eds), *Interior Finishes and Fittings for Historic Building Conservation*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 145–147; Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers, and Jamaica, with the Natural History of the Herbs and the Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &c.*, London, printed by B. M. for the author, 1707, vol. 1. p. x.

<sup>529</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 311.

<sup>530</sup> Inventory of Francis Bright, returned 9 July 1755, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 319.

<sup>531</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 32, 84.

as well as the amusements, the tropics were seen by many Britons as a dangerous place, as they were unaccustomed to the warm and humid climate. The heat and humidity was thought harmful and was best to be avoided if possible. Studies on eighteenth-century architecture in the West Indies show that even if the risks of earthquakes or heavy storms caused some to reject multiple storeys on their houses, over time this type of house became the most desired. Therefore, many planters built houses with more than one floor, embellished with framed glass windows, even if these buildings were not suited for the climate and conditions of the West Indies.<sup>532</sup> This, in turn had consequences for the comfort of the inhabitants. William Hickey reminisces in his memoirs that during his time in the West Indies he took part in a dinner at which he was greatly disturbed by the heat in the room which was partly caused by the closed glass windows.<sup>533</sup> It seems that, at least in that case, the stylishness of the house was more important than practicality.

During the eighteenth century, physicians increasingly acknowledged the importance of fresh air for public health. Doctors often recommended resorting to country estates for medical reasons, as these were thought to increase ones chances of surviving the climate:

Governors, newly arrived at Jamaica, of whom many have died soon after their landing or any other gentlemen who can afford to keep a horse or carriage after doing business at Spanish Town or Kingston might before sunset return to such a healthy and pleasant country seat as is here recommended taking precaution of never sleeping elsewhere during a sickly season.<sup>534</sup>

In previous centuries, the aim had been to try to block outside air from entering the house, but during the early decades of the eighteenth century inventors starting experimenting with artificial ventilation.<sup>535</sup> Especially in the sailing and mining industries there was a desire to get rid of bad air

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<sup>532</sup> Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*, p. 251–252; William James Gardner, *History of Jamaica: From its Discovery by Christopher Columbus to the year 1872*, London, Elliot Stock, 1873; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, p. 127; Crain, *Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands*, p. 74, 98; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 122.

<sup>533</sup> Hickey, 'Memoirs', vol. 2, p. 20–21.

<sup>534</sup> Lind, *An Essay on Diseases Incidental to Europeans in Hot Climates*, p. 226.

<sup>535</sup> Bill Addis, *Building: 3000 Years of Design Engineering and Construction*, London, Phaidon Press, reprinted edition, 2007, p. 215.

and within these areas several attempts at inventing machines that could give some relief were made.<sup>536</sup> In general, product innovation and the advance of new technologies was an important aspect of the rapid development in consumer goods and luxuries in the eighteenth century. The invention of new products was spurred by the global contacts, as well as an improvement in technology that made their manufacturing easier.<sup>537</sup> For the inhabitants of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica one way to increase comfort might have been to buy 'White's air machine' a device that was advertised in the local newspapers. The price of this machine ranged from 10 to 34 guineas, depending on its size:

The machine is so constructed that it will occupy a very small space; and will have the appearance of a very ornamental furniture in any room or cabin. In the warmest seasons, and the most sultry climates it will infallibly afford cool refreshing air, a luxury of all others the most to be desired [---]. Noblemen and gentlemen will find its excellence in the application of it to their wines and fruit, which it will cool to any degree without any of the pernicious consequences which too frequently attend the injudicious use of ice [---].<sup>538</sup>

William White, the inventor of the 'air machine', was a resident of London. He was granted a patent for his invention in 1790. Originally, the machine had been designed to bring fresh air into coal mines, in an industry where the problem of foul air caused many deaths at the time. However, in the public discussion about the machine, other areas where the speedy clearing of unwholesome air could be used were also mentioned. White's air machine, which was said to be able to clear a room that was approximately 15 metres long, 6 metres wide and 3 metres high in only a few minutes, would consequently prove useful in hospitals and prisons as well as on board ships, places where ventilation was much needed. George Hamilton, who worked as a surgeon on board the ship *Pandora*, mentions the actual use of White's air machine on board a ship travelling around the world. However, it seems that at that time the use of the machine was not that successful, mainly due to the ship being too crowded, hindering

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<sup>536</sup> Arnold Zuckerman, 'Scurvy and the Ventilation of Ships in the Royal Navy: Samuel Sutton's Contribution', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1976–1977, p. 228–229.

<sup>537</sup> Berg, *Luxury & Pleasure*, p. 44–45.

<sup>538</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, issue 284, November 26, 1790.



the air from flowing freely.<sup>539</sup> In addition to the facility of cooling down air, another feature especially needed in the colonies was also suggested in the advertisements for the machine. In one of the letters sent to the Royal Humane Society advocating for the many uses of the machine, a former resident of the West Indian colonies suggests that in combination with a fragrance it could be used to kill or fend off mosquitoes and other insects, providing the inhabitants in the colonies with some much-desired relief.<sup>540</sup>

For those who could not afford, or access, the latest technology, there were other possibilities for reviving themselves. One option was to spend time on the shaded piazzas, or single-covered galleries outside of the houses.<sup>541</sup> Low-storeyed houses with piazzas became common in Jamaica during the latter part of the eighteenth century. These houses had windows and doors that could be closed for the night, to shield the inhabitants from the cooler evening air that in their minds was harmful to their health. The covered gallery outside the houses also offered protection from the sun. According to Edward Long's account, families spent the majority of their time out in the piazzas. Long described the leisured planter in the following way:

[---]nor can there be a more agreeable indulgence enjoyed by the master of the house, than to sit in an elbow-chair, with his feet resting against one of the piazza columns; in this attitude he converses, smokes his pipe, and quaffs his tea, in all the luxury of indolence.<sup>542</sup>

Additionally, these covered galleries were as good places as any to look out for people approaching the house. For that purpose, they were often equipped with spyglasses.<sup>543</sup> In her journal, Lady Nugent frequently mentions spending time or strolling in the piazzas of various houses, often

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<sup>539</sup> George Hamilton, *A Voyage Around the World, in His Majesty's Frigate Pandora. Performed Under the Direction of Captain Edwards in the Years 1790, 1791, and 1792...* Berwick, printed by W. Phorson, 1793, p. 11.

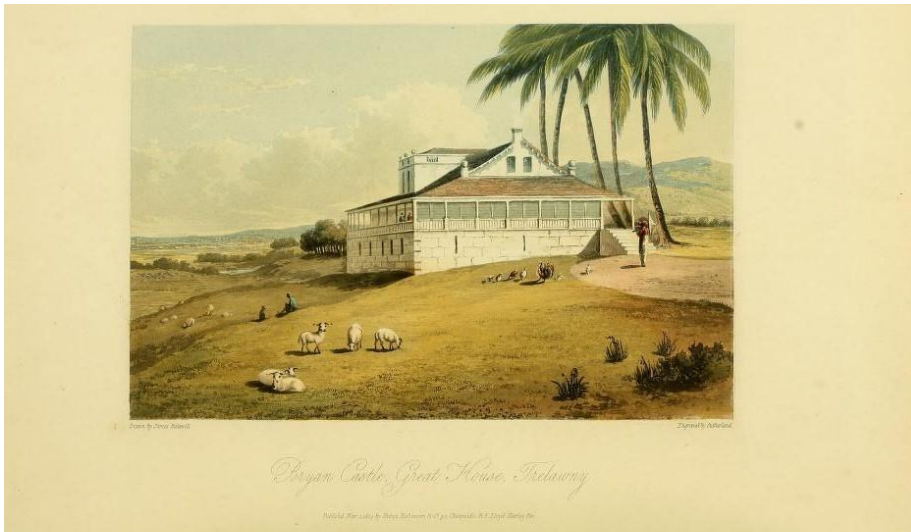
<sup>540</sup> William White, *Extracts from the Reports of the Royal Humane Society: With Certificates, Letters, &c. Which Fully Evince the Utility of an Air Machine Invented by Wm. White*, London, s.n., 1793, p. 6.

<sup>541</sup> Iain Jackson, 'Tropical Architecture and the West Indies: from Military Advances and Tropical Medicine to Robert Gardner-Medwin and the Networks of Tropical Modernism,' *The Journal of Architecture*, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 716.

<sup>542</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 21.

<sup>543</sup> Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 117.

early in the morning before the heat had become too troubling. Her notes support Edward Long’s opinion of the piazzas as places for social interaction and entertainment.<sup>544</sup> Several of the houses in James Hakewill’s illustrations depicting early nineteenth-century Jamaica have covered galleries. The best example is probably that of Bryan Castle Great House in Trelawny in the northwest of the island (see image 15). The picture shows a large, light-coloured house with a covered gallery around the two visible sides of the building. Two men are standing on the piazza, perhaps seeking shade from the burning sun. On the road leading up to the house stands a man carrying an umbrella. The house is surrounded by an idyllic landscape, with numerous sheep grazing or resting on the grounds.<sup>545</sup> Similar to the other illustrations by Hakewill this too shows an idealised picture of life in the West Indies. Hakewill has focused on the house and the landscape, rather than showing the brutality of slavery, or the trouble caused by the climate and diseases, as William Holland for example did in the satirical caricature depicting Johnny Newcome in Jamaica.



*Image 15: Bryan Castle Great House, Trelawny. The house is surrounded by an open gallery, a place that functioned as an important space for recreation for the white inhabitants of late eighteenth-century Jamaica. Source: James Hakewill, A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica, London, London, Hurst and Robinson, 1825, p. 80.*

<sup>544</sup> Nugent, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, p. 150, 205, 212, 218, 220.

<sup>545</sup> Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour*, p. 80.

As with the houses of the gentry, the surroundings of the planters' establishments were increasingly paid attention to. Both public and private gardens were considered to be extensions of the rooms for indoor entertainments. In his account, the long-time resident of the island, John Stewart, was of the opinion that the principal towns on the island would benefit from public walks or gardens where the white inhabitants, especially the women, could promenade in the evenings. Due to the lack of gardens in the towns, the women usually rode around in carriages to avoid unwanted attention.<sup>546</sup>

Much of the inspiration for these gardens came from Italy, either through the work of landscape architects or because the aspiring gentlemen went on educational trips, so-called 'Grand Tours', in Europe. In the 1770s, a few botanical gardens had been established outside of the main towns. Originally, the aim of these gardens was to provide a site for sugar production and experiments with tropical and other plants, but they also became important places for the white inhabitants of the island to meet and mingle in. Lady Nugent visited the bathing house and garden in the village of Bath in the south west of Jamaica in the year 1802. After drinking the water at the spa and taking a refreshing bath, she made an excursion to the botanical garden nearby where she saw a number of trees and plants, 'all so new to an European eye'.<sup>547</sup> Another late eighteenth-century visitor to the well was Lord Adam Gordon, who tasted the water during his travels around the island. He found that the colonists used the water as medicine, to cure many disorders such as 'Rheumatick complaints'.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 125.

<sup>547</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 91–92; Joan Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda: Monuments and the Eighteenth Century British Empire*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press 2006, p. 250; Burnard, *Master, Tyranny, Desire*, p. 117–118.

<sup>548</sup> Gordon, 'Journal of an Officer's [Lord Adam Gordon's] Travels in America and the West Indies', p. 380.



*Image 16: The funeral monument of Thomas Hibbert, a wealthy inhabitant of eighteenth-century Jamaica. This was one of the monuments shipped to the island from Europe by the genteel inhabitants on the island. Source: James Hakewill, A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica, London, London, Hurst and Robinson, 1825, p. 46.*

The white colonists not only adorned their gardens with plants and flowers. In Jamaica, Sir Charles Price, a wealthy planter and speaker of the Assembly placed a classical obelisk in his garden, and one of the most influential merchants in Kingston, Thomas Hibbert had a Roman-style tombstone built on one of his plantations. The art historian Joan Coutru notes that in the eighteenth century the inhabitants in the colonies ordered most funeral monuments from Europe. Starting in the seventeenth century, funeral monuments were often commissioned by the heirs, rather than the deceased person. Their function was not only to commemorate the dead, but to display status and ancestry among the living as well. Towards the end of the century the wealthiest planters, but also persons of the lower social orders, such as doctors and attorneys, commissioned monuments. Inhabitants of Jamaica erected several of the most magnificent ones. As famous English sculptors made some of these monuments, it can be argued that there was willingness among the white

inhabitants of Jamaica to underline the cultural links between the island and Britain.<sup>549</sup> Also in other ways, the white inhabitants on the island used funerals as part of their strategy for displaying their wealth and fortune. As they dressed their dead in imported fine fabrics and placed them in coffins, they were not only saying their last farewells, but also showing off their wealth and ancestry to the lookers-on.<sup>550</sup> An illustration of the funeral monument of Thomas Hibbert from the beginning of the nineteenth century shows a well-dressed white gentleman pointing at the enormous tombstone (image 16). A black man is standing next to him holding a horse, and two dogs are playing at their feet. The size and location of the tombstone seems to make it visible from a long way off, which might have drawn spectators to it during their walks to take the air.<sup>551</sup> The illustration is taken from James Hakewill's *A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica*, and like the previously-discussed illustration by Hakewill, it gives its audience a rather idealised view of life on the island. There is a green, well-managed landscape and no signs of the terrible conditions that the slaves had to endure on the sugar plantations.

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<sup>549</sup> Coutu, *Persuasion and Propaganda*, p. 25–30; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, p. 5.

<sup>550</sup> Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, p. 81–83.

<sup>551</sup> James Hakewill, *A Picturesque Tour*, p. 43; Robertson, 'Eighteenth-century Jamaica's Ambivalent Cosmopolitanism', p. 610–611.

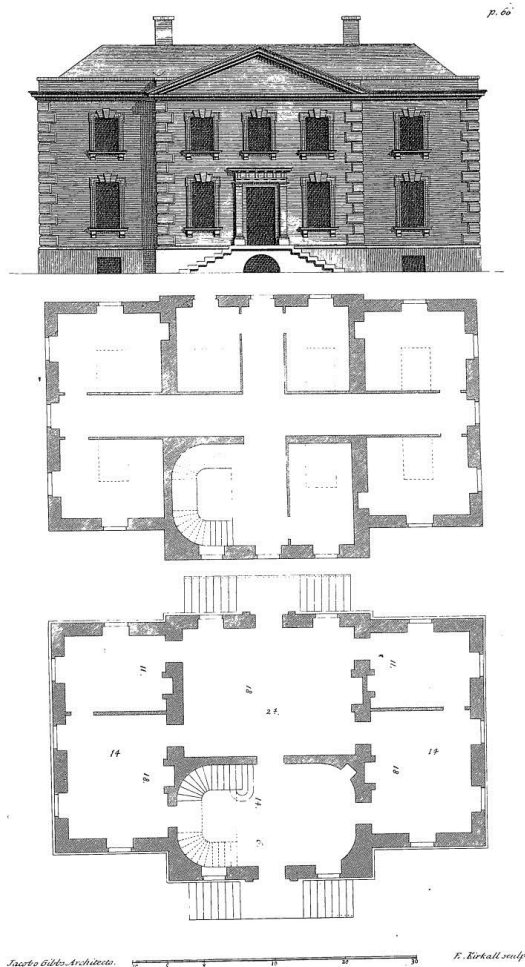


Image 17: One of the many floor plans designed by the architect James Gibbs. The image shows a great house with two stories and a large staircase. Source: James Gibbs: *A book of architecture, containing designs of buildings and ornaments*, London, s.n, 1728, p. 168.

In addition, the interiors of the houses went through changes in the eighteenth century. The connection between one's home and one's social status, and the way that the latter could be affected by changes in the former, were frequently discussed in contemporary books on architecture. For example, the eighteenth-century architect Isaac Ward, explained that

'There are apartments in which dignity, others in which neatness and others in which show are consulted'.<sup>552</sup> For the white settlers in Jamaica, architecture was also one way of maintaining ties to Britain. As with other areas of fashion, architecture spread to the West Indies and the colonies in general via pattern books. *A book of architecture* by James Gibbs, published in 1728, was one such book that became widely read in the colonies as well as at home and which provided guidance in a simple style for aspiring colonial gentlemen in decisions regarding design.<sup>553</sup> The book contains, among other illustrations, a number of floor plans depicting the way that the owner of a grand home should arrange the rooms of his or her house. The scheme of one such house (image 18) depicts the desired order of the rooms, with two large rooms on the ground floor suitable for entertaining guests.

With the restructuring of the homes of the polite, the saloon, or reception room became the new centre. The larger houses even had two rooms for entertaining guests; one that was the main reception room, and another, smaller one where the family could relax.<sup>554</sup> Edward Long notes that planters used decoration sparsely in their homes, except for mirrors, paintings, prints and maps.<sup>555</sup> However, on the basis of other sources this view can be somewhat nuanced. From the evidence of advertisements printed in the local newspapers, I would suggest that there were a number of ways that the planters might decorate their homes. The stores on the island offered a wide range of paints in a variety of colours as well as newly imported tapestries and wallpapers of various kinds.<sup>556</sup> During the eighteenth century, painted wallpapers of Chinese origin became popular in Europe and the colonies. These wallpapers were greatly appreciated by the elite and members of the middle class. Initially the high demand resulted in long waiting times, as the transportation of wallpapers from China to Europe and further to the colonies could take up to eighteenth months. However, soon the production of wall coverings also took place in Europe and by 1770 Britain, and later France, was the main supplier of

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<sup>552</sup> Cited in Styles and Vickery, 'Introduction', p. 10.

<sup>553</sup> John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 333; Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*; James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early Modern American Life*, Anchor, New York, Revised, Expanded, Subsequent edition, 1996, p. 156–157.

<sup>554</sup> Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 78.

<sup>555</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 22.

<sup>556</sup> Ingram, 'The West Indian Trade of an English Furniture Firm', p. 28.

printed wallpaper. The manufacturers of these wallpapers had often been inspired by Chinese styles, but they made their products more cheaply and therefore they were affordable for a wider group of buyers.<sup>557</sup> Like many of the other objects used to decorate homes, the choice of wallpaper was a way to demonstrate social and economic status. As wallpaper was not expected to last a lifetime, it also gave the owner of the home a chance to experiment and follow the latest changes in fashion.<sup>558</sup>

In addition to putting up wallpaper, the interior walls of the houses could be painted. In Kingston, the firm of J. H. Stevenson advertised that they had a wide range of colours for sale, suitable for 'finishing and decorating "rooms, halls, stair cases, lobbys etc. etc' in the same style that was appreciated in the 'most polite parts of Europe'.<sup>559</sup> In addition, paintings and other types of pictures were used to adorn the interior walls. In general, portraits were sought after in Britain during the eighteenth century. The dimensions of these customarily included showing the head and upper body of the person sitting for the painting. The painters worked primarily in their studios, but if clients were few and far apart, they would pack up the necessary items and go on tours.<sup>560</sup> The previously-mentioned firm of J. H. Stevenson in Jamaica also painted portraits, family pictures and miniatures.<sup>561</sup>

The eighteenth-century sources examined for this thesis mention paintings and prints a few times. In the letters sent from Jamaica to the young Jane Broadbent in England, we find that her cousin decorated the drawing-room walls of her home in Mount Pleasant with pieces of print

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<sup>557</sup> Ingela Broström and Elisabet Stavenow-Hidemark, *Tapetboken. Papperstapeten i Sverige*, Stockholm, Byggförlaget, 2004, p. 37, 52; Ellen Kennedy Johnson, 'The Taste for Bringing the Outside in': Nationalism, Gender and Landscape Wallpaper (1700–1825)', in Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Women and Material Culture 1660–1830*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 119, 121–122.

<sup>558</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Neat and Not too Showey': Words and Wallpaper in Regency England', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 203; Johnson, 'The Taste for Bringing the Outside in', p. 120–121.

<sup>559</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 50, 8 April 1780, Bodleian Library; *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* vol. 2, issue 43, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>560</sup> Louise Lippincott, 'Expanding on Portraiture: the Market, the Public and the Hierarchy of Genres in Eighteenth-century Britain', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture: Image, Object, Text 1600–1800*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 80.

<sup>561</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 2, issue 50, 8 April 1780, Bodleian Library; *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, issue 43, 1780, Bodleian Library.



work made by Jane, items that gave much pleasure.<sup>562</sup> Jane's mother, Mrs Broadbent, decorated the room where she used to sit during the mornings and receive visitors with other pieces of print work. As a proud parent, she wrote to her daughter that because of this 'they cannot fail of being seen and of course admired'.<sup>563</sup> In another case, a painting was ordered to the island from Europe:

By Captain Stupart I have at last sent you Miss Fanny's Picture which I hope will please, it is I assure you a very strong likeness of her, the price to Cotes is thirty Guineas (the most usual sum for a picture of that size) his prize for a head is only twenty Guineas, and I thought you would imagine the other ten Guineas well bestowd to have the Picture of the size it now is, and as the picture will deserve a handsome frame I ordered a neat Italian fluted one for it to be put into, so that the whole expence will be £36 8 s which although more that you first intended will be fully compensated by the resemblance it has to the fair object it was intended for and by the other excellencys of the piece.<sup>564</sup>

Exactly why the painting was commissioned from Europe is not mentioned in the correspondence, but perhaps the family felt that this was such a large investment that they wanted to make sure that the painter was a professional.

### *Genteel furniture*

In order to complete a refined interior decoration of a house, attention also had to be paid to the furniture and other interior furnishings such as carpets and curtains. In similarity to cloth, refined furniture is a good example of items that connected different parts of the world during the eighteenth century, linking the colonists to a transatlantic cultural phenomenon.<sup>565</sup> In the beginning of the eighteenth century, a change occurred in the way that furniture was produced, sold and bought. Previously furniture production had mostly been a local affair, being made by local carpenters for customers living nearby. However, the

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<sup>562</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 38.

<sup>563</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 105.

<sup>564</sup> Anne M. Powers, *A Parcel of Ribbons: The Letters of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Family in London & Jamaica*, s.l., 2012, p. 131.

<sup>565</sup> Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Cost of Luxury in Early America*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 19.

distance between the place of production and use of furniture grew greater. Simultaneously the criteria by which the furniture was evaluated also became more refined.<sup>566</sup> The historian Nuala Zahedieh has shown that by the late seventeenth century there was a demand in Jamaica for imported items that could be used in homes; for example window glass, upholstery and various furnishings, card and billiard tables.<sup>567</sup> Gaming was a popular pastime, appealing to people from all ranks of society in Europe as well as in the colonies. With the increase in time for leisure and the diversification of consumer goods, furniture specifically designed for gaming came out onto the market.<sup>568</sup> Tables for playing cards, backgammon and billiards were sold in the stores on the island, together with necessary accessories such as billiard balls and storage-boxes.<sup>569</sup> In the eighteenth century, the origins of furniture used in furnishing the interiors of genteel homes in the West Indies was varied. An advertisement in the *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* from October 1779, mentions that elegant household furniture and kitchen utensils were sold at the house of Tomlin Campbell Esq. The furniture is described as 'all made in London by the most eminent Workmen, and particularly adapted for this Island, both by their Elegance, and Goodness of Materials'.<sup>570</sup> Imported furniture from London was seen as better and more fashionable, and therefore necessary for a genteel way of life on the island. Even if imported goods were preferred, locally-produced furniture could be bought on the island. The upholster Samuel Palin stated in his advertisement that in his store 'every branch of the business was performed in a neat and expeditious manner at reasonable prices'.<sup>571</sup>

The historian David Jaffee has argued that the furniture business in the colonies experienced a boom in the latter decades of the eighteenth century, spurred by an increase in the demand for refined furniture. This phenomenon was not only visible in the bustling port cities such as Boston

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<sup>566</sup> Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 74–103; Crowley, *Invention of Comfort*.

<sup>567</sup> Zahedieh, 'London and the Colonial Consumer', 1994, p. 248–249.

<sup>568</sup> Janet E. Mullin, 'Cards on the Table: the Middling Sort as Suppliers and Consumers of English Leisure Culture in the Eighteenth Century', *Canadian Journal of history/ Annales Canadiennes d'histoire*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2010, p. 50–51; Burnard, "'The Grand Mart of the Island"', p. 189; Pointon, 'Women and their Jewels', 2007, p. 19.

<sup>569</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 15, issue 2, 1793, Bodleian Library.

<sup>570</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, October 1779, Bodleian Library.

<sup>571</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, vol. 3, issue 124, 1781, Bodleian Library.

or New York, but also spread out into the countryside.<sup>572</sup> In eighteenth-century Britain, London furniture makers were considered to be the best. They had the necessary raw materials and the right skills, and they could see to the transportation of the items to the desired location. Below this standard of quality came furniture that had been made in large quantities, but had been given the final touches by a local carpenter, perhaps following a pattern book. Both these levels of quality were based on a shared understanding about what the furniture should look like to meet the current standard and ideals. Pattern books could also depict the planning of refined rooms, and the proper positioning of furniture. The way that the furniture in a room was organised and the positioning of the light sources contributed to the guests' comfort and pleasure during an evening.<sup>573</sup> In the illustration below (image 17) the chairs, sofa, sideboards and stands with urns are placed near the walls, leaving an open space in the middle of the room for dancing. The sizeable windows on one side of the room, as well as a number of chandeliers attached to the walls, provide the room with light. Furthermore, a refined interior required refined manners. Therefore, the previously mentioned eighteenth-century courtesy books often included rules of conduct for stylishly furnished rooms. The Earl of Chesterfield emphasised, for example, that spitting on the carpet was a disgusting habit that should be avoided, as it gave the impression that one was not accustomed to genteel furniture.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>572</sup> David Jaffee, 'Sideboards, Side Chairs and Globes: Changing Modes of Furnishing Provincial Culture in the Early Republic, 1790–1820', in Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (eds), *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture can Tell us About the European and American Past*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 82.

<sup>573</sup> Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 77; Amy H. Henderson, 'A Family Affair: the Design and Decoration of 321 South Fourth Street, Philadelphia', in Amanda Vickery and John Styles (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 285.

<sup>574</sup> Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *The Accomplished Gentleman: or Principles of Politeness, and of Knowing the World: Containing Every Instruction to Complete the Gentleman and Man of Fashion, to Teach Him a Knowledge of Life and Make Him Well Received in all Companies*, Dublin, printed by Wogan, Bean and Pike, 1782, p. 40.

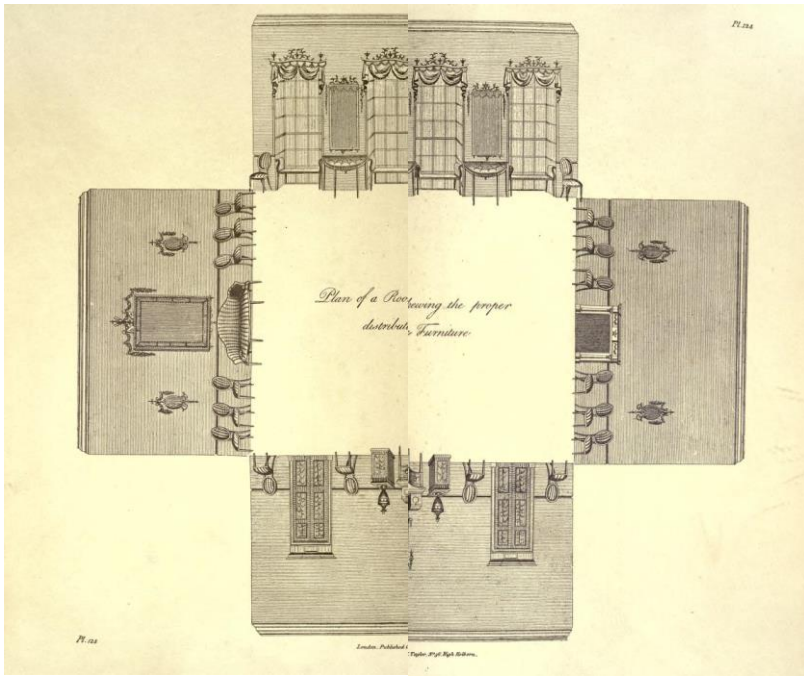


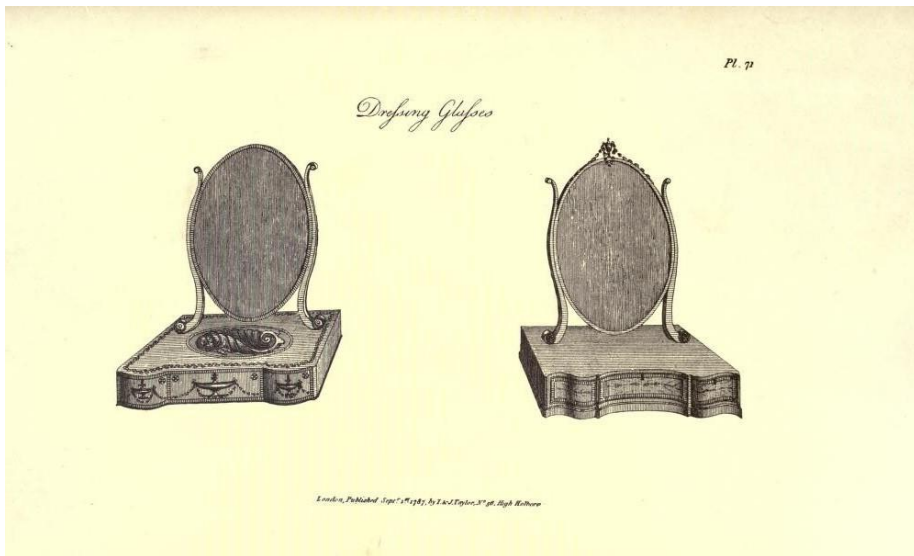
Image 18: Plan of a room showing the proper distribution of furniture in a fashionable home in the eighteenth century. Source: *The Cabinet makers and upholsters guide; or repository of designs for every article of household furniture*, Reprint 1897, originally published in London, 1794, by J. and J. Taylor.

The advertisements printed in Jamaican newspapers in the late eighteenth century mention various kinds of furniture of all qualities. Many of the pieces of furniture mentioned were made of mahogany, the preferred material by eighteenth-century fashionistas both in Europe and in the colonies.<sup>575</sup> Interested buyers in Jamaica could, for example, find an assortment of very neat mahogany furniture at the store of William Daltary in Kingston. He had, among other things, the following articles of mahogany for sale: very neat solid desks, elegant beau sets with glass doors, oval, dressing and shaving glasses with mahogany frames, wardrobes and various kinds of tables.<sup>576</sup> In other stores 'leather and mahogany backgammon tables', 'portable mahogany medicine chests' and 'mahogany and japanned ladies and gentlemen's dressing cases'

<sup>575</sup> Leslie, *A New and Exact Account of Jamaica*, p. 31.

<sup>576</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, Kingston December 11, 1779, Bodleian Library.

could be bought (see image 19).<sup>577</sup> The popularity of mahogany, and the fact that it became a luxury during the eighteenth century was due to a combination of several factors. Colonial commodities were increasingly available and growing more popular at the same time that the furniture makers and merchants were actively promoting the use of mahogany. The process of turning mahogany produced on the island into neat furniture was also very much a transatlantic project. According to an early eighteenth-century account, planters on the island had the mahogany growing on the island cut down and turned into planks. These were then shipped to England by the merchants involved in the transatlantic trade, and crafted into different types of furniture. The finished furniture was then packed up and shipped back to Jamaica, for the pleasure of eager consumers on the island desirous of furnishing their houses in the latest fashion.<sup>578</sup>



*Image 19: The illustration, taken from an eighteenth-century pattern book, shows mirrored dressing tables made of mahogany. Dressing tables and other pieces of mahogany furniture were sold in the stores on the island. Source: *The Cabinet makers and upholsters guide; or repository of designs for every article of household furniture*, Reprint 1897, originally published in London, 1794, by J. and J. Taylor.*

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<sup>577</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, January 4, 1790, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>578</sup> Anon, *The Importance of Jamaica to Great-Britain, Consider'd With Some Account of the Island From its Discovery in 1492 to this Time; and a List of the Governors and Presidents...*, London, printed for A. Dobb, 1740?, p. 49.

Refined gentlemen and women of the eighteenth century also furnished their homes with musical instruments of various kinds. These too can be found in the advertisements for the local stores. Among the instruments found in the stores in Jamaica at the time were smaller instruments, such as flutes or violins of various qualities and executions, and pianos. The owner of 'Cook's wine vaults and rum store' in Kingston advertised in June 1780, that there was a fine harpsichord for sale; 'the tone is full, rich and sweet, the touch easy'.<sup>579</sup> William Aikman's stationery store sold books on music history and in John Mund's store, the buyer could choose from a wide assortment of instruction books for various instruments such as the harpsichord, guitar and violin.<sup>580</sup> Those inhabitants on the island who had enough possessions to make a will, also listed musical instruments and paraphernalia among their belongings. For example, the Jamaican widow Elizabeth Anna Maria Johnston left a cembalo and some music books to her daughter in her will, dated at the end of the eighteenth century. At the time, pianos and cembali were expensive instruments, meant to be used in the homes at social gatherings for entertainment.<sup>581</sup> Outside the home music could be heard at, for example, concerts and in the theatre.<sup>582</sup> An education in music was seen to be part of a refined upbringing. Girls were mostly taught how to perform and entertain guests with music at social gatherings, usually on keyboard instruments. These skills were important as they were supposed to be able to attract a potential husband with music and singing. For boys a musical education included mastering musical theory, but otherwise music was thought to take time from more important activities, and there was also a risk that it rendered men more feminine.<sup>583</sup> Mrs Broadbent's daughter in England was taught music at her school, something that pleased her parents. They told her to take her practice seriously, as it would give her and her company much pleasure if she knew how to play an instrument and sing.<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 11 December 1789, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>580</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 1 February 1790, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>581</sup> Will of Elizabeth Anna Maria Johnston, the National Archives, Kew, England, PROB 11/1202.

<sup>582</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 2, issue 42, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>583</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 532.

<sup>584</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 40, 60; Richard Leppert, 'Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music: The Politics of Sound in the Policing of Gender Construction in

For the settlers in Jamaica the inspiration to rearrange and enhance their homes came from a number of directions. Imported pattern books, advice from friends on the other side of the Atlantic and European tours have already been mentioned here. One easily accessible source was the local newspapers and the advertisements placed by local retailers and artisans. Many also relied on the storekeepers and their judgement.<sup>585</sup> Despite selling a vast array of items or offering various forms of services, these advertisements have common features. Many of the carpenters advertising in local newspapers seem to have emphasised that they had recently arrived on the island and that they therefore were well informed of the current fashion trends in Europe. Storekeepers selling paint and wallpapers were keen to mention that their goods were similar to those used in the most polite parts of Europe.<sup>586</sup> Furthermore, the tradition of hospitality provided good opportunities for getting inspiration for upcoming purchases. As with other forms of status consumption during the eighteenth century, an audience was a necessity; the houses and their interiors had to be seen in order to communicate their owner's gentility. Without anyone there to read the messages that were being sent by, for example, one's choice of furniture, the use of the home as a marker of politeness would not have functioned. Therefore, private homes needed to be opened up and guests had to be invited in.<sup>587</sup> During her stay in the West Indies, Lady Nugent followed her husband on a tour of the island, a series of visits that she describes in her diary. Being the most distinguished persons on the island, they were invited into several homes, and Lady Nugent writes appreciatively about the way that several of these houses had been newly painted and refurnished prior to their visit.<sup>588</sup> Consequently, these visits put some strain on the hosts and their servants who wanted to display themselves and their homes as well as possible. However, for the inexperienced this was not an easy task. After one such visit to a planter's home Lady Nugent observed that during the dinner

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Eighteenth Century England', in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture: Image, Object, Text 1600–1800*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 514–533.

<sup>585</sup> Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 79; Crain, *Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands*, p. 74, 98.

<sup>586</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, 8 April 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>587</sup> Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1977, p. 307.

<sup>588</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 122.

‘three courses were served with the greatest bustle and confusion, the servants nearly knocking each other down in their hurry and awkwardness; for I suppose it is an age since they have had such fine doings’.<sup>589</sup> This note highlights the discrepancy between display and reality in the lives of the white settlers in eighteenth-century Jamaica, at least in the eyes of a member of the white British elite.

## 4.2 Appearance as a marker of gentility

In the introduction to her book *The Anatomy of Fashion*, Susan J. Vincent calls for an approach where historians see clothing and changes in fashion as being affected by culture and the choices that people make. Therefore, an examination of how people dressed and of the meanings that they attributed to their clothing, will give us a better understanding of the past.<sup>590</sup> The sociologist Thorstein Veblen underlines the importance of an understanding of the propriety of dress for conspicuous consumers. According to Veblen, consumers use pieces of clothing both for emulation; that is, to compete with or excel their equals, as well as in order to create distinctions between themselves and people of lower social standing.<sup>591</sup> During the early modern era, considerations of the use of new and second-hand clothes were an aspect of people’s lives, wealthy and poor alike. Fashion was an important component in this behaviour, especially for those aspiring to be seen as genteel.<sup>592</sup> At the time, several external influences affected the way that people in Europe dressed, as fabrics such as Chinese silks or printed cottons came into the European fashion industry.<sup>593</sup> Clothes and textiles were important features of transatlantic

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<sup>589</sup> Nugent, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, p. 122–123.

<sup>590</sup> Susan J. Vincent, *The Anatomy of Fashion. Dressing the Body from the Renaissance to Today*, Oxford: Berg, 2009, p. xv–xvi.

<sup>591</sup> Veblen, *Den arbeidsfria klassen*, p. 75–76, 97.

<sup>592</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 44.

<sup>593</sup> Mikkel Venborg Pedersen, ‘Prologue’, in Tove Engelhardt Mathiassen, Marie-Louise Nosch, Maj Ringgaard, Kirsten Toftegaard and Mikkel Venborg Pedersen (eds), *Fashionable Encounters: Perspectives and Trends in Textile and Dress in the Early Modern Nordic World*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2014. P. xvi.



commerce and made up the majority of British export goods.<sup>594</sup> According to the historian John Styles, no eighteenth-century commodity revealed differences in living standards between rich and poor more visibly than clothing. In the previously discussed satirical caricature depicting the grand Jamaica ball (image 11), the marker of certain forms of clothing or ragged dress was a way to discredit some of the attenders of the ball, and send a message that the couple, despite their best efforts, did not measure up. However, as appearance was an important ingredient in the pursuit of gentility, the aspiring Britons could not give up all their efforts to adhere to the British way of dressing.<sup>595</sup> This is just one example of how pieces of clothing had symbolic value in the eighteenth century.

In addition to satirical caricatures, clothing is also visible in paintings portraying life in the West Indies in the eighteenth century. The painting below, entitled *Planter and his wife, with a servant*, is the work of Agostino Brunias (1730–1796), an Italian painter famous for his paintings depicting life in the West Indies in the late eighteenth century (image 20). At the time, travelling artists were accompanying scientists on their explorations of the world in an attempt to document the places that they visited and the appearance of the people that they met. Also in various written sources, the dress of the people that these explorers met is often accounted for in detail<sup>596</sup>. This demonstrates that appearance and clothing were important and something that people in the eighteenth century in general paid attention to.

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<sup>594</sup> Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce and Colonization in the Atlantic World 1650–1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>595</sup> Styles, *The Dress of the People*, p. 11.

<sup>596</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth-Century British Painting*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1999, p. 144–145; DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, p. 11.



*Image 20: Agostino Brunias, Planter and his wife, with a servant, ca. 1780. The illustration depicts a West Indian planter and his wife, dressed in fine clothing. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.*

In the year 1770, Brunias accompanied the new Governor of Dominica, St. Vincent and Tobago on a trip to the West Indies. In contrast with the caricaturists, the travelling artist in the West Indies seldom depicted

slavery, but being paid as he was by a slave owner, showed a rather idealised scene.<sup>597</sup> In similarity to James Hakewill, Brunias has been criticised for being too romantic, leaving out much of the harsh reality of life in the West Indies. Instead, the aim of his work was to show the colonies as places where the inhabitants had the potential to improve and become more refined, trying to allure more people to move to the colonies.<sup>598</sup> However, unlike most of the artists behind the caricatures previously discussed in this thesis, Brunias had actually visited the geographical area that he depicted. Even if his main aim was not a scientific and objective representation of life in the West Indies, his image can, with a careful examination, tell us something about life in the West Indies.<sup>599</sup>

This well-dressed couple brings attention to the topic of clothing and appearance among the white inhabitants in Jamaica. Moving from a consideration of the highly-polished surroundings which were a way of showing status, to the way that the white settlers in Jamaica used their bodies for display, the theme of this sub-chapter is appearance, especially the way that clothing and hair were a significant part of a polite lifestyle. By examining how the white inhabitants of Jamaica were dressed, and especially by asking why they dressed in this way, it is possible to study how norms were created and what influenced their clothing.<sup>600</sup> Eighteenth-century manufacturers and merchants were eager to create and maintain annually changing fashion cycles. The cycles caused a rise not only in the variety of goods on offer, but also in the techniques used in the production and the available materials and patterns. At the time, fashionable products were often made of new colours or materials, and some of them provoked desire by being exotic.<sup>601</sup>

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<sup>597</sup> Sarah Thomas, "'On the Spot': Travelling Artists and Abolitionism 1770–1830, *Atlantic Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. 214–215.

<sup>598</sup> Kay Dian Kriz, 'Marketing Mulattresses in the Paintings and Prints of Agostino Brunias', in Felicity A. Nussbaum (ed.), *The Global Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 196.

<sup>599</sup> Thomas, "'On the Spot': Travelling Artist and Abolitionism', p. 14; Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power*, 146–147.

<sup>600</sup> Marie Ulväng, 'Textilbadet– kläder och konsumtion' in Anna Maria Forssberg and Karin Sennefeldt (eds), *Fråga föremålen. Handbok till historiska studier av materiell kultur*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2014, p. 91.

<sup>601</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 250–251.

### *Alluring advertisements*

The storekeepers in Jamaica took up substantial portions of the local newspapers with their advertisements for different types of fashionable goods. As with the advertisements for other consumer items, the language in the advertisements promoting goods connected with appearance were manifold. Maxine Berg has underlined that advertisements were absolute necessities for the storekeepers at the time. By making use of the improvements in printing technology, the sellers could use both images and text in their attempts to enhance trade. At the time the advertisements could take on various forms, from small printed announcements in the newspapers, to trade cards and long catalogues listing all the articles for sale.<sup>602</sup> From the stylish clothes that they wore, to the way that they furnished their houses or spent their evenings, the life of the white settlers was intertwined with questions of status, quality and taste.<sup>603</sup> As has been discussed by several British historians, such as Maxine Berg, Amanda Vickery and John Brewer, the underlying motive for these queries among consumers at the time was the notion of gentility. Gentility, politeness and the overlapping terms courtesy and civility were strongly associated with modes of behaviour and consumption.<sup>604</sup> For those aiming at being part of polite society, buying the 'right things' and living according to the expected standards was of great significance.<sup>605</sup> 'Right things' should here be understood as items suitable to the rank, gender and age of the buyer. One should be fashionable, but not overtly so, in case one risked obtaining the reputation of a vain or whimsical person.<sup>606</sup> An interest in material culture and consumption of fashionable and novelty items carried with it a number of choices, some of a more practical character, as described in the following ironic writing in a Jamaican newspaper, *The Daily Advertiser* in 1790:

Of all the demagogues worshiped in this country there is none so universally adored as fashion; she is courted by all ranks of people, without regard to age or sex. [---] it has been the uniform practice of the

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<sup>602</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 270–271.

<sup>603</sup> Mary Louise Roberts, 'Gender, Consumption and Commodity Culture', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, no. 3, 1998, p. 817–844.

<sup>604</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability*, p. 31–34, 205.

<sup>605</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, p. 197–202; Sverker Sörlin, *Världens idéhistoria 1492–1918*, Stockholm, Natur och Kultur, 2004, p. 398–401.

<sup>606</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 82–84.

admirers of fashion to vindicate her whims, on the ground of convenience; every change that they assume with them is not only neat and smart but convenient. It is very convenient in the warm weather to have one's collar so high in the neck, that a part of the hair is to cut off to make room for it - it has a cool appearance. How cool and convenient is a pair of leather breeches reaching half way down the leg granted. And how extremely convenient is the part of the ladies' dress, called La Montagne Blanc, or the white Mountain, which we find occupying the space between the waist and the chin. How delightfully convenient for eating turtle soup; well, we would grant that also were it not a fact that lately some gentlemen lately have been obliged to quit the room, not choosing an emetic at that time, owing to the clumsiness of our fair country women, in mowing the spoon rapidly [ill] over, the white hillock – We say that nothing is more beautiful than snow, but it look shocking when soiled.<sup>607</sup>

As the above-quoted passage shows, fashion in dress was important in Jamaica and the settlers tried to follow the latest trends in Europe. One way of being informed about the latest trends in fashion was by reading advertisements. In eighteenth century advertisements, the new and fashionable consumer goods were often described in a manner that underlined the link between the purchases and a modernity and fashion.<sup>608</sup> Therefore, an analysis of the newspaper advertising, will give some hints about the ways that the retailers tried to influence the readers.

Some of the Jamaican merchants and storekeepers settled for listing the items that they had for sale, while others used a language of politeness, tempting customers with the idea that they could acquire a polite lifestyle by buying certain items. In the Jamaican press at the end of the eighteenth century clothes and fabrics were, for example, described as 'most fashionable' or the 'best London made' or being 'of the most fashionable patterns'.<sup>609</sup> A store in Spanish Town offered fabric in large quantities and of various qualities:

A large assortment of the best superfine broadcloths with fashionable buttons and all other trimmings. Blue, black and scarlet ditto. Striped and

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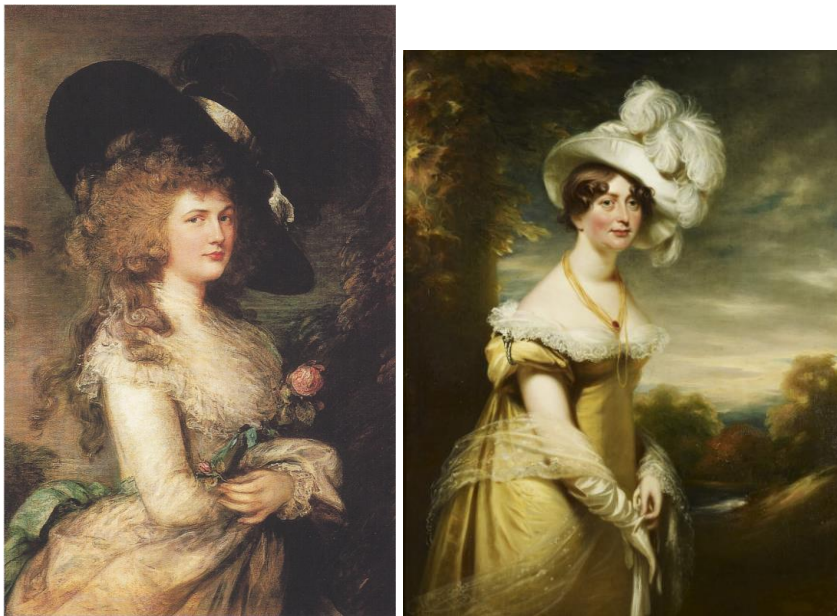
<sup>607</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* 1790, Issue 273, 19 November 1790, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>608</sup> Berg, *Luxury & Pleasure*, p. 15.

<sup>609</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, issue 55, 4 March 1790, British Library Newspapers; *The Daily Advertiser*, 11 December 1789, British Library Newspapers.

elastic narrow ditto. Livery clothes of different colours with livery buttons [---] A few readymade superfine cloth coats [---] Ladies coloured hats with fashion bands [---] A great variety of fancy stuffs for waistcoats. Best scented violet hair powder & pomatum [---].<sup>610</sup>

The names given to some of the garments for sale reveal much about the contemporary ideas about fashion and the society of that day. Hats reproducing the style of famous people could be bought in the Jamaican stores, as for example, the Duchess of Devonshire's hoods, Princess Royal dress caps, Princess Augusta hats and Fitzherbert mob caps.<sup>611</sup> These women were all fashion icons in England and their influence spread not only across England but also across the Atlantic in the trade ships (see image 21).<sup>612</sup>



*Image 21: Thomas Gainsborough, Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to the left and Henry William Beechey, Augusta Sophia of Hanover, princess of the United Kingdom on the right. Hats sold in the stores in Jamaica in the late eighteenth century bore the names of these fashion icons among others. Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.*

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<sup>610</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* 11 December 1789, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>611</sup> *The Daily Advertiser* 4 March 1790, Issue 55, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>612</sup> Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, 'Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow: Extreme Makeovers in late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Portraits', *Huntington Frontiers* Fall/Winter, 2013, p. 14.

The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century brought many new, partially finished, consumer goods to the market. Many of these were textiles of various sorts.<sup>613</sup> Cotton was a fairly cheap and durable textile, used mostly in the home, especially in furnishing bedrooms. Another area of use was clothing, where both cotton and linen were used in garments of various sorts.<sup>614</sup> Silks on the other hand, were finer fabrics and very versatile. They could be woven in various patterns, dyed or painted following the changes in fashion. As silks were manufactured in various qualities and therefore at various prices, they were appealing to both the elite and the middle classes who used them in dresses, waistcoats and smaller items such as handkerchiefs. Initially, merchants trading with Asia brought silk fabrics to Britain and the British colonies, but as the eighteenth century wore on, silk produced in Britain became more and more common.<sup>615</sup> The storekeepers in their advertisements often mentioned the place of origin of the various fabrics sold. By studying these names, it is possible to get a glimpse of the global trade and map how different goods could spread all over the world. The shops on the island were filled with all kinds of fashionable fabrics and different types of ready-made clothes. There was a substantial and diverse supply of striped, spotted, checked, flowered and embroidered fabrics of all different colours on the shelves of the stores. They also supplied the buyers on the island with different kinds of hats, ready-made coats, waistcoats, stays, stockings, breeches, handkerchiefs, fans, hair and other ribbons for men, women and children.<sup>616</sup> In addition, storekeepers kept a supply of umbrellas made of silk, a fashionable way of blocking out the sun. In the 1780s, these were made of green silk.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> John Styles, 'Manufacturing, Consumption and Design in Eighteenth-century England', in John Brewer and Roy Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 530.

<sup>614</sup> Barbara Burman & Jonathan White, 'Fanny's Pockets: Cotton, Consumption and Domestic Economy', in Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (eds), *Women and Material Culture 1660–1830*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 40–41.

<sup>615</sup> Smith, *Consumption and the Making of Respectability* p. 46–47; William Farrell, *Silk and Globalisation in Eighteenth Century London: Commodities, People and Connections c. 1720–1800*. PhD Thesis, Birckbeck, University of London, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>616</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, issue 55, 4 March 1790, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>617</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, December 11, 1789, British Library Newspapers.

In addition, shoes of all kinds of manufacture were available in the stores on the island: Moroccan slippers of different colours, Ladies' calamanco and silk shoes, leather shoes and boots, shoes with French heels, slippers, London-made shoes and pumps and sandals are listed in the advertisements of the local newspapers.<sup>618</sup> This array of items for sale presented the consumers who entered the stores with a challenge. If we keep only to the fabrics, there were up to 200 varieties of cotton goods traded during the eighteenth century.<sup>619</sup> As the stores were well supplied with a number of other items as well, it is evident that buying the right things required skill and knowledge.

In addition to fashionable clothes, hair was an important part of a person's appearance. The style of one's hair or wig was a sign of one's willingness and ability to follow the latest trends and be part of the fashionable society of that day.<sup>620</sup> Hair and wigs were important markers at the time, showing not only social class, but also how well one had adapted to the current fashion.<sup>621</sup> By the middle of the century, all men but those from the lowest classes commonly used wigs in Britain and the colonies. Consequently, wigs were an important part of their stock of worn apparel, and those who could afford them owned several wigs. The best wigs were made of hair from humans, but hair from animals such as horses, goats, and sheep was used as well.<sup>622</sup> Wearing a wig was a statement of masculinity for eighteenth-century men and in combination with a clean-shaven face, a symbol of control and discipline.<sup>623</sup> If we recall the sloppily-dressed couple in the satirical caricature 'A grand Jamaica ball', the man was unshaven and had hair sticking out from under his wig. This might have been a way in which the printer William Holland meant

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<sup>618</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, December 23, 1779; *The Daily Advertiser*, December 11, 1789, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>619</sup> Trentmann, Frank, 'The Modern Evolution of the Consumer: Meanings, Knowledge and Identities Before the Age of Affluence', in Frank Trentmann and John Brewer (eds), *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives. Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006, p. 66.

<sup>620</sup> Alden Cavanaugh, 'The Coiffure of Jean-Baptiste Greuze', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2004, p. 165–166.

<sup>621</sup> Cavanaugh, 'The Coiffure of Jean-Baptiste Greuze', p. 165.

<sup>622</sup> Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 129.

<sup>623</sup> Alun Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2013; Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 128.



to further discredit the white West Indians and suggest that there was something wrong with their discipline and morale.

In the above-cited advertisement of a store in Spanish Town, hair powder and pomatum were mentioned, both used for dressing hair. Hair powder was usually made of rice flour and both this and pomatum could be scented or coloured.<sup>624</sup> During the eighteenth century, a wide range of products for covering the smell of bad odours came out onto the market and some of these ended up in the consumers' hair. In Jamaica, the store of Rob Loosey & Co. sold 'Smyth's lavender water, pomatum and a general assortment of perfumery', while Helen Maxwell provided customers with 'powder and perfumery' in her store on Harbour Street in Kingston.<sup>625</sup> Some of these products did more harm than good as they were filled with corrosive and otherwise harmful ingredients.<sup>626</sup>

The language in the hairdresser's advertisements was similar to that used by the retailers. The following example, an advertisement by two hairdressers from London named Evans & Glass, is taken from the Jamaican newspaper *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*:

Those who please to honour them with their Commands, may depend on being dressed with Elegance, and flatter themselves they will be able to give general Satisfaction to those who please to favour them with their Custom. The also sold a large assortment of necessarys: fashionable Taits, Braids, Bows, Cuols, Light Cushions suit-able to the Climate, best treble distilled Lavender Water, ditto Hungary ditto, Combs of different Sorts, Comb Brushes, best English Powder, Powder Bags and Puffs, Hair Bags and Rosettes, Pins of all Sorts, shaving Boxes, with all Sorts of Perfumery, and every other Article for Ladies and Gentlemens Hair Dressing, &c.<sup>627</sup>

The cushions that they sold were adapted to the climate. This is interesting, since it shows that the goods sold in Jamaica were not always the same as those sold in England, but that some of them had been adapted to the West Indian conditions. In this, there seems to have been a change over time and the merchants seems to have been responding to the needs of the consumers in Jamaica. If this was the case, it does give us a hint of

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<sup>624</sup> Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 129.

<sup>625</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 11 December 1789, British Library Newspapers; *The Daily Advertiser*, issue 55, March 1790, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>626</sup> Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England*, p. 63.

<sup>627</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, issue 2, 1779, Bodleian Library.

the importance of the colonial consumer. The interest in hairdressing on the island seems to have been so great that it was profitable to sell adapted goods.

The wearing of a wig and shaving required some preparation and skill. To begin with, the hair had to be shaved and this made way for new shaving technologies during the eighteenth century, spurred by the development of a new type of steel. Some men took care of the shaving themselves with the help of the shaving equipment that came out on the market in the eighteenth century. In the Jamaican stores, a man who wanted to take care of his appearance could, for example, buy shaving kits for the purpose and shaving mirrors with mahogany frames.<sup>628</sup> Those with more money could employ someone to take care of this side of their appearance for them. In January of 1780, an advertisement placed in one of the local newspapers in Kingston stated the need to 'purchase or hire a complete waiting man, that can shave and dress hair to wait on a single gentleman. No need apply who cannot be well recommended for honesty, sobriety and cleanliness in their person and business'.<sup>629</sup> Washerwomen, slaves of higher social status, washed the clothes of eighteenth-century white inhabitants in Jamaica. In the countryside, the clothes were washed in streams, but in the towns, the women used tubs and scrubbing boards, as was done in Europe. According to the historian Steeve Buckridge, the whites on the island preferred the European way of having their clothes washed, thus further underlining the cultural similarity.<sup>630</sup>

Another example of a hairdresser's advertisement comes from *The Royal Gazette* in 1793:

Joseph Caszo, Hair-Dresser, acquaints his former customers, and the ladies and gentlemen in general, that he is just arrived from London; and having visited Paris, he trusts he is fully enable to dress their hair in the most fashionable modes in vogue, and earnestly hopes to acquire their countenance and support.<sup>631</sup>

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<sup>628</sup> *Jamaican Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, issue 40, 1780; *The Daily Advertiser*, 10 December, 1789, British Library Newspapers.

<sup>629</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 28 January 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>630</sup> Buckridge, *The Language of Dress*, p. 54–55; Articles of Agreement between Henry Bright, Bristol, Francis Bright, Kingston, Charles Hall, Kingston and Jeremiah Meyler, Kingston, dated 28 May 1751, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*. p. 239.

<sup>631</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, 5 January 1793, Bodleian Library.

This advertisement informs former and potential new customers that the hairdresser has recently been to Europe and therefore he is acquainted with the latest fashions on the continent. The remark about former customers reveals that this is not the first time that Joseph Caszo has crossed the Atlantic. By making more than one journey, he has become a well-informed link between the customers on the island and the polite culture of Europe. In the advertisement, the hairdresser emphasises the significance of London and Paris as centres of fashion. It has been pointed out in previous studies that advertisements mentioning foreign cities altered the mental maps of the world, linking distant places and times.<sup>632</sup> The association with France was also visible in the popular hairstyles of women. Elaborate and immaculate hairstyles were a way for women to display their knowledge of, and interest in, the latest fashion. In one of his letters to his sister Jane in England, Rigby Broadbent reported on the hairstyles that he had seen in Paris: 'little girls not so big as you with their hair powdered, and adorned with a large cap'.<sup>633</sup> Perhaps Jane later passed on this information about French fashion to her mother in Jamaica who often desired this kind of information.

As keeping track of the time became widely practised during the eighteenth century, a watch was also part of a gentleman's dress. A person owning a watch would signal to his companions that he was interested in following time and the current fashion. For a person interested in buying a timepiece, the local stores on the island offered several options. The storekeeper William Bryan, for example, advertised that he had 'Ladies fashionable London made watch chains' in his store on Harbour Street in Kingston.<sup>634</sup> In addition, local watchmakers and engravers placed advertisements in the newspapers offering their services:

Edward Whitton, of the Royal Academy of London, Begs leave to inform his friends and the public, that he continues to engrave historical pieces, coats of arms, crafts, cyphers, mottos &c. at his apartment adjoining to those in which Algernoon Warren Esq. Keeps his office, in the house of John Urquhart Watchmaker, in Harbour street, nearly opposite to the coffee house. {[---] Urns, vases, cyphers, and other devises on crystals, for

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<sup>632</sup> Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing*, p. 111.

<sup>633</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 50.

<sup>634</sup> *The Daily Advertiser*, 2 January 1790, British Library Newspapers.

mourning rings, locket, breast buckets, hair pins &c. done with expedition in the most elegant manner and newest tastes.<sup>635</sup>

Valuable watches show up also in other places in the sources. They seem to have caught the attention of thieves, and there a quite a few advertisements for stolen watches in the local newspapers from late eighteenth-century Jamaica. These advertisements are interesting as the lost item is often described in detail, giving a good impression of what it might have looked like. In December 1779, John Woolfrey offered the reward of ten pistoles for anyone who could bring his lost watch back, and three times that amount for the person who were to find the thief so that he or she could be imprisoned. The lost gold watch was described as having a gold chain and 'triangular Scotch pebble six thereto, the impression on the seal, a coat of arms consisting of three half moons. On the outside case are engraven the initials of the propretior's name in a cypher'.<sup>636</sup> Furthermore, residents in eighteenth-century Jamaica mention watches in their wills. For example in the will of the widow Elizabeth Kersey, whose will was dated in 1776, a repeating watch is listed among her belongings as a legacy that she wanted to give to her daughter. Repeating watches were rare and expensive at the time. They were also practical, as they were equipped with a small button that could be pressed, making the watch give the time. Due to this feature, the watches were also useful at night-time when it was dark.<sup>637</sup>

In comparison with several of the other consumer items available during the eighteenth century, clothes were not that durable. Their everyday use caused them to wear out, and they had to be altered to suit the wearer and keep pace with the current fashion. Despite this, they made up a substantial part of the belongings of people and were key items in the process of self-fashioning and display.<sup>638</sup> By studying accounts from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica, it becomes clear that the preferred dress among the whites on the island was very similar to that worn in in Britain. In his account from the island, Robert Renny reflected upon this similarity and wrote that the clothes on both sides of the Atlantic were so alike that it would be hard to talk someone in Jamaica into

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<sup>635</sup> *The Royal Gazette*, issue 80, 1780, Bodleian Library.

<sup>636</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 3 December 1779, Bodleian Library.

<sup>637</sup> Will of Elizabeth Kersey, The National Archives, Kew, England, PROB 11/1040.

<sup>638</sup> Styles, *The Dress of the People*, p. 12–13.

dressing in any other fashion. Renny questioned this way of dressing and advocated the use of lighter fabrics in clothing, as the heat in the West Indies was so troubling.<sup>639</sup> And as Jane Broadbent started planning for her return to the island, her mother urged her to take with her a number of dresses and other clothes from England to Jamaica, including '4 genteel fashionable dresses, proper to make tea visits in'.<sup>640</sup> This request links to the previously discussed tea drinking as an aspect of social culture on the island.

As was previously discussed, fashionable clothes played an important role in social situations such as entertainment in the form of balls. For those who wanted to be seen as fashionable a new event seems to have required at least the alteration of a dress, if one could not afford the purchase of a new one. Mrs Broadbent lamented the trouble of having to prepare for the frequent balls in the following way in one of her letters:

The Gentlemen have all subscribed these Sessions for a weekly Ball at the King's House during the sitting of the Assembly, I suppose we shall have about six of them, You will think me very much altered when I say that I am very sorry about it, for indeed now I care not if I never go out, and the trouble of preparing for Dancing is inexpressible for you are obliged to alter and do all your own Dresses, and you cannot go out to every Dance in the same, and when they are done you don't know whether they are Fashionable or not, but the worst of all is the Heat which is worse when one is Dressing than at any other time.<sup>641</sup>

From this letter it can be understood that there were two issues related to the dresses that displeased her, the first being the trouble with making alterations to the pieces of clothing, the second that she lacked knowledge about what was fashionable at the moment. Linda Baumgarten, an expert on historical clothing, notes that the altering of garments with the wearer or changes in fashion was common during the eighteenth century. People from all ranks of society, both men and women, turned to in-use alterations and reparations of their dress. As the conditions in the colonies could be quite rough, clothes were subject to much wear and tear and therefore often had to be replaced or mended. In addition, the growing market for ready-made clothes meant that the pieces of clothing had to be

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<sup>639</sup> Renny, *An History of Jamaica*, p. 195.

<sup>640</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 130.

<sup>641</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 100.

altered according to the wearer's body shape and height before they could be worn.<sup>642</sup>

### *The second-hand trade in clothing and furniture*

In the eighteenth century, there was also a market for trade in used goods. Clothes that one no longer used could be privately sold; some tailors combined their business with trade in second-hand clothes and peddlers and street hawkers also traded in used clothes. The trade in second-hand clothes was especially, but not exclusively, used by those with little money as a way of purchasing fashionable clothing or clothes that in other ways were appealing to them.<sup>643</sup> For wealthy people, buying second-hand clothing was a way of renewing their wardrobe, in addition to buying items that had at some point belonged to a famous person, perhaps in a bid for some of the glory to rub off. The trade in second-hand clothing seems especially to have been relevant in towns where the demands for fashionable dress were high.<sup>644</sup>

There are a few references to the second-hand trade and alteration of clothes in Jamaica in the sources studied. Lady Nugent and her husband attended a wedding on the island, but when they arrived at the scene the bride was upset as she had not been able to find either the proper ingredients for the stuffing of a duck that was to be served at the dinner, nor any white satin ribbon to decorate her dress. Luckily, Lady Nugent had a piece of ribbon that she could lend the bride. However, she later became annoyed as the bride had cut the ribbon into several pieces and made bows with it to decorate her dress. The only way to restore the ribbon was to send for a new one from England.<sup>645</sup>

If only a little can be said about the trade in second-hand clothes on the island, we know more about the trade in used furniture. As was previously described, life in Jamaica was for many of the white settlers only a temporary condition. Some chose to leave the West Indies after

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<sup>642</sup> Linda Baumgarten, 'Altered Historical Clothing', *Dress: The Journal of the Costume Society of America*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1998, p. 42–57; Zahedieh, 'London and the Colonial Consumer', p. 255.

<sup>643</sup> Ian Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing, 1700 to 1850*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014, p. 73.

<sup>644</sup> Lemire, Beverly, 'Consumerism in Preindustrial and Early Industrial England: The Trade in Secondhand Clothes', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1988, p. 1–24.

<sup>645</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 265.

acquiring some money; others were forced to leave the island because it was detrimental to their health, or for business reasons. Since transportation costs were high, the persons leaving the West Indies wished to turn their belongings into money before they left. Moreover, many more died, leaving their possessions to relatives on both sides of the Atlantic and sometimes debts that had to be paid. Selling their belongings in an auction was a solution. The auctions are of interest because by studying them yet another aspect of consumption is addressed; namely that of second-hand goods. In general, a substantial proportion of trade carried out during the eighteenth century involved used goods. Second-hand clothes and furniture were not only bought by poor persons but also by wealthier individuals interested in acquiring something that was novel for them. The attendees often appreciated auctions not only for the opportunity to make purchases, but also for the social spectacle, drawing together as such an occasion did people from various ranks in society. For the poorer sort, auctions offered a chance to, at least try to buy themselves into gentility.<sup>646</sup> In eighteenth-century Jamaica auctions and private sales were common. Some of them have left traces in the local newspapers. An auctioneer was in charge of these sales and this person had an important role in the selling of not only goods, but also ideas about fashion and ambition. An advertisement printed in the *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Gazette* in 1780 gives us a hint of the characteristics of a good auctioneer. Knowledge of the value, uses and merits of different goods were, according to this advertisement, important qualities:

Auction. George Hughes, Having been flattered by his friends, that he possesses in some degree, those requisites that are necessary to point out the value, explain the uses, and illustrate the merits of many articles that are commonly put up at Public sale. Respectfully offers his services to the town as an Auctioneer. Those gentlemen who have Books, Plate, Furniture, or goods of any kind to dispose of, will do him a singular favour, by giving him an opportunity of serving them. Please apply at the New Printing Office.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>646</sup> Cynthia Wall, 'The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantlings', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1997, p. 2–3.

<sup>647</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, vol. 21, issue 15, 1780, p. 189, Bodleian Library.

Auctions were arranged for many reasons. A sale of furniture, other household items or clothing often took place when people moved house, declared bankruptcy or were deceased.<sup>648</sup> After his death, the possessions of the wealthy planter Simon Taylor, for example, were sold in an auction. These things included an old horse chaise and a golden box for preserving snuff.<sup>649</sup> According to Jamaican laws, those wanting to leave the island had to place an advertisement in the local newspapers a few weeks in advance informing the public of their plans. This was a way of making sure that all the possible creditors were notified about the departure and that financial affairs could be settled.<sup>650</sup> In the newspapers, one can find several advertisements placed by individuals planning to leave the island, such as one by an Abraham Aguilar in the *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser* in October 1779. Like many others, he was leaving the island for health reasons and he hoped to discard his 'household furniture of the latest fashion and not the worse for use' before his departure.<sup>651</sup>

By buying second-hand furniture one could obtain furniture of good quality cheaper, but it was simultaneously also a way of buying into fashion and provenance. There were differences in the way that furniture and clothes were used as markers of status. Pieces of furniture were often more durable and thought to last for a longer time, as well as to be passed on to the following generations.<sup>652</sup> However, this does not mean that they were not sensitive to changes in fashion. Wills from late eighteenth-century Jamaica contain several examples of fashionable pieces of furniture and imported exotic items that were passed on from one generation to the next. The widow Prudence Moore mentions a lacquered china cabinet in her will<sup>653</sup>. These cabinets usually had two doors that could be opened in order to display a set of small drawers. The owners

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<sup>648</sup> Wall, Cynthia, 'The English Auction: Narratives of Dismantlings', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1997, p. 10.

<sup>649</sup> Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 141.

<sup>650</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 141.

<sup>651</sup> *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, issue 25, 1779, Bodleian Library.

<sup>652</sup> Mitchell, *Tradition and Innovation in English Retailing*, p. 73; Edwards, Clive and Margaret Ponsonby, 'The Polarization of the Second-Hand Market for Furniture in the Nineteenth Century', in John Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (eds), *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade: European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700–1900*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 97.

<sup>653</sup> Will of Prudence Moore, The National Archives, Kew, England PROB 11/999.



used these small cabinets to display imported items such as china or other small luxury items.<sup>654</sup>

Finally, one might ask if the used goods did actually sell? Research done on colonial Chesapeake, North America, shows that there, at least, the mid-century colonists were mostly interested in new and fashionable goods, not second-hand ones. Cheap and durable goods were, as always, sought for, but among the colonists aspiring to be seen as fashionable used goods and even some ready-made items were not as popular.<sup>655</sup>

### **4.3 Conclusions: expensive living in eighteenth-century Jamaica**

In this chapter, I set out to examine the ways that the white settlers in Jamaica spent their money on housing and interior furnishings, food and dress as a way of displaying status. From the lavish Governor's house in Spanish Town, a large two-storey building made of brick, to the more modest homes of the clerks of the Meyler-Bright family, the conspicuous consumption in housing and furniture of the white inhabitants in late eighteenth-century Jamaica can be examined as a process where factors such as fashion and novelty mattered. By making informed and balanced decisions with regard to materials, quality and propriety when examining possible purchases or planning a new house, a person might affect the way that others saw him and his rank and place in society.

By comparing sources from eighteenth-century Jamaica, I have shown that the white inhabitants on the island were reckoning with factors such as taste and materials as well as display as they made their purchases. Especially visits from the Governor and his wife who toured the island, seems to have spurred the planters to spend money on the decorating of their homes. As the eighteenth century evolved, and the planters became wealthier, they were increasingly building lavish houses according to the dictates of England fashion, even if these were more vulnerable to possible earthquakes and storms. Similarly, the white inhabitants seem to have preferred furniture made in England to locally produced items. Large shipments of fashionable furniture made of mahogany and other high

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<sup>654</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 224–230.

<sup>655</sup> Carr and Walsh, 'Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake', p. 59–166.

quality woods, were therefore shipped to the island on their request. This practice was, I would suggest, linked to the white West Indians' desires to surround themselves with furniture and other items that were fashionable in Europe. Another source of fashionable furniture was the second-hand trade. My analysis of advertisements in contemporary newspapers shows, that these from time to time contained announcements for used goods. The advertisements often reflected the transient nature of white Jamaican society, as household goods were sold when people died or moved back to Britain.

In similarity to the activities discussed in chapter three, the white inhabitants also had to reckon with climate when making decisions regarding housing and apparel. Wealthy white inhabitants could afford to buy technical devices that could be used to cool down the air. Outside, the piazzas were important places for socialising. From these covered galleries, the planters also had a good view of their gardens, filled with exotic flowers and fruits, or imported sculptures inspired by gardens in Europe.

Throughout this chapter, fashion has been an important concept. Due to the high visibility of general appearance, style of clothing and hair, to be fashionably dressed was a way of displaying status in the eighteenth century. The white inhabitants of eighteenth-century Jamaica received information about the latest fashion from several directions, such as newspapers and magazines, pattern books, in discussions with the storekeepers and by visiting each other's houses. Consequently, the company of others affected their consumption behaviour. Interaction at the local level was necessary for those who wanted to create a fashionable lifestyle. In the following chapter, the friendly relations and companionship is being explored further, and especially how it extended across the Atlantic.

## 5 Shopping by correspondence

Now that you are at home, I shall expect a very long letter from you to tell me all the news, fashions etc. etc. for in this dull place we do not know much of either.<sup>656</sup>

Up until this chapter, items and activities in the West Indies have been at the centre of the study. The focus has been on how the white inhabitants in late eighteenth-century Jamaica kept up an appearance of politeness and refinement locally in the West Indies. In this chapter, the scope widens as new actors, living in Britain, enter the stage. For white men and women with genteel ambitions in Jamaica, friends and relatives on the other side of the Atlantic played an important role as transmitters of not only goods and services, but also ideas about fashionable appearance. For the writer of the above-quoted letter, Anna Maria Broadbent, living in Spanish Town like so many other white inhabitants in Jamaica at the time, the lack of knowledge about current events and fashion trends in Europe was problematic. Therefore, she encouraged her sister in England to share any information about current affairs, as well as keeping her relatives in the West Indies informed about what kind of modish clothes people were wearing. This was significant information for those who wanted to maintain or improve their status through consumption.

Since a quick look at my sources already shows that there were various connections across the Atlantic, I find it relevant to examine the role of proxies and collaboration in the white inhabitants' quest for items that could be deemed genteel. In general, purchases can be done in various ways, in different modes that can involve different people. In the eighteenth century, shopping for the household goods as well as for more durable items was a task that often required extensive knowledge and an ability co-ordinate the purchase of goods from both local and distant suppliers.<sup>657</sup> Previous studies have shown that in Europe, consumers

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<sup>656</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 43.

<sup>657</sup> Claire Walsh, 'Shopping at First Hand? Mistresses, Servants and Shopping for the Household in Early-Modern England', in David Hussey and Margaret Ponsoyby (eds),

desirous of obtaining specific novelty products, or information about what to buy, often used intermediaries.<sup>658</sup> Knowledge is a key theme in this chapter. In short, this chapter sets out to answer the question of how the settlers obtained the objects they desired if they did not buy them in a local store? As will be discussed, relatives and friends living in Britain were important to the white inhabitants in Jamaica in three different ways: as suppliers of objects, providers of information about the current fashion in Europe, and as providers of finance. This chapter is structured around these three themes, starting with some reflections on the transatlantic correspondence itself in order to set the context.

### *Letters from England*

Letters arriving in Jamaica were generally highly desirable. Lady Nugent wrote on numerous occasions about the lack of news from England, as well as her great joy and 'state of happy fuss' which would continue for hours when letters finally arrived.<sup>659</sup> In her case, the correspondence bridged the distance across the Atlantic. Konstantin Dierk has argued that personal letters can be seen as a situation in which abstract cultural standards were turned into meaningful social practices. In their correspondence, letter writers articulated their own priorities and values at the level of social practices.<sup>660</sup> Consequently, a letter should not be understood as a monologue, but as part of an ongoing discussion. This makes letters different from other sources such as diaries that are written only for the keepers' pleasure.<sup>661</sup> In the eighteenth century, numerous guides on letter writing were printed. Many of these were printed in Britain, but as they spread to the colonies, a shared culture of letter writing was created in the British Atlantic. The manuals aimed at helping the letter writer find the right tone or style in his or her writing. In familiar letters

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*Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, p. 13–15.

<sup>658</sup> Ijäs, 'English Luxuries in Nineteenth-Century Vyborg', p. 271; Steinrud, 'Books, Wine and Fine China: Consumption Patterns of a *Brukspatron* in Early Nineteenth-Century Sweden', p. 181.

<sup>659</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 64.

<sup>660</sup> Dierk, 'Letter Writing, Stationary Supplies and Consumer Modernity', p. 474.

<sup>661</sup> Anu Lahtinen, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki, Kirsi Vainio-Korhonen and Kaisa Vehkalahti, 'Kirjeiden uusi tuleminen', p. 20.

such as the ones examined here, the guides stressed that the tone should be polite and conversational.<sup>662</sup>

My letter I am afraid you will think too long, but I think the length of a letter ought to bear some proportion to the distance it is to go.<sup>663</sup>

In addition, the length of the letter mattered. According to eighteenth-century letter-writing manuals, polite letters should not be long.<sup>664</sup> The writers of the letters that I have read for this study seem to be aware of the norm, but at times choose to deviate from the rule. One example is the above-quoted letter, where the geographical distance between Jamaica and England is given as a reason for the breach of decorum. In general, letters from both sides of the Atlantic were much anticipated and seen as contributions to an ongoing discussion. When no letters had arrived in Jamaica for a long time, the tone in the letters sent from the island could become quite desperate:

In my last I complained of you not writing me by the Success since the Dragon Captain Lawson from London & a ship from Montrose arrived here, and no other vessel from any part of Great Britain [sic] or Ireland. I have not received the favour of a line from you since that per Duke of Bedford, which makes me at loss what to write.<sup>665</sup>

This example shows the conversational character of the letters sent across the Atlantic. If the time between the letters grew too long, the ongoing conversation would be interrupted. A lack of letters and information in the West Indies led to distress and rumours began to proliferate. The fleet was consequently much anticipated, as stated here by Mrs Broadbent:

We hear that some part of our London fleet is at Barbadoes, and report also says that four or five of them have been taken in their passage to that

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<sup>662</sup> Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 67–70.

<sup>663</sup> Powers, *A Parcel of Ribbons*, p. 160.

<sup>664</sup> Dierks, *In my Power*, p. 161; Anon. *The Art of Letter Writing. Divided into two Parts. The first Containing Rules and Directions for Writing Letters on all Sorts of Occasions...*, *The second, a Collection of Letters on the Most Interesting Occasions in Life...*, London, printed for T. Osborne, 1762, p. 7.

<sup>665</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated April 7, 1747, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 198.

place, but as little or no credit is to be given to these kinds of reports which are in daily circulation for the amusement of those who are easily imposed upon, I trust there is no truth in it, and that a short time will bring us the fleet in safety and many good things in it, as we are in great want of many articles in the Housekeeping way.<sup>666</sup>

Up until the emergence of widely-read newspapers in the beginning of the eighteenth century, news was often added to letters. With the emergence of newspapers, these largely, but not totally, took over the role of news carriers.<sup>667</sup> In the correspondence that I have studied, items of news were at times included in the letters, but more often the letters mentioned that newspapers were added to the same shipment. Jeremiah Meyler mentioned in one of his many letters, that he had included the newspapers as well as information and the prices of goods for sale in both London and Bristol with his latest letter.<sup>668</sup>

The notion of *news* should itself be examined. During the eighteenth century, letter writers described both public and private matters as ‘news’ in their writings. In other words, ‘news’ was used as a term to indicate everything from political matters to information about current prices or health status.<sup>669</sup> In the correspondence of the Bright-Meyler family, a large portion of the letters consists of business-related information: prizes, requests for items, complaints about slow and irregular shipments and rumours about competing ventures. Furthermore, the letter writers often mention their current health status, as well as enquiring about relatives on both sides of the Atlantic. According to historian Sarah M.S. Pearsall, the fact that a family member emigrated to another part of the world might have strengthened family bonds and keeping up the ties by correspondence was one way of doing this. Family members back in England could, and often did, try to affect the way that their relatives on the other side of Atlantic behaved.<sup>670</sup> Much of early modern public life revolved around the idea of honour. This was

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<sup>666</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 115.

<sup>667</sup> Lindsay O’Neill, *The Opened letter: Networking in the Early Modern British World*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, p. 171–172, 175; Dierks, *In my Power*, p. 144–146.

<sup>668</sup> Jeremiah Meyler, Bristol, to Henry Bright, Kingston letter dated October 16, 1750, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 228.

<sup>669</sup> O’Neill, *The Opened Letter*, p. 177.

<sup>670</sup> Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 57.

not only a question of one's own social standing, but also of the social ranking of one's family and heritage. As a consequence, decisions regarding public consumption also had consequences for the honour of one's whole family. This can be one of the reasons, in addition to generally kind feelings towards one's relatives, behind letters such as the following one, secretly sent from Bristol to a clerk of the Bright-Meyler business venture in Kingston in 1776:

As I am much interested in whatever concerns you I cannot help mentioning anything that appears to me to be for your benefit. Mr. Richard Bright & Messrs. Bush & Elton have been inform'd by someone (but who I don't know) that you are commenced more a man of dress and pleasure than is consistent with the character of a man of business. I hope it is not true; or at least that this friendly hint will have the desired effect; and that in future you will restrict yourself in particular and confine yourself wholly to business for a few years; it will not only be more to your advantage, but it also is the character that will distinguish you & claim you more respect, than you possibly can from any other.<sup>671</sup>

In this letter from a caring relative in England, a clerk from the Bright-Meyler family is being warned not to spend his money on follies and finery in the West Indies, illustrating a situation in which the whole family is working together to save the reputation of the man, even across the Atlantic. Consequently, when the Bright-Meylers in Bristol complain that they have heard rumours about one of their clerks in the West Indies being 'more a man of dress and pleasure'<sup>672</sup> than of business, or Mrs Broadbent stresses the necessity of being dressed like a gentlewoman to her daughter in England, these letters can in fact be understood as indications of familial governance by letter.<sup>673</sup>

Had the settlers in Jamaica been living in the British countryside, they would probably have travelled to the nearest town, or even the metropolis of London, to make purchases. Studies have shown that during the eighteenth century, country towns grew in importance as centres of commerce and that these towns were closely connected to their local areas.

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<sup>671</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Bristol, to William Saunders, Kingston, letter dated August 31, 1776, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 485.

<sup>672</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Bristol, to William Saunders, Kingston letter dated August 31, 1776, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 485.

<sup>673</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 106.

In general, storekeepers used advertisements in newspapers and on trade cards as well as informal communication between individuals to inform customers in the countryside about possible purchases. Transport services such as mail coaches and carriers played an important part in the distribution of both items and ideas.<sup>674</sup> However, for the British settlers in Jamaica, the situation was somewhat different. The accuracy of navigation had been improved by the mid-eighteenth century thanks to the widespread use of aids such as maps, marine atlases and navigation instruments. This enabled ships to cross the Atlantic with more regularity and at a quicker pace. However, there were still many risks involved in the transatlantic passage, some caused by the weather, others by wars and enemy privateers.<sup>675</sup> Despite the establishment of regular postal ships in 1755, with almost 20 ships engaged in carrying letters and packages back and forth between Jamaica and Britain, the contact between the island and Europe was not continuous.<sup>676</sup> According to a contemporary guidebook for traders, the price of a letter sent from England to the West Indian islands was 1s 6d if it was written on one paper, and 3s for two pages. During the second half of the century, the ships sailed across the Atlantic in about 60 or 70 days, and spent on average around 100 days in a port in Jamaica at a time. However, there were large variations between different journeys.<sup>677</sup> In addition to this, the internal communications in Jamaica were poorly developed as the central mountain barrier hindered easy access from one side of the island to the other. The weather also caused problems, as heavy rains at times destroyed existing roads. In Jamaica, the postman rode a mule, and the success of his trips was often dependent on the weather. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the post from Kingston was delivered once a week to various parts of the island except for Spanish Town, which received communications more frequently. The postal system made inhabitants of larger towns such as Kingston and

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<sup>674</sup> Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 49–50; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 268.

<sup>675</sup> Morgan, *Shipping Patterns and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 518–519.

<sup>676</sup> William Beckford, *A Descriptive Account of a Part of the Island of Jamaica: With Remarks upon the Cultivation of Sugar-cane*, London, printed for J. and T Egerton, 1790, vol. 1, p. xxxix; Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, p. 35.

<sup>677</sup> Anon, *The Bath and Bristol Guide, or the Tradesman's and Travelers Pocket Companion. Containing I. A Description of the City of Bath...* Bath, printed for J. Keene, 1765, p. 51; Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850*, p. 128.



Spanish Town better informed than inhabitants in more remote places.<sup>678</sup> With the topic of this thesis in mind, the slow and irregular connections led to a situation where information about possible purchases as well as the actual items reached the island at an irregular pace, causing uncertainty and the spread of rumours.

### *Collaborative consumption*

In her work, *The Ties that Buy*, Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor emphasises the importance of connections during the eighteenth century for women in the North American colonies. For these women and their families, networks and collaboration were important when they wanted to obtain specific items or information about what they should buy; in other words, what was fashionable at that moment. According to Hartigan-O'Connor, consumption by proxies was common, both in Britain and in the colonies. For women living in the North American colonies, the most common way of making purchases was with the help of numerous contacts: married couples bought items for each other, items were ordered through relatives, and slaves and servants were sent out shopping.<sup>679</sup>

Other studies have also underlined the importance of collaboration for consumption in the eighteenth century. According to Amy H. Henderson, the use of proxies was common, as those living at a distance from metropolises like London also desired fashionable items.<sup>680</sup> In Henderson's study, a woman residing in London was in a perfect position to help her sister and brother-in-law with the building of a house in Philadelphia on the other side of the Atlantic. As a Londoner, she was well aware of the current taste in Britain but also close to the best stores, being able to function as an agent for their purchases.<sup>681</sup>

As has been underlined previously in this study, making choices demanded knowledge and skills. Seeking advice from others on what to

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<sup>678</sup> James Robertson, 'Eighteenth-century Jamaica's Ambivalent Cosmopolitanism', *History*, vol. 99, no. 337, 2014, p. 615; Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society*, p. 4; John Lee to Rose Fuller, Spanish Town Jamaica, letter dated July 25, 1755, in Powers (ed.), *A Parcel of Ribbons*, p. 80; Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 166.

<sup>679</sup> Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, 'Collaborative Consumption and the Politics of Choice in Early American Port Cities', in Amanda Vickery and John Styles (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700–1830*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006, p. 126.

<sup>680</sup> Henderson, 'A Family Affair' p. 267–291.

<sup>681</sup> Henderson, 'A Family Affair', p. 270.

buy with regard to quality, choice of material and colour was probably as common during the eighteenth century as it is today. Notions of refinement and taste were affected by the opinions of others and these ideas were in turn manifested in people's buying habits. For those wanting to appear in a certain light, decisions with regard to purchases had to be given careful consideration. In general, consumers at the time gathered information from several sources, not least advertisements. For retailers the use of advertisements was fundamental, as it enabled them to combine text and images in order to enhance trade in new consumer goods. However, according to the historian Jon Stobart, an advertisement in an eighteenth-century newspaper can also be read as a summary of features connected with politeness, as it was written on the basis of wider ideas and manners.<sup>682</sup>

In addition to advertisements in newspapers, the fashion in dress was promoted in other printed matter such as fashion magazines and women's almanacs. The authors of the *Fashionable Magazine*, published in London in the late eighteenth century, saw a bright future and a wide audience for the newly-established fashion periodical:

If any work can be denominated universal, the Fashionable magazine is certainly entitled to that appellation. It interests, alike, the manufacturer and the artist, the man of pleasure, and the man of business, the old and the young, the serious, and the gay; nor is its utility connected to either sex, for, acceptable as it must questionless prove to the Gentlemen, it will perhaps be even more so to the ladies.<sup>683</sup>

By the late eighteenth century, there were several British journals reporting on the latest changes in fashion. Also in France, an established press provided information concerning written information about fashion as well as collections of fashion engravings.<sup>684</sup>

With the aid of newspaper advertisements and trade cards, the idea of refinement spread from the retailers to their customers. From all these sources combined, consumers learned about fashion, quality, and

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<sup>682</sup> Stobart, 'Selling (Through) Politeness', p. 322.

<sup>683</sup> Anon., *The Fashionable Magazine, or Lady's and Gentleman's Monthly Recorder of New Fashions, being a Compleat, Universal Repository of Taste, Elegance and Novelty for Both Sexes*, London, printed for Harrison & co., 1786, p. 62.

<sup>684</sup> Jones, Jennifer M., *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France*, Oxford, Berg Publishers, 2004, p. 181.

styles, and at a broader level about the options that were available to them.<sup>685</sup> Spoken advice on what constituted a fashionable dress is harder to pin down in the sources. However, we know that Lady Nugent and her friends met to discuss what they would be wearing at a ball later that evening.<sup>686</sup> Furthermore, on another occasion she spent time shopping with the ladies in Kingston.<sup>687</sup> Even if the note in the journal does not say so, it seems likely that the current fashion was one of many topics of conversation during this trip. I would also argue that Lady Nugent herself, described by a fellow diarist as '[---] an amazing dresser. [Who] never appears twice in the same gown' can be seen as a local arbiter of taste in her role as the Governor's wife.<sup>688</sup> In her diary, she often wrote that she and her husband were stared at when they displayed themselves in public.<sup>689</sup> In these situations they may have inspired the audience, willingly or not, and functioned as arbiters of taste and transmitters of fashion.

Those who traversed the Atlantic more than once were also well informed of the current fashion in Britain. Mrs Broadbent reported to her daughter of an encounter with a mutual friend in the following way:

Marshall's second trip to England has no doubt made her quite the Englishwoman. I hear the present Fashion in England is for the Ladies to wear no Petticoats, and to go as little covered as possible with a tucker, for no handkerchief is allowed of. I think the next change of fashion should be that of a Gauze dress alone and the Petticoat totally exploded.

<sup>690</sup>

Even if Mrs Broadbent went on to ask if this new vogue in dress was 'caused by a state of insanity?', it is clear from her letter that the current fashion in England had been the topic of conversations she had been

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<sup>685</sup> Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, p. 270; Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, p. 29; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 'Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France', *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2007, p. 145–170; Stobart, 'Selling (Through) Politeness', 309–328.

<sup>686</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 121.

<sup>687</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 213.

<sup>688</sup> Anne Fremantle (ed.), *The Wynne Diaries*, p. 1935, quoted in *Lady Nugent's Journal of her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, ed. Philip Wright, Kingston, University of West India Press, p. xiv.

<sup>689</sup> Nugent, 'Lady Nugent's Journal', p. 20, 21, 24.

<sup>690</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 96.

involved in with other Britons in the island.<sup>691</sup> Based on the letters examined for this thesis, information on the latest fashion trends, as well as knowledge about what was in vogue and what was outdated, was at times hard to obtain in Jamaica. One way to compensate for this was to receive the information from friends or relatives in Britain. On numerous occasions Mrs Broadbent urged her daughter in England to write about the latest trends in clothing in Europe: 'Whenever you write to me from home remember and give me some account of the fashions, for tho' I do not attend to them much myself I would not wish to be altogether out of them, so as to appear ridiculous'<sup>692</sup> and in another: 'And whenever you write to your sister you should give her a description of the fashions, as it will assist her in making up new caps and dresses, or in alteration of those which may be out of fashion'.<sup>693</sup> Her desire to be informed about the changes in British and European fashion seems to have been based on a number of interests. Even if Mrs Broadbent stated that she was not a follower of fashions, she was interested in knowing about the latest trends and found this information significant. The risk of being caught wearing outdated clothes and being seen as silly by the individuals that she spent time with in Jamaica was obviously something that she wanted to avoid. Moreover, the letters containing information about alterations in style of dress provided her with useful hints about how to alter old clothes so that they became more modish, and functioned as guidelines when she went searching for new outfits in the local stores.

Finally, I want to return to the discussion in chapter 3 on the question of gender and consumption and if and how this becomes manifest in the transatlantic correspondence. As was previously touched upon, women during the eighteenth century were often seen as the best judges of fashion and arbiters of taste. Men, on the other hand, were not supposed to engage overtly in questions relating to fashion and dress; those who did were often given the reputation of a fop. A fop was a man overtly interested in luxury and refinement, to a degree that had weakened his moral character. As a satirical motif which was common in plays and illustrations, this imaginary figure summed up much about what, to many thinkers, was wrong with the new consumer patterns of the eighteenth century. At the centre of this criticism were often negative

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<sup>691</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 96.

<sup>692</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 98–99.

<sup>693</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 116, see also p. 120.

views of everything French, and a fear that the men of Britain would become like the men of France; supposedly effeminate and vain. This would in turn be a threat to the whole British nation.<sup>694</sup>

However, to be disinterested was not an option for those wanting to present themselves in a certain light. When it came to clothing, fabrics, colours and the fit of the clothing, in combination with manners and posture, could be manipulated in order to convey a certain image.<sup>695</sup> Therefore, other studies show that men in the eighteenth century were also aware that items could be linked to social meanings, and that they knew how to manipulate these meanings.<sup>696</sup> As will be discussed next, both men and women seem to have been involved in the discussions on taste and the production and acquiring of desired items in the eighteenth century.

## 5.1 The arrival of the items: joy and dissatisfaction

The arrival of a few ships from England into Jamaica is depicted in the following thrilled manner in a fictional diary about life in Jamaica in the beginning of the nineteenth century:

Then in addition to all this, persons in our position have a box twice a year from England, and it is a merry time when the box arrives. As long as I can remember, it has been a holiday with us, Oh, such fun it is! Such an unloading, such an arranging on the table of Parisian bonnets and sweet little black lace cloaks, and short silk ones too with tiny hoods.<sup>697</sup>

Theodora Lynch, a woman born in the West Indies, wrote this story. She later moved to England and supported herself by writing, often about life in the West Indies in a way that left out many of the negative aspects of plantation life.<sup>698</sup> Similar feelings of anticipation and delight are found in

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<sup>694</sup> Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 82–83; Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England*, p. 41; Solkin, David H., *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993, p. 48–49.

<sup>695</sup> Baumgarten, 'Altered Historical Clothing', p. 42.

<sup>696</sup> Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution', *Social History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2000, p. 133–155.

<sup>697</sup> Theodora Lynch, *Years Ago: A Tale of West Indian Domestic Life of the Eighteenth Century*, London, Jarrold and Sons, 1865, p. 10.

<sup>698</sup> Catherine Hall, 'Reconfiguring Race: the Stories the Slave-Owners Told', in Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington and Rachel Land (eds),

many of the letters sent from Jamaica to England in the late eighteenth century as well. As was previously mentioned, the weeks when the Jamaican Assembly was in session were the most important ones for those white inhabitants who were desirous of display and fashionable clothing. However, the ships from England did not always arrive in time for the festivities. Mrs Broadbent brought up this subject in many of her letters; she feared not only for her own, but also for the dresses of her daughter. In one letter she states that 'I am apprehensive from the lateness of the Fleet leaving England that the Sessions will be over before the arrival of our dresses: if so poor Nancy [Anna Maria Broadbent] will be again greatly disappointed!'<sup>699</sup> The irregularity of the ships coming in caused some irritation and anxiety, as there was a desire on the island for things that the inhabitants could not purchase locally. Mrs Broadbent wrote 'our London and Cork fleets, which were to have been out before Christmas, are not yet arrived, consequently we are in want of very many articles which are not manufactured in the island'.<sup>700</sup>

In the correspondence of the Bright-Meyler family, both positive and negative remarks about the items that were sent across the Atlantic were made. In some letters, there is just a mention that the shipped goods have reached the island and that upon examination they have been deemed satisfactory.<sup>701</sup> In other letters, the items and their faults are described in more detail. Francis Bright wrote to his brother Henry in Bristol that 'I received the things you sent per Milford. Coat fitted well. Hatt too small. Shoes too long & narrow which faults please to have mended in the next you send me'.<sup>702</sup> This remark illustrates some of the problems that collaboration over such a long distance could cause. The proxy consumer did not only have to be aware of the current fashion trends. On a more practical level, he or she had to know the size of the person who would be wearing the clothes in the end. In addition, of course, with the stints in the West Indies being of long duration, it might happen that the size of the final wearer of a specific piece of clothing

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*Legacies of British Slave-ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p.181.

<sup>699</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 98.

<sup>700</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 104.

<sup>701</sup> F.ex. Francis Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated August 22, 1748, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 210.

<sup>702</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated July 29, 1746, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 190.

changed over time. One way of avoiding this was adding exact measurements to the letters. Joseph Lee in London urged his brother to keep his relatives in England updated about his size. He writes: 'My Grandmama desires to know whether you are grown since you left England and should take it as a particular favour if you would send me over your measure'.<sup>703</sup>

Another practical matter relating to buying items in this way was the long passage from England to the West Indies. Transatlantic transport might cause damage to the delicate pieces of clothing and other items shipped across the Atlantic. Janet Schaw, a young diarist, describes how a storm hit the ship that she and her companions were travelling in across the Atlantic in the 1770s. The storm shoved passengers, furniture and other minor items on board the ship around, and drenched everything in seawater. When the storm finally calmed down, the ship had lost its masts and the passengers and their belongings were all wet, but happy to be alive.<sup>704</sup>

Mrs Broadbent reported to Britain about a shipment that had bad luck on its way to Jamaica across the Atlantic:

Now that I am speaking of dresses I must tell you that ours are at last got to hand. I am very much pleased with the Materials and the mode they are made up in. Mrs. Gifford's cap &c are as usual very Tasty and neat, and remarkably well packed, which I cannot say for Abram's for the caps are so much tumbled that you can scarcely make out what form they are. I beg you will tell them of it, and at the same time mention how very differently those from Mrs. Gifford's were received.<sup>705</sup>

The above-cited letter shows that Mrs Broadbent wanted the shop in London to be aware of their mistake, perhaps as she intended to continue as their customer but wanted to avoid similar problems in the future. From time to time, the settlers mentioned broken or damaged items in their letters. In many cases, the faults were not so bad and they could be

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<sup>703</sup> Joseph Lee, London to Robert Cooper Lee, Jamaica, letter dated July 22, 1751, in Powers (ed.), *A Parcel of Ribbons*, p. 47.

<sup>704</sup> Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality, being the Narrative of a Journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776*, edited by Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles Maclean Andrews, New Haven, Yale University Press 1923, p. 50–56.

<sup>705</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 106.

mended in the West Indies even if this meant some additional expense. The local carpenters could fix a broken carriage, for example, but a broken thermometer had to be sent back to England for repair.<sup>706</sup> Other problems that arose over the long distance included letters being at times lost or ruined during the period of transportation. One way around this was including the same information in a number of letters, hoping that at least one of them would reach the intended destination.<sup>707</sup>

### *Peer opinion*

As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis, conspicuous consumption and display necessitate an audience. In the letters discussing items shipped from Britain to Jamaica, the writers frequently mention the opinions of others. In one of his many letters from the West Indies to his father in Bristol, Robert Bright mentions that a shipment he has been waiting for has now finally arrived. He thanks his father for the things he has received; some unspecified pieces of clothing, and a horse chaise painted in blue. Robert Bright's only complaint was that the lining of the chaise should have been a darker colour; however, he felt that artisans on the island could adjust this. Overall, he found all the items sent to him 'very genteel & the chaise is in general very much liked by everyone'.<sup>708</sup> Robert Bright died shortly after he had received these items, and his will does not mention any clothes, or the horse-drawn carriage. Instead, he left a golden watch, sleeve buttons and a silver hilted sword to his son, all items that one could expect to find among the belongings of an British gentleman in the eighteenth century.<sup>709</sup>

Mrs Broadbent, in turn, was worried about the lateness of a shipment from England, as she was afraid that the other ladies on the island would receive their new dresses in time, but that she might not.<sup>710</sup> Her letters display a sense of competition and a desire to be dressed like the other women on the island at the social gatherings arranged by the

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<sup>706</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Bristol to David Duncombe, Jamaica, letter dated January 10, 1779, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 509; Robert Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated July 19, 1758, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers* p. 337.

<sup>707</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 87.

<sup>708</sup> Robert Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated July 19, 1758, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 336.

<sup>709</sup> Will of Robert Bright, dated 19 July 1758, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 337–338.

<sup>710</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 96.



inhabitants of the town. This underlines her desire to be dressed to the same level as her peers, rather than to stand out from the crowd. Francis Bright also sent a letter from Jamaica to his brother in Bristol after having unpacked a shipment of clothes. He was not altogether satisfied with the things sent to him, stating that 'The fustian frock was made for you, instead of me, being a great deal too big & long. The other things are all agreeable, but if the ruffles of the shirts were somewhat deeper, they would be more like other people's.<sup>711</sup> Again, other individuals on the island and the way that they dressed becomes a point of reference. Since these are only brief remarks in a few letters, one has to be careful not to draw far-reaching conclusions. However, I would argue that these remarks could be taken as evidence that the opinion of others in the local community in the West Indies also mattered to the white inhabitants of the island. Consequently, the white inhabitants had to take not only the British fashion ideals, but the opinions of their peers in the local community as well into account when making purchases.

## 5.2 Economic ties

Inclosed you have bill of lading for one hogshead sugar on my account. The proceeds lay out in a dozen of good ruffled shirts (let Polly Price make them) two hats 12s. each 4 pair pumps which I've wrote to Phineas Watts for two fustian frocks & four pair knit breeches 2 scarlett & 2 black half the quantity by each of the two first ships.<sup>712</sup>

Francis Bright in Kingston sent the above-quoted letter to his brother in England. In the letter, Francis Bright gave instructions about a few pieces of fashionable clothing that he wanted sent to him in Jamaica, as well as how these purchases should be financed. This letter draws our attention to one final question relating to consumption by collaboration across the Atlantic: how were the items that were privately purchased and shipped across the Atlantic at the request of the white inhabitants on the island paid for? The answer to this was credit.

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<sup>711</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated January 7, 1747, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 191.

<sup>712</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol letter dated 16 July 1747, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 183.

During the eighteenth century, money was scarce and credit was a commonly-used method of payment, both in the colonies and in England. The possibility of paying later has been seen as an important factor behind the establishment and growth of the British colonies in America. For example, for those desiring to establish a plantation with numerous slaves in a British colony, the use of credit was often a necessity. People from all ranks in society used credit. For the poorer sort it was unavoidable, for the wealthy a way of reducing the risks on their investments.<sup>713</sup> Merchants involved in trade at both the local and the global levels offered credit to their customers, warehouses let storekeepers re-stock their outlets against later payment, and the storekeepers in their turn offered credit to their customers.<sup>714</sup> For retailers and merchants, the offer of credit terms was a way of enhancing trade and their own profit margins. For the customers it offered a chance to be part of the emerging consumer culture, despite having limited economic resources. With the use of easy credit, almost everyone could, and often did, buy some of the British manufactured goods that flooded the market at the time.<sup>715</sup>

According to John Stewart's contemporary account of Jamaica, English laws were in force on the island, with some exceptions. One of these had to do with credit and bankruptcy. Jamaica had an *Insolvent Debtor Act* that according to Stewart was frequently exploited and misused. In line with the act, a man in Jamaica found to be in debt had to give his account books to the administration on the island and spend three months in jail. Subsequently, he was released from his debts. However, cunning men often exploited the system. According to Stewart's description: 'it is not unusual to see a man, who has just claimed the benefit of the insolvent act, continuing to live in his usual style, and even obtain credit from the store-keepers and others with whom he deals: he has in fact become more independent since he so conveniently settled with his creditors [---]'.<sup>716</sup>

Due to the risk of debt, the moral impact of the use of credit was publicly debated in the eighteenth century. As was discussed in the previous chapter, planters in the West Indies were often described as over

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<sup>713</sup> Price, 'Credit in the Slave Trade', p. 294; Burnard, *Creole Gentlemen*, p. 60–63.

<sup>714</sup> Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 66.

<sup>715</sup> Breen, 'The Meaning of Things', p. 252; Hartigan-O'Connor, 'Collaborative Consumption and the Politics of Choice', p. 127.

<sup>716</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 138.

spenders, and accused of leading too lavish lives at the risk of creating substantial debts. To Edward Long, this was not totally the planters' own fault, as they were lured into buying things that they did not necessarily need by merchants, a group that Long described in the following manner:

No race of mankind are more profligate, more griping and extortionate; more replete with quirks, quibbles, lies, arts and deceit of every kind, than this species of vermin. No persons can be more liberal in offers of credit, or inveigle, nay even force, their goods upon the unwary planter, with more specious lures of flattering and friendly language; but none are more inexorable and inhuman in exacting payment, even to the ruin of the unfortunate man who confides in them.<sup>717</sup>

Thinkers in Europe as a whole shared this negative view. During the eighteenth century, the rest of the community often looked down upon the retail sector. Merchants and storekeepers were blamed for the way that luxuries were seen as harmful to the morals of people, and despised for the way that they tried to lure customers into buying items that they did not necessarily need, nor had the money to pay for. The opponents saw the use of credit as a form of lending against interest, a practice that had been forbidden in the Bible. However, previous studies show that in reality the early modern storekeepers seldom demanded interest.<sup>718</sup>

Since the majority of the planters in the West Indies earned their money on the sugar plantations, most of the money on the island was tied up for large parts of the year. It was only after the planters had sold their crop that they had any free money to spend. In the Bright-Meyler correspondence, the lack of money in Jamaica is often referred to. Richard Meyler II noted that the planters in Jamaica would not pay their debts for months, sometimes even up to two years.<sup>719</sup> After his arrival on the island, Lowbridge Bright sent a letter from Kingston to Bristol, describing how there were plenty of most kinds of items for sale, but no money to be had. He also found himself at a loss when it came to mentioning the prices for

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<sup>717</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, p. 575.

<sup>718</sup> Nancy Cox, 'Beggary of the Nation': Moral, Economic and Political Attitudes to the Retail Sector in the Early Modern Period', in John Benson and Laura Ugolini, *A Nation of Shopkeepers: Five Centuries of British Retailing* I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2003, p. 26, 39.

<sup>719</sup> Richard Meyler II, Bristol, to James Pardoe, Bristol, letter dated 19 February 1752, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 244.

anything on the island, as these were dependent on whether the customer had money or not.<sup>720</sup>

Due to this lack of ready money, British merchants were more willing to give credit than were their peers on the European mainland. They saw the practice as a way of keeping up valuable relations in business and facilitating new contacts. In addition, the traders and merchants themselves were dependent on credit; for them receiving credit was connected to having a good reputation. Gossip was commonly spread among the traders, both in the places where they socialised and in letters.<sup>721</sup> Therefore, one's name and the reputation of one's firm had to be protected. This might explain why the correspondence of the Bright-Meylers at times deals with the topic of rumours and reputations. The clerks sent to the West Indies were repeatedly warned not to spend their money on extravagant things. In one of his letters, Richard Meyler II in Bristol informed Jeremiah Meyler in Kingston that a couple of men that they had previously had trade relationships with had pulled a scam and left the West Indies for New York. There they had been seen conspicuously 'strutting away in fine laced clothes'. Consequently, Richard Meyler II warned Jeremiah Meyler that these men were not to be given credit anymore by the Bright-Meylers, as this would only lead to the money being lost.<sup>722</sup> It is difficult to tell if the men had spent their money on conspicuous clothing or if the remark was a way for Richard Meyler to further defame the men, or both. However, the letter shows the importance also of a good reputation across long distances.

In the correspondence studied in this thesis, payment for items purchased by a proxy in Britain is at times, but not always, mentioned. Taking the Broadbent family as an example, two kinds of credit relationships can be detected in the letters. For purchases of fashionable pieces of clothing in Britain, money often came from a specific friend of the family. In the letters, the daughter in her role as a proxy in England

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<sup>720</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Kingston to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated 6 July 1765, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 395.

<sup>721</sup> Rowena Olegario, *Culture of Credit: Embedding Trust and Transparency in America Business*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 17, 21; Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 66; Sherrylynn Haggerty, *Merely for Money? Business Culture in the British Atlantic 1750–1815*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012, p. 113.

<sup>722</sup> Richard Meyler II, Bristol, to Jeremiah Meyler, Kingston, letter dated, June 22, 1764, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 340.

was often told to ask the family friend to pay for the clothes and other purchases that she made.<sup>723</sup> However, Mr Broadbent did also have an account of his own in England that was charged at his request. In the letters a set of pearls for his daughter in England, as well as some medical books for himself were mentioned; these were specifically to be charged to the latter account.<sup>724</sup>

### 5.3 Orders by letter

Shall I trouble you Sir to send me out two Suits of Cloaths (Summer colours) the Coats to be without capes and with Buttons on the Sleeves, and a Scarlet Waistcoat with a gold Lace – Lovick has my Measure, and also six pair Sattin shoes and six pair Callimanco Shoes for my friend here, my Sister Lee’s size will fit her, or John Gresham Tavistock Street Covent Garden has the measure.<sup>725</sup>

In letters sent from Jamaica to England, the proxies received more or less detailed instructions about desired consumer items they should buy, parcel out and send across the Atlantic. The above-quoted letter is one example of this practice. When the proxies in Britain did the actual buying, they were responsible for making sure that the item they bought was of the desired quality and finish. In the letters studied, the proxies were mainly used as suppliers of fashionable clothes, but food, furniture and horse-drawn chaises were shipped across the Atlantic upon request as well. Lady Nugent received a large shipment for her baby from England; she described the items as ‘much admired, and a great amusement to us all day’.<sup>726</sup> In general, the requests made by the white inhabitants in Jamaica at the end of the eighteenth century fit into the three categories of objects most desired by the planters mentioned by Edward Long: foodstuffs, clothing and transportation (as discussed in chapter 4). The above-quoted excerpt from a letter sent from the West Indies to England is quite typical of the requests in the sources that I have studied. Joseph Lee of Spanish Town wrote the letter at the beginning of the year 1772 and

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<sup>723</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 34, 43, 73.

<sup>724</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 43, 125.

<sup>725</sup> Powers, *A Parcel of Ribbons*, p. 160.

<sup>726</sup> Nugent, ‘Lady Nugent’s Journal’, p. 173.

sent it to his brother in London. Like so many other young men during the eighteenth century, Joseph Lee had arrived in the West Indies with the hopes of becoming rich in trade; however, it seems that he died shortly after he had made his request for clothes from Europe.<sup>727</sup> The desired items in Lee's letter are described in general terms, i.e. summer colours, and exactly what colours are not specified. There are also some instructions regarding size. The number of shoes might seem conspicuous, but during the eighteenth century, shoes were not that durable, especially in rough conditions such as in the West Indies. Furthermore, different shoes were worn on different occasions. A fashionable person needed different shoes indoors when, for example attending a ball, and outdoors when promenading.<sup>728</sup> In addition to these needs, the length of time of the transport of items across the Atlantic was perhaps also taken into account in the order; receiving another shipment of shoes might take months. Additionally, prices in the stores in Jamaica could be exceptionally high at times, a factor that might have encouraged the ordering of items from Britain. Writing on the subject of storekeepers, John Stewart notes that the prices on the island were not fixed as in England, but varied from time to time according to the supply and demand. Taking up the example of shoes he states that: 'thirty shillings, for instance, has been known to have been demanded for a pair of common export shoes (not always calculated for long wearing) for which, perhaps, the store-keeper paid six or seven shillings sterling; but the article was scarce, and must be had at any rate'.<sup>729</sup> Lowbridge Bright of the Bright-Meylers also elaborated on the prices on the island and noted that it was difficult to report the price of any goods to Britain, as the price varied depending on if the person had money or would be using credit.<sup>730</sup>

In the transatlantic correspondence, orders were also made on behalf of others. Often a third party was engaged in the carrying out of the instructions, for example a tailor, an embroiderer or some other type of artisan. The way that the items would be paid for was usually mentioned as well:

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<sup>727</sup> Powers, *A Parcel of Ribbons*, p. 336.

<sup>728</sup> Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, p. 164.

<sup>729</sup> Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of Jamaica*, p. 108.

<sup>730</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, Bristol, letter dated 6 July 1765, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 395.

I beg you will request the favor of Mrs. Penoyre to purchase for me four pounds of different sized pins and to have them sent with the things I expect from Gifford's and Abraham's. I will also trouble her to add to the white morning dresses your Sister and self are to have from Houndsditch, a coloured dress for each, provided there is anything in colours which is very fashionable and pretty...<sup>731</sup>

In this letter, Mrs Broadbent commissions her daughter Jane to ask a friend of the family to execute some requests for specific items, among other things morning dresses (image 22). However, the letter also shows that there was some room for this friend to decide for herself, or perhaps in collaboration with a retailer, what colours the requested garments should have. Here the current fashion in England was the deciding factor. As Mrs Broadbent was unaware of the latest changes in fashion, she left the decision to her friend in Britain, trusting that she would be able to make the right choices. Similarly, on another occasion she makes a request for some dresses to be sent to her, but adds that 'whatever is fashionable to wear around the waist either in Ribbon Sashes or any other, I must also beg Mrs. P to have four of different colours sent for each of us'.<sup>732</sup> In other words, she was at loss as to what would be a fashionable style and left that up to her friend in England to decide.

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<sup>731</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 91.

<sup>732</sup> Mozley, *Letters to Jane*, p. 83.



*Image 22: A fashion plate showing morning dresses for February 1799. Mrs Broadbent in Jamaica desired her daughter to bring light-coloured morning dresses from London when she returned to the island. Source: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org).*



The written instructions about requested items could at times be hard to interpret. On such occasions, the intermediaries also took on the role as a clarifier of the orders. When Nathaniel Milward in Kingston wanted a coat made in England to be sent to him, his friend Lowbridge Bright was helpful. Bright later sent a letter back to the West Indies stating:

I have ordered the pattern for your coat, but it is not ready. Will send it as soon as embroidered together with the stockings I hope the embroiderer understand what you mean from your and my verbal description, for your drawing though very neat is beyond her comprehension.<sup>733</sup>

Nathaniel Milward had a specific desire, but he needed help obtaining the wanted pattern embroidered on the coat. As we do not know what the desired embroidery was, it is difficult to make any judgment about the clarity of the description. However, perhaps Lowbridge Bright was useful as an interpreter of the written description, as he and his friend had discussed this coat and the pattern at some occasion, or because he knew what the desired embroidery looked like. Similar difficulties were not only common in transatlantic trade, but also present in the commissioning of clothes within the borders of Britain. Confusion arose when the customers in rural England were forced to take their own measures, for example, but also in relation to the cut and colour of the ordered pieces of clothing.<sup>734</sup>

The instructions regarding purchase in the transatlantic letters were of all sorts, ranging from detailed descriptions of a number of items, their quality and style, to short notes. When Henry Bright asked his father-in-law to ship some much-desired quality furniture to the island, he included a detailed description of the items in a few letters. He referred to the shipment as a 'few necessities', however, it consisted of twelve chairs, one round table and one writing desk, all made of mahogany. To this were added one black walnut bedstead for a mosquito net, two looking glasses and hair for making a mattress. The sizes of the various pieces of furniture were carefully depicted, implying that he had already decided on a house or a room to put them in, even if this is not mentioned in the letter. In addition to the requested furniture, Henry Bright asked his father-in-law to make sure that some clothes that he had previously ordered were made

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<sup>733</sup> Lowbridge Bright, Bristol, to Nathaniel Milward, Kingston, letter dated 3 August 1774, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 463.

<sup>734</sup> Lambert, 'Sent from Town', p. 76–79.

and paid for. From an earlier letter, we understand that the clothes were a hat and one dozen pairs of hose.<sup>735</sup>

It could be asked why Henry Bright chose to import the bulky items for his own use to the island, as there also were local furniture makers. One reason, already discussed in this thesis, could be that imported items in the colonies in general were seen as being of better quality than items sold locally. Therefore, by using imported items the colonist could furnish their homes with stylish furniture of good quality associated with a polite and refined way of life.<sup>736</sup> In the above-mentioned letters, the father-in-law was given several roles as a proxy and participant in the consumption of Henry Bright. First, he was in charge of supervising that the order was executed and paid for. In addition, he had to buy the furniture, or commission someone else to do it. Finally, when the pieces of furniture were ready, he had to decide whether they were of good enough quality to be sent across the Atlantic to the relative looking forward to the shipment. In the letters there are no further instructions regarding the appearance of the furniture, which I would suggest, meant that there was a common understanding of material and appearance. As the topic did not need clarification, it seems that Henry Bright relied on his father-in-law to make the right decision and trusted his judgment in this matter.

## 5.4 Conclusions: collaborative consumption across the Atlantic

The question I set out to answer in this chapter was: how did the eighteenth-century settlers in Jamaica obtain desired items, if they did not buy them locally? The stores on the island offered, at least at times, a range of goods of various qualities and fashions, but it seems that quite often this supply did not meet the demand of the white inhabitants on the island. Based on my research, I argue that the white inhabitants, in addition to purchases in the local stores, used their connections on the other side of

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<sup>735</sup> Henry Bright, Kingston to Richard Meyler II, Bristol, letter dated 16 May 1743, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 180; Henry Bright, Kingston to Richard Meyler II, Bristol letter dated 30 July 1743, in Morgan (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 181.

<sup>736</sup> Nash, 'Domestic Material Culture and the Consumer Demand in the British Atlantic World', in David S. Shields (ed.), *Material Culture in Anglo-America: Regional Identity and Urbanity in the Tidewater, Lowcountry and the Caribbean*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2009, p. 221–266.

the Atlantic and ordered desired items by letter from friends and relatives. The aim of this chapter has been to analyse letters that were sent across the Atlantic during the late eighteenth century, in order to examine what types of items were ordered in this way, how these items were discussed and described in the letters and in what way British or European fashion trends were spread to Jamaica through correspondence. This approach opens an analysis of the underlying motives and aims of the consumption behaviour of the settlers.

The commissioning of clothes and other items across the Atlantic came with numerous difficulties. Some of these problems also occurred when someone ordered items more locally, or when friends did each other favours and were as such not connected to the transatlantic orders. The proxies who supervised the ordering of, for example, pieces of clothing, had to know the size of the person who would be wearing the clothes, as well as other preferences with regard to their dress. Those functioning as proxies for someone in the West Indies also had to be aware of the latest changes in fashion and make sure that the items were properly parcelled up for the long journey across the Atlantic. Also the freight had to be paid for. Because of the long distance, mistakes were difficult to mend as they often meant the eager customer in the West Indies had to wait for several months in order to receive a new shipment.

This transatlantic commissioning of items also had an economic aspect. The amounts of money that should be spent on specific purchases were seldom mentioned in the letters; instead the discussions mostly concerned other aspects such as material, quality and colour. The proxies in England had, at least temporarily, to pay for the requested items themselves. Consequently, the persons placing orders in Jamaica became dependent in various ways upon the proxies, as they had to rely not only on their ideas about fashion and ability to make purchases, but also on their money or capacity to obtain or give credit. For the white inhabitants of eighteenth-century Jamaica, the use of credit or the borrowing of money from friends and relatives was a necessity if they wanted the much-awaited shipments of fineries from Britain.

The white inhabitants in Jamaica ordered all kinds of items from Britain at the time, but many of the requests were for fashionable pieces of clothing to be used at balls and other social gatherings; events that offered ample chances of display. The desire among the settlers to dress according to the latest fashion in Europe is evident; but there was also a wish for

clothes that were similar to those that their peers on the island were wearing. In other words, their consumption choices can be taken both as an attempt to imitate European fashion, as well as to be distinct from the poorer whites in the West Indies who could not afford to import items. The desire to wear imported clothes of the latest fashion, can be explained by the settlers' wish to be seen as fully comparable to British country gentlefolk, even if they happened to live across the Atlantic. In the case of the Governor and his wife, it is also clear that they had a significant role as the King's representatives on the island, and therefore had to behave according to the expectations of the settlers, showing the necessary splendour and opulence in dress. As the desired fineries were not always found in the local stores, orders from across the sea became necessary.

The sources studied show that there was an ongoing discussion about fashion across the Atlantic. Fashion, good taste and novelty all affected the consumer choices of the settlers and their proxies, but as the former were dependent on the latter for information, trust became an important issue in the correspondence. The ambitious settlers urged their friends and family members in Europe to keep them informed of the latest fashion trends as well as supplied with the necessary items. When orders were placed, they might be specific as to what types of goods the settlers desired, but the details were left up to the proxies. Due to the long period of transportation, this practice ensured that the received clothes were more modish than if the settler had decided the particulars. Furthermore, when the shipment had arrived in the West Indies, the receiver sent a letter back reporting his or her opinions on the clothes. In this way, the settlers and their relatives and friends in Britain created and negotiated a common understanding of the consumer items and fashionable dresses.

## 6 Expensive living and costly entertainment in Jamaica, c. 1750–1810

In the opening chapter of this thesis, a woman living in eighteenth-century Jamaica sat down to write a letter to her daughter on the other side of the Atlantic. Like many other children of British descent on the island, the daughter had been sent by her parents to a boarding school in England to receive a genteel education. In their correspondence, mother and daughter discussed a number of subjects, ranging from news about various acquaintances, to enquiries about the current fashion in England, as well as complaints about the slow transport and uncertain contacts between the island and the mother country. Their correspondence was part of a stream of letters that crossed the Atlantic between settlers in the West Indies and their friends, family members and business associates in Britain. These letters were an important link across the Atlantic, and brought a small piece of British culture to a setting that many Europeans perceived as unfamiliar, unorganised and often brutal. For the colonists in the Caribbean, of whom many saw themselves as Englishmen living abroad, this meant that they met with many difficulties in their attempts to create either the reality or the image of Jamaica as a miniature England.

The aim of this study has been to examine the consumption patterns of white settlers in Jamaica at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. By focusing on these individuals, not primarily as slave owners or traders, but as consumers of a wide array of items of various qualities and executions that reached the British market at the time, this thesis contributes to research within the history of consumption. By combining notions from previous studies on material culture, polite society and collaborative consumption, I have shown how the white inhabitants in Jamaica received information about fashion in Europe, the role that display had in social situations in the island and how the inhabitants collaborated with their friends and relatives in England in order to buy desired items. Theoretically, this thesis has built on the works by sociologist Thorstein Veblen and Pierre Bourdieu. By examining the consumption of a few aspiring Britons in late eighteenth-century Jamaica, I have shown that there were conspicuous elements in their consumption. Furthermore, according to the sources studied, the whites in Jamaica were eager to underline their connections to Britain by following a behavioural

pattern that underlined a common understanding of good taste and the latest fashions in Europe. Locally, they were keen to seek approval from their peers in Jamaica and strengthen their self-image as Britons living abroad. One way to do this was to take part in the 'right' kind of entertainment. Participating in the social activities in the island dressed in appropriate clothing, was one way of trying to fit in and obtain approval.

Jamaican eighteenth-century society was highly unequal, based as it was on slavery and terror. Among the small group of white inhabitants on the island, there was a constant fear of slave rebellions as well as natural disasters such as tropical storms and earthquakes. Various diseases and a warm climate afflicted the inhabitants and most of the Europeans arriving there sought to make a fortune quickly and then leave. Only a few of them succeeded, but those who did, were in general wealthier than the inhabitants of other British colonies were at the time. Despite the harsh surroundings and the constraints that life in the West Indies brought, the white settlers tried to keep up a certain appearance and display themselves as polite Englishmen away from home. One way to do this was through consumption. During the early modern era, exotic commodities and raw materials from other parts of the world, such as sugar, coffee, tea, cocoa, silk and cotton reached Europe and the European colonies. In addition, European manufacturers produced a large and diversified array of items. Over time, ready-made clothes, various fabrics and furniture made of imported woods became available to an increasing group of people interested in taking part in this new consumer culture, dressing in new fabrics and furnishing their home in new ways. As many of these items were exported to the British colonies, the inhabitants there were also within reach of the novelties, manufactured goods and luxuries. By making purchases in the local stores and ordering items from Britain, they tried to participate in the new consumer culture that evolved in Britain and the rest of Europe during the eighteenth century.<sup>737</sup>

In this study, travel writings, diaries, letters, newspaper advertisements and satirical caricatures depicting life in the West Indies have been analysed. Public opinion in Britain on the consumer behaviour and manners of the white settlers, as expressed in caricatures printed by William Holland, was that they had money; but that they lacked the

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<sup>737</sup> The idea about a consumer revolution in eighteenth century Britain was first brought forward by Neil McKendrick in the 1980s. It has later been criticized and calls for a more nuanced view have been made.

necessary knowledge about these items and their symbolic meanings and the refinement required to be part of British genteel society. In my analysis of the caricatures and written sources, I have found notions that both support and overturn this view. The wearing of winter clothes at the hottest time of year falls into a pattern of conspicuous consumption, while having to emphasise that those attending a ball should wear shoes, shows that there were those on the island who were not that accustomed to this type of event. On the other hand, I have discussed items that were made specifically for the tropical conditions in the West Indies, suggesting that the planters were seen as a group with great purchasing power and with an interest in buying these items. In other words, they were not only copying a British pattern, but also in some cases seen as a powerful consumer group.

### *Expensive living, refinement and taste*

When Edward Long, in his work on eighteenth-century Jamaica, accused the creoles of being too fond of expensive living, he was building on a common idea about the planters being too wealthy and desirous of expressing this wealth in a lavish lifestyle and conspicuous consumption. However, as has been discussed in this thesis, the wealth was unequally distributed and not all of the white settlers could afford such a lifestyle. With regard to housing – a clear outward manifesto of wealth – my analysis of travel writings and journals from Jamaica shows that the planters chose between two different paths. Some, struggling to establish a plantation, reinvested their profits, making the building of a lavish home impossible. Furthermore, as many planters chose to leave the island as soon as possible, and live as absentee landlords in relative safety in England they did not want to spend money on an extravagant house in the West Indies. However, this changed over the century and the white inhabitants of Jamaica began investing in their houses, building elaborate mansions on their plantations and refining the surroundings of these houses by investing time and money in gardens. Inspiration for these projects came from various directions such as travels in Europe and architectural pattern books.

The interiors of the houses also mattered in the white inhabitants' attempts to display themselves as wealthy and refined. By putting up newly-imported wallpaper or painting the inner walls in fashionable colours, decorating the walls with paintings and prints and choosing

suitable furniture and textiles, the settlers furnished their homes according to the latest trends in Britain. These nicely furnished and decorated rooms made fashionable settings for the entertainment of guests. Hospitality was common on the island and the inhabitants, particularly newcomers, were especially anticipated guests, partly because of a desire for news from the other colonies and Britain. Furthermore, by opening the doors of one's home, the owner of the house was provided with an audience for his or her display of wealth, manners and good taste, important features of a genteel way of life. In previous research, the importance of an audience has been highlighted, as status consumption is seen to be connected to display and performance. By examining the sources against this theoretical standpoint, I have shown that the white inhabitants of eighteenth-century Jamaica had opportunities to buy fine furniture, imported tea sets, candlesticks and other items and place them on show. Many of the items that were shipped to the West Indies by request of the settlers were purchased because the white inhabitants had a desire to fit in, create, or strengthen their identities as Britons living on the other side of the Atlantic. However, occasions where larger groups met, for example over dinner, were also excellent moments for the settlers to display their wealth and spend money on a lavish display of hospitality in the form of food and drink. On such occasions, consumption was a way of standing out from the crowd, and conspicuously displaying one's wealth. At the end of the eighteenth century, the white settlers in Jamaica were well known in Europe for this form of display.

### *Costly entertainment and possibilities for conspicuous consumption*

Everyday life for the white settlers in Jamaica was filled with difficulties of various kinds, caused by the environment and the nature of the society. Despite this, there were attempts made at keeping a lifestyle where cultural entertainment was to be had. This was especially visible in Kingston and Spanish Town, the largest towns on the island. These towns supplied the aspiring British consumers with a number of opportunities to see and be seen. They met in taverns, coffee houses, theatres, ballrooms and stores, in order to consume and to be seen by others. The wealthy whites on the island frequently arranged balls, especially as part of the social circuit during the sessions of the Jamaican House of Assembly. These gatherings were excellent opportunities for the white inhabitants on the island to expose themselves to the scrutinising gaze of others, and to



see others and engage in contact with persons of a higher social standing than themselves. As the white society on the island was so small, these gatherings brought together both the elite and people of lesser social standing. As has been discussed in this thesis, some of the people attending the balls and other assemblies were not as aware of the expected standard as they were required to be. Furthermore, the climate in the West Indies caused problems, making the imitation of British culture and polite society challenging. Contemporary travel accounts, journals and correspondence show that the high temperature at times made the settlers uncomfortable, dressed as they were in imported clothes, intended for a significantly cooler climate.

Shopping was one of many pastimes of the white inhabitants in late eighteenth-century Jamaica. In the stores, people from different ranks of society came together to examine the latest imports from Britain and the North American colonies. The stores offered aspiring consumers on the island many good opportunities to discuss fashion and their purchases, as well as displaying themselves as interested consumers. At the time, consumption was connected to knowledge, and showing an interest in a fashionable appearance was one way of improving one's position in society. In the Jamaican stores, a large variety of fabrics were sold, as well as ready-made clothes, shoes for all occasions, ribbons, hats and accessories of various kinds. As the white inhabitants in Jamaica were a long distance from the fashion centres of Europe, they had to rely on others for information about what was fashionable and appropriate. Storekeepers and their advertisements were one way, pattern books and fashion dolls another, but the help of friends and relatives in England was also of importance.

### *Proxies and collaboration across the Atlantic*

For eager consumers with money to spend the local stores were natural places to go shopping. An analysis of advertisements in local newspapers shows that there was, at least at times, a wide range of items compatible with a genteel way of life for sale in Jamaica: sets of china, fashionable furniture, clothes made in modish fabrics and various foodstuffs such as tea and Madeira wine. In their advertisements, the storekeepers often underlined that their goods were of the latest imports from England, and that the fabrics were of the best or newest quality and print. For the storekeepers, this kind of language was a way of enhancing trade, but the

advertisements can also be taken as evidence for the close cultural connections between Britain and the white inhabitants of Jamaica.

Despite the storekeepers' persuasive language and best efforts, local shops could not always supply the white settlers with everything that they desired. They were often of the opinion that the best things, and the latest fashions, came from Britain. Therefore, the white inhabitants in Jamaica at the time often reached across the Atlantic to relatives and family members in Britain for help. In the transatlantic correspondence studied in this thesis, various requests for items are mentioned. To the white settlers of Jamaica, this correspondence was important as it not only let them stay in contact with their friends and relatives across the Atlantic Ocean, but also kept them supplied with news and information about the latest fashion trends in Britain. At the time, new consumer goods were produced in Britain at an increasing pace, and many of these were exported to the colonies. These goods not only included necessary items such as pieces of clothing or food, but a wide range of luxuries. Many of the letters analysed in this thesis contain requests for specific items, and everything from bulky items such as furniture and carriages, to fashionable clothes, interior decorations such as paintings or prints and petty items such as garters were sent across the Atlantic. The prices of the requested items were seldom discussed; instead, the focus was placed on other characteristics such as colours, patterns and fashionableness. It is of course possible, that members of the same family had had a discussion concerning the budget, before they were separated by the Atlantic Ocean. However, in general money seems not to have been at the top of the settlers' minds when they made their choices or urged their proxies to do so, instead they were willing to pay the price if the items that they desired were shipped to them in the West Indies. By studying this late eighteenth-century transatlantic correspondence, it becomes clear that the relatives and friends in Britain played a crucial role in the consumption of the white settlers. They were not only suppliers of information about current fashions in England and Europe; they also carried out placed orders, clarified instructions and provided money for purchases.

### *An alternative story?*

This study has been all about consumption, individuals taking part in entertainment and loosening the strings of their purses in order to make acquisitions for themselves or others. However, an alternative story

relating to the history of consumption in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Jamaica could also have been told. When the English traveller Cynric Williams wrote *A tour through the island of Jamaica*, published in the beginning of the 1820s, he included an anecdote of a man, a Mr Matthews, whom he had met on the island during his travels. Mr Matthews was, according to Williams, deeply involved in the current political situation and an advocate of the liberation of Jamaica from England. This stance took its expression in the way that he felt about commodities imported from England to Jamaica; he wanted to avoid these whenever it was possible:

He has neither tea, porter, cider, wines, fish sauces, nor hams from England. His plate is manufactured from dollars, by one of his book-keepers, who has been educated by a goldsmith. His clothes are made in the island, though of British cloth. His furniture has been made his own carpenters; his beds stuffed with his own silk cotton. [...] He has a handsome carriage made of his own premises, and, with the exception of a few tools, he is independent of all the wants England supplies to others, as if England had ceased to exist.<sup>738</sup>

This is one of the few examples in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel writings from Jamaica that I have studied where consumption of British imported items was avoided in Jamaica. However, the man abstaining from consuming British items as a protest against the British government made a choice with regard to consumption. In a study of consumption behaviour in Jamaica in the late eighteenth century, it is relevant to point out that items that were not consumed, for some reason or other, are also part of the history of consumption, and that choices made in relation to these items mattered. The man in Cynric Williams' account chose to avoid buying items made in England as a form of protest, trying to make a statement by refraining from purchases of imported goods. In this study, statements made through consumption behaviour have been numerous, as the white inhabitants of Jamaica spent their money on expensive living and costly entertainment in an attempt to display themselves as the gentlefolk they desired to be seen as.

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<sup>738</sup> Cynric Williams, *A tour through the island of Jamaica: from western to the eastern end in the year 1823*, p. 65–66.

## Swedish summary – Sammanfattning

Syftet med denna avhandling har varit att studera den vita befolkningen på Jamaika under och deras konsumtion åren 1750–1810. Avhandlingens rubrik, "Expensive living and costly entertainment", är tagen ur en beskrivning av brittena på ön, gjord av den brittiske koloniala administratören, juristen och historikern Edward Long. I sitt verk, *A History of Jamaica* (1774) redogör han noggrant för livet på ön, och det intresse för lyx och nöjen som han tycker sig se hos den vita befolkningen. Genom att analysera dagböcker, brevväxlingar, reseskildringar och bilder från den aktuella tiden, har jag analyserat hur en liten grupp människor i en hård miljö försökte ta sig fram i livet och måla upp en bild av sig själva som engelska gentleman och -kvinnor, trots att de befann sig långt från Storbritanniens huvudstad London.

Under 1700-talet spelade det intryck man gjorde på personer i sin omgivning, genom till exempel kläder och sätt att föra sig, en stor roll. Samtidigt hade de tidigare så skarpa gränserna mellan olika skikt i samhället försvagats och konsumtion kom att bli ett sätt genom vilket ambitiösa personer kunde försöka stärka sin position i samhället. Under 1700-talet kom en mängd nya exotiska varor, såsom te, socker, kakao, kaffe, tobak, bomull och silkestyger till Europa och de europeiska kolonierna. Modet kom att få en allt större roll och för den som ville uppfattas som en gentleman gällde det att följa med i sin tid och i modets alla svängar. Avhandlingen utgår från följande tre frågeställningar: 1) Hur uppfattade brittena på Jamaika förfining och god smak? Genom att analysera källorna i jakt på beskrivningar av mode och diverse uppköp, har jag studerat de underliggande uppfattningarna om mode och god smak som de omfattade. 2) Vilka möjligheter hade brittena på Jamaika att köpa moderiktiga kläder och andra varor lokalt på ön? Genom att studera tidningsannonser och korrespondens över Atlanten, har jag försökt klarlägga hur uppfattningar om vad som var det senaste modet i Europa spred sig Jamaika. 3) Vilken roll spelade vänner och bekanta i Europa för konsumtionen? Hur kunde kontakterna över Atlanten användas för spridning av såväl konsumtionsvaror som idéer?

Jamaika var under 1700-talet Englands mest värdefulla koloni, till stor del på grund av den produktion av socker och andra grödor som skedde på ön. Arbetskraften på sockerplantagerna bestod till största delen av slavar som med våld hade transporterats till Västindien. På ön fanns även en liten minoritet av vita invånare, och de är dessa som har stått i centrum för min undersökning. Majoriteten av denna vita befolkning på Jamaika drömde om att snabbt skrapa ihop en förmögenhet för att sedan lämna ön för den relativa tryggheten hemma i England. Livet i Västindien var kantat av en rad faror, förutom en ständig rädsla för slavuppror utgjorde sjukdomar, tropiska stormar och jordbävningar verkliga hot. Även klimatet var en påfrestning för de européer som reste till området. I Storbritannien såg man ofta ner på den vita befolkningen i Västindien, framför allt mot slutet av århundradet då rösterna mot slaveri och förtryck växte sig allt starkare. I satiriska teaterpjäser och karikatyrer framställdes den vita befolkningen på Jamaika som en grupp utbildade personer med för hög alkoholkonsumtion som levde i omoraliska förhållanden med sina kvinnliga slavar. Enligt detta synsätt hade de vita britterna på Jamaika visserligen mycket pengar, men inte en aning om hur de skulle föra sig för att leva upp till idealbilden av den engelska gentlemannen.

Avhandlingen visar att utbudet av nöjen för den vita befolkningen på ön var brett. Framför allt under de veckor på året då den lagstiftande makten, *Jamaican House of Assembly*, sammanträdde, samlades en stor del av den vita befolkningen på ön i en av de större städer, Spanish Town. Kvällstid erbjöds nöjen i form av teater, konserter, dans och middagar. Dessa sammankomster hade flera funktioner, de var inte bara till för att roa den vita befolkningen på ön, utan även ypperliga chanser för deltagarna att visa upp sig inför andra, bli sedda och umgås med likasinnade.

I avhandlingen analyseras även arkitektur och konsumtionen av möbler och andra former av inredning på Jamaika under senare delen av 1700- och början av 1800-talet. På Jamaika spelade gästfrihet en stor roll, det fanns få värdshus på ön och det var vanligt att plantageägarna och deras gäster umgicks i hemmen. Dessa sammankomster gav värden tillfälle att visa upp sig själv och sin familj, samt manifesteras eller försöka förbättra sin position genom att visa upp sin konsumtion av specifika föremål och kläder som var kopplade till status. Ett vackert, moderiktigt inrett hus fungerade som en ypperligare bakgrund för att visa upp sig som

en person som följde sin tid och visste hur och vad man förväntades konsumera.

Avhandlingen bygger också på en analys av brev. Analysen av brevväxlingar över Atlanten mellan vita invånare på Jamaika och deras vänner och släktingar i England visar, att den senare gruppen hade en central roll i inte bara anskaffandet av moderiktiga kläder till ön utan också som förmedlare av information. Även om kontakterna mellan Jamaika och moderlandet var relativt täta tog det ändå månader för ett skepp att korsa Atlanten. Under överfarten kunde fartygen råka ut för problem som försenade dem ytterligare eller till och med förlisa, något som skapade en stor osäkerhet på ön. De vita invånarna på Jamaika såg fram emot brev från England med nyheter från släkt och vänner, men också med information om det rådande modet i Europa. Med hjälp av dessa upplysningar gjorde de om sina kläder och frisyrer för att bättre motsvara det senaste modet i Europa. Mellanhänderna i Storbritannien fungerade också som kontaktpersoner vid beställningar av kläder, de kunde förklara instruktioner för sömmerskor och skräddare och i många fall även betala för de önskade sakerna och överse transporten till Västindien. Den vita befolkningen på Jamaika var alltså beroende av de transatlantiska kontakterna för sin konsumtion och deras försök att framställa sig som brittiska gentlemän och -kvinnor bör därför ses som ett transatlantiskt projekt.

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Image 4: William Holland: Johnny New Come in the island of Jamaica, London, 1800, The British Museum, London. © Trustees of the British Museum.

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Image 6: William Holland: Segar smoking society in Jamaica, London, 1802, The British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Image 7: A Bottle ticket, probably made in Sheffield in 1780, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Image 8: William Holland, a West India sportsman, London, 1807, The British Museum, London. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Image 9: A grand Jamaica ball! or the creolean hop ala muftee as exhibited in Spanish Town. British Cartoon prints collection, Library of Congress.

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Image 14: William Holland, West India Luxury!!, London 1808, The British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum.

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Image 20: Agostino Brunias, Planter and his wife, with a servant, ca. 1780, Yale Centre for British Art.

Image 21: Thomas Gainsborough, Portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire to the left and Henry William Beechey, Augusta Sophia of Hannover, princess of the United Kingdom on the right. Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

Image 22: A fashion plate showing morning dresses for the year 1799, *Los Angeles County Museum of Art*, [www.lacma.org](http://www.lacma.org).

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