Radical Skepticisms: Literatures of the Long Jamaican 1960s

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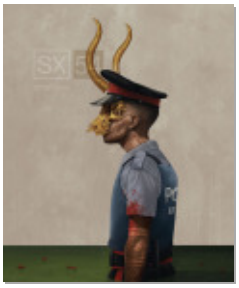

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This is the kind of *pessimism* that has been increasingly haunting the conventional West Indian novel . . . since the end of Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956). It is a mood which reflects the continuing West Indian sense of political and cultural rootlessness and failure.
—Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite, "West Indian Prose Fiction in the Sixties"

Jamaican fiction published in the 1960s was fundamentally pessimistic but nuanced in its discrepant varieties. These writings drew from regional ontologies of religious millenarianism, colonial abjection, and racial damnation, as well as from the existentialist philosophies of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Eliding the breadth of such distinctions, contemporary postcolonial scholars position two dominant texts, Sylvia Wynter's 1962 *Hills of Hebron* and Orlando Patterson's 1964 *Children of Sisyphus*, as outliers of an otherwise optimistic period of writing nationalist romances.[1] Such periodization, however, occludes the complexities of the emergent disillusionment and disappointment with the nation-building project.[2] Rather than exceptions, these two texts are consistent

1 Literary critics such as Belinda Edmondson have long taught us to look behind the veneer of mythological tropes; see her *Caribbean Romances: The Politics of Regional Representation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999). See also Leah Reade Rosenberg's careful study of Caribbean literature's ambivalence between imperial affect and nationalist desire, in *Nationalism and the Formation of Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

2 The conceptual strength of Deborah Thomas's and David Scott's anthropological studies have effectively enabled other scholars to make shorthand generalizations about the narrative trajectory of romance to tragedy. See Deborah Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); and David Scott, "The Tragic Vision in Postcolonial Time," *PMLA* 129, no. 4 (2014): 799–808. Harvey Neptune challenges such historiography in his attention to the sociopolitical culture of 1940s Trinidad; see the coda to his *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). An older generation

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with the decade's literary pessimistic mood underscored by Kamau Brathwaite in the quote above.[3] Returning to a corpus of Jamaican writings, twelve novels and one memoir, I examine the heterogeneous nature of the decade's literary pessimisms to argue for a sensibility of *radical skepticisms* that utilized critical distance to cast doubt on the past, the present, and the very idea of single-island sovereign futures.[4] Radical skepticisms reveal that there was not a uniform nationalist romance about what independence signified. Instead, diverse writers entered the 1960s at a critical juncture, with frustration, reservation, and doubt as a foundational core rather than simply or solely a superstructural element. Jamaican writers did not have a homogeneous idea of, or desire for, "the nation-state"; and in fact, with hopes of federation fading, many questioned the very project of independent state sovereignty and offered differing responses about what was on the horizon. For some, the demise of federation meant impossible futures for developing third world economies; for others, it was the internal and intimate racial, ethnic, and class hierarchies within national, communal, and diasporic formations that proved the impasse. Especially in those narratives that focused on the middle classes, writers depicted how the heteronormative bourgeois project had literally undone many of its subjects. While female and subaltern bodies are often understood outside the teleology and promises of national sovereignty, even middle-class male bodies that imagined themselves the inheritors of self-government arrived at independence with a sense of radical skepticism rather than euphoric optimism.[5]

Plotting to disrupt both material and ideological stagnation, these fictions sought to highlight structural conditions in need of social transformation and to make narratives account for the diverse voices competing for recognition within the rhetoric of creole nationhood. Consequently, the decade's fiction captured a range of story lines—pro-federation, pro- and antinationalist, socialist, feminist, cosmopolitan, exilic, and queer—and a variety of forms, such as romance, tragedy, the tragicomedy, the historical novel, the comedic novel of manners, and the *künstlerroman*. Leadership is a ubiquitous theme, whether intellectual, political, or religious leaders are represented as entrenched in stifling orthodoxies. Covering topographies from urban to rural and temporalities from

of criticism paid careful attention to periodization that often materialized as studies of particular decades. Notable examples include Bruce King, *West Indian Literature* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1979).

3 Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite, "West Indian Prose Fiction in the Sixties," *Caribbean Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1970): 11 (emphasis mine). It is important to note that Brathwaite's survey is regionally organized rather than nationally, which is crucial to the centrality of the formation of West Indian versus national identity during the period. The temporal point delineated here is only relevant for how Jamaican fiction lines up in his broader regional categorization. For Jamaican-specific studies, see Rhonda Cobham-Sander, "The Creative Writer and West Indian Society: Jamaica, Literature, 1900–1950" (PhD diss., University of St. Andrews, 1981); Barbara Lalla, *Defining Jamaican Fiction: Marronage and the Discourse of Survival* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996); and Sheri-Marie Harrison, *Jamaica's Difficult Subjects: Negotiating Sovereignty in Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Criticism* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2014).

4 Neville Dawes, *The Last Enchantment* (1960; repr., Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2009); Andrew Salkey, *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* (1960; repr., Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2009); Namba Roy, *Black Albino* (1961; repr., London: Longman, 1986); John Hearne, *Land of the Living* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961); Fitzroy Fraser, *Wounds in the Flesh* (London: New Authors, Hutchinson, 1962); Sylvia Wynter, *The Hills of Hebron* (1962; repr., Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2010); Orlando Patterson, *Children of Sisyphus* (1964; repr., Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2011); Alvin Bennett, *God the Stonebreaker* (1964; repr., London: Heinemann, 1973); J. B. Emtage, *Brown Sugar: A Vestigial Tale* (London: Collins, 1966); Lindsay Barrett, *Song for Mumu* (1967; repr., Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974); Orlando Patterson, *An Absence of Ruins* (1967; repr., Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2012); Andrew Salkey, *The Late Emancipation of Jerry Stover* (London: Hutchinson, 1968); Joyce Gladwell, *Brown Face, Big Master* (1969; repr., London: MacMillan Caribbean, 2004).

5 Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship: Sexuality and the Nation in Contemporary Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

slavery to the independent present, the decade's literature was also caught up with questions of queer sexualities, prostitution, and interracial and intercolonial sexual liaisons.[6] Of the thirteen narratives, five take up the period's debate about Rastafarianism as cult versus culture.[7] Because the novel is the dominant form, these writers worry less about housing respectable narratives and detail instead the cost of respectability and other forms of social uplift. Where the texts address numerous themes, Jamaican literary culture itself in this preindependence period evinces a cosmopolitan character. Older members of this constellation of writers were born in Nigeria; Montreal, Canada; Panama; and Cuba to Jamaican parents. While a number of Caribbean writers in the making sought exile in England and Africa, the reverse was also true: white English expatriate writers settled in Jamaica. Two of the eleven writers in this cohort are women, who published single texts in their thirties; the male writers generally published in their mid-twenties.[8]

Brathwaite's immediate survey of the 1960s Caribbean literary landscape offered a temporal grid that characterized pre-1965 Jamaican fiction as "novels of frustration" providing narrative resolution through consolation and post-1965 fictions as persistently pessimistic. Where his historical demarcation positioned mid-decade as a pivotal turning point, I advance a more detailed mapping of the temporalities of 1960s pessimisms; that is, how the literature exists *within* the decade's unfolding sociopolitical timeline, which we might think of as late colonial (late 1950s through 1961), articulating the anticipatory hopes for federation or single-island sovereignty; independence (1962), reckoning with federation's failure and the arrival of independent state formations; and early postcoloniality (1963 through 1970), living in the heady days of new nation building. Rather than understanding pessimism as debilitating impasse or frustrated returns, my conceptualization of radical skepticisms thinks through pessimisms' generativity to reveal how these late-colonial Jamaican writers anticipated current critical theories about failure's productivity, while also highlighting the need to pluralize our very conception of *afro-pessimisms* to account for different black diasporic geopolitical formations such as the Caribbean.[9] Whereas US-centered Afro-pessimism focuses on the afterlife of slavery, because the Caribbean comprises plantation, colonial, anticolonial, and

6 Salkey's *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* has been recently revived for its exploration of queer themes, but such moments also structure Barrett's *Song for Mumu*.

7 The texts are Hearne's *Land of the Living*, Patterson's *An Absence of Ruins* and *Children of Sisyphus*, Emtage's *Brown Sugar*, and Salkey's *The Late Emancipation of Jerry Stover.*

8 The exceptions were Roy, Bennett, Dawes, Hearner, and Salkey. Namba Roy, the eldest of the writers in this survey, was born in Accompong, Jamaica, of maroon heritage, in 1915. He was forty-six years old at the time of his novel's publication and died in London within the same year of its release. Alvin Bennett was born in March 1918. *God the Stonebreaker*, his second novel, was published in 1964, when he was forty-six years old (his first novel, *Because They Know Not*, was published in 1961). Neville Dawes was born in Warri, Nigeria, to Jamaican parents in 1926. *The Last Enchantment*, the first of his three novels, was published in 1960, when he was thirty-five years old. John Hearne was born in Montreal, Canada to Jamaican parents in 1926. *Voices under the Window*, the first of his ten novels, was published in 1955, when he was twenty-nine years old. Andrew Salkey was born in Panama to Jamaican parents in 1928. *Escape to an Autumn Pavement*, the second of his five novels, was published in 1960, when he was thirty-two years old. Sylvia Wynter was born in Cuba to Jamaican parents in 1928. Her only novel, *The Hills of Hebron*, was published in 1962, when she was thirty-four years old. Joyce Gladwell was born in Jamaica in 1931. Her only published work, the memoir *Brown Face, Big Master*, was published in 1969, when she was thirty-seven years old. Fitzroy Fraser was born in Jamaica in 1936. His only published novel, *Wounds in the Flesh*, appeared in 1962, when he was twenty-six years old. Orlando Patterson was born in Jamaica in 1940. He is a noted academic sociologist, but he published two novels in the 1960s: *Children of Sisyphus*, in 1964, and *Absence of Ruins*, in 1967, when he was twenty-four and twenty-seven, respectively. Lindsay Barrett was born in Jamaica in 1941. His *Song for Mumu* was published in 1967, when he was twenty-six years old. I have not been able to discern more information on James Bernard Emtage, the British expatriate writer who published *Brown Sugar* in 1966.

9 Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

neocolonial societies, it disrupts the binary between spaces of colonialism versus slavery.[10] As a result, this Jamaican archive delimits theorizing blackness as the single register: Caribbean more starkly accentuates that where one fell on the color line *between* blackness and whiteness mattered, since it often indexed the generational accumulation of capital and often colonial economic, affective, and political values. In these narratives, and consequently in my discussion, the terms *near white* and *brown* signal varying degrees of proximity to the accrual of plantation wealth—and the intricacies that framing the Caribbean as creole renders visible.[11] Thus understanding the 1960s through radical skepticisms as political and affective responses attends to what it meant to live with, and live in, fluctuating temporal moods, and how one lives with moodiness as a way of enduring the afterlife of slavery, colonialism, and independence.

In what follows, I offer a chronological but schematic mapping of this literary oeuvre before turning to a sustained reading of Neville Dawes's opening 1960 novel, *The Last Enchantment*, and Joyce Gladwell's closing 1969 autobiography, *Brown Face, Big Master.* Together they bookend the types of radical skepticisms central to the period's cultural political sensibilities. Disenchantment and doubt, but not hopelessness, are the prevailing ethos of the thirteen texts examined here. Collectively, they link the structural failures and fissures of state making to the psychic life of these citizens in the making when the things they had hoped for, or groomed themselves for, fell apart. Even while the narratives do not provide idyllic utopian visions of the future, their multitudinous plotlines, which include resentment, betrayal, disillusion, disappointment, detachment, shame, and contempt, create conceptual ground to accommodate the discrepant political and affective responses in, and to, the independence era.

The decade's opening texts pose a series of questions to which they proffered provisional answers about impending independence: Is federation a more viable project? Can exceptionally black communities be housed within the nation-building project? Has a black utopia ever existed? Set in bedsitters, bars, and barbershops throughout late-1950s metropolitan London, Andrew Salkey's 1960 *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* provides an opening answer with a rumination on federation. This temporality at once underscores Fredric Jameson's contention that the 1960s began earlier in the anticolonial world; but it also demonstrates that from London, regional cultural politics were fervently debated amongst emigrants who imagined themselves stakeholders in the

10 Manthia Diawara's *In Search of Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) is the progenitor of this current generation's theorizations of Afro-pessimism. See also Frank Wilderson's interview with Saidiya Hartman, "The Position of the Unthought," *Qui Parle* 13, no. 2 (2003): 183–201; Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); and Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016) recognizes such diasporic dislocations; Caribbean spaces and thinkers Dionne Brand, Kamau Brathwaite, and M. NourbeSe Philip provide the conceptual spine for her theorization about living in the afterlife of slavery as "the wake" and "wake work." In his review of Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother*, Harvey Neptune uses "wake work" to characterize this body of African diasporic scholarship that insists on accounting for "despair, defeat and death." See Harvey Neptune, "Loving through Loss: Reading Saidiya Hartman's History of Black Hurt," *Anthurium* 6, no. 1, article 6 (2008): 1.

11 See O. Nigel Bolland, "Creolisation and Creole Societies: A Cultural Nationalist View of Caribbean Social History," in "Konversations in Kreole: The Creole Society Model Revisited; Essays in Honour of Kamau Brathwaite," special issue, *Caribbean Quarterly* 44, nos. 1–2 (1998): 1–32; and Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (London: Clarendon, 1971).

region's future.[12] It is in the barbershop—a space of male sociality in which intellectuals meet the popular classes—that men from different West Indian territories and class backgrounds deliberate and articulate more support for federation than for single-island sovereignty. Because emigration had consistently been the response to lack of economic opportunities for the working classes, these migratory subjects had already understood the hollowness of a nation-state capable of facilitating their economic aspirations. Hence, two years before independence, *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* plots the preindependence signposts of disappointment felt by this group of West Indians in London.

The decade's opening disappointment is followed in 1961 with two novels of betrayal and denigration. Maroon communities are often idealized as alternative socialities to plantation slavery, but through the plotline of betrayal, Namba Roy's 1961 *Black Albino* explores how it feels to be exiled within the maroon community, laying bare its internal hierarchies, prejudices, divisions, and racial diversity. In Roy's rendering, this maroon settlement discloses the fault lines in constituting a harmonious black nation. Troubling the multiracial rhetoric of the black and brown creole nationalist projects, the novel compels readers to question what it means to think imminent independence and black futurity through the figure of the albino. Where *Black Albino* engages the earliest historical instantiation of black resistance, John Hearne's *Land of the Living*, published in the same year, portrays the 1960 Claudius Henry Affair: Henry, the Afro-Jamaican Rastafarian-identified leader, was accused and found guilty of arms possession and treason, leading to a nationwide state of emergency. Beset by Cold War politics, Hearne's alternative imagined community is framed as the result of culture under constraints rather than the spontaneous violent expression of a cult fringe. At its core, then, *Land of the Living* is a nationalist novel that seeks to accommodate this denigrated black subculture within the national fold. Furthermore, by invoking the point of view of an exiled Jewish intellectual as protagonist, the novel not only makes visible the local white planter class but, more important, makes Rastafarianism resonate with other global oppressions.[13]

As independence approaches in 1962, the questions turn to the sustainability of resistive ideological positions and communities, as well as the corruption embedded even in counter-publics. Fitzroy Fraser's *Wounds in the Flesh* and Sylvia Wynter's *Hills of Hebron* usher in independence with revenge plotlines addressing the absurdity of unquestioned Marxist and religious orthodoxies. With a focus on administrative leaders, Fraser explores the state of the nation's educational institutions while Wynter scrutinizes the millenarian ideologies and practices of a self-isolated religious sect. Through sartorial style wars, Fraser dramatizes the farce of colonial educational leadership ill-suited to the needs of the local population, whereby after repeated attempts to resist colonial affectations, the protagonist succumbs to the internal disciplinary pressures of the local bourgeoisie to secure respect, an income, and professional mobility. Wynter's *Hills of Hebron* utilizes a revenge plot replete with betrayal, rape, and pregnancy to chronicle a leader's marital shame and

12 Fredric Jameson,"Periodizing the 60s," in "The 60s without Apology," special issue, *Social Text*, nos. 9–10 (1984): 178–209.
13 V. S. Reid and Roger Mais brought these themes to Jamaican fiction in the 1940s and 1950s. They are also touched on in Shivaun Hearne's important biography of her father, *John Hearne's Life and Fiction: A Critical Biographical Study* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2013).

ultimate vindication; but more pointedly, the novel unveils the corruption embedded even in those religious groups that physically and morally set themselves apart from the larger decadent society. As mid-decade approaches, in 1964, we begin to see the turn toward what Brathwaite identifies as "persistent pessimism" with the publication of two novels that address the urban spatiality of black abjection through the plotline of dehumanizing shame. Alvin Bennett's *God the Stonebreaker* and Orlando Patterson's *Children of Sisyphus* represent the ghettos of Montego Bay's Swine Lane and Kingston's Dungle. Both novels address the housing crisis of the nation's subaltern, whereby unable to escape the geography of squalor the protagonists ultimately inhabit the shame of returning to the dire social conditions originally escaped. Paired, these two novels reveal that Patterson is not the sole author of the period's fictions of abject black housing and caution the critical cordoning off of Kingston as the exceptional national space to think conditions of urbanity, especially urban blight.

The transitional downturn of the 1960s provides a universal critique of settled dispossession within Caribbean societies rather than Jamaica specifically as evinced in J. B. Emtage's 1966 *Brown Sugar: A Vestigial Tale* and Lindsay Barrett's *Song for Mumu* in 1967. In Emtage's *Brown Sugar*, despite racial difference Jamaican Rastafarians and Barbadian Red Legs (poor whites who are the legacy of white indentured laborers) share a habitus of national dispossession. Through the contemptuous yet tragicomic lens of this British expatriate, Rastafarians are rendered gullible victims caught up in revolutionary passions. But in framing Rastafarians as Jamaica's angry young men, the author links them to their disaffected white working-class male counterparts in postwar England, who share a similar mood of anger and disappointment. Weaving poetry and folklore into the structure of the novel to demonstrate African folkways and black vernacular culture, *Song for Mumu* tackles the intergenerational legacies of mental illness.[14] The novel asserts that whether in the pastoral countryside or the concrete jungle of urban Kingston, the then colonial and now post-colonial state do not offer meaningful institutional structures of care to its citizens grappling with mental illness. As the decade rounds to a close in 1967 and 1968, two novels dealing with middle-class angst appear: Orlando Patterson's second novel, *An Absence of Ruins*, and Andrew Salkey's third novel, *The Late Emancipation of Jerry Stover*. The former critiques the paradoxical position of university intellectuals caught between the ruling classes they attacked and the masses they sought to elevate. After his academic training abroad, the protagonist's central conundrum is his inability to resettle into the nation or commit to the socialist agenda of his intellectual peers, which results in his exodus from Jamaica back to England. *An Absence of Ruins* captures a mounting sense of disillusion and detachment well before the 1968 expulsion of Walter Rodney, which is often credited as being the catalyst for intellectual flight from the island. Critiquing a brand of intellectual activism that mobilized around race and an uncomplicated championing of the folk, this campus novel demonstrates that intellectuals cannot be homogeneously categorized as nationalist, and that, in fact, they did not achieve any sense of a nationalist hegemony over the people. Depicting a similar middle-class cosmopolitan milieu of urban Kingston, Salkey's *The Late Emancipation* captures the

14 See Edward Baugh, "*Song for Mumu* by Lindsay Barrett," *Caribbean Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1967): 53–54; and Kelly Baker Josephs, *Disturbers of the Peace: Representations of Insanity in Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

ethnicity-based class resentments played out between Jerry Stover, the reluctant brown middle-class civil servant, and his older Chinese supervisor, for whom this job means liberation from behind the stereotypical shop counter. Throughout the text, the Asian population foils Salkey's critique of middle-class Afro-creole indiscipline. For Jamaica's Asians, their ability to lift themselves out of ethnic-based labor niches (agriculture and shopkeeping) are overwhelming feats that require defying ethnic restrictions as well as casting off negative stigmas and societal expectations. The novel closes with Stover becoming undone by the tedium of his inherited place in the new creole nation, and he retreats from the banality of Kingston's urban center to join a Rastafarian group. Certainly this elective escape from his class trappings romanticizes marginality, but it also forcefully demonstrates that the center could not hold even for those intended as its inheritors. The range of radical skepticisms articulated in this Jamaican literary archive breaks down any singular reading of pessimism to show instead variegated responses to, and understandings of, the unfolding decade's possibilities and impossibilities.

Intimate Resentments

Neville Dawes opened the decade with a finely tuned character study of how intimate resentments motivate characters' actions revealing his own radical skepticism of the nationalist project. By the 1960 publication of *The Last Enchantment*, Dawes had quit Jamaica. Frustrated with what he perceived as an insecure and dishonest middle class, he sought more meaningful nation-building work in Kwame Nkrumah's 1950s Ghana, where he lived from 1955 to 1970 and from where he wrote this first novel, set in the urban Kingston of the late 1940s into the 1950s. Dawes already knew the story of Jamaica achieving universal suffrage in 1944. Aligned with the progressive left, Dawes was deep inside the nationalist movement, thereby amplifying his skepticism of the myth of a multiracial nation. The novel's very title marks the transitional point of no return to the idyllic hopes of what Marxism, federation, creole nationalism, or even Caribbean literary futures could offer. Dawes writes against the emerging creole nationalist fiction that "there was no black and white distinction in Jamaica and it was mischievous for people to try to invent shade discriminations and shade prejudices which did not exist."[15] Underscoring that vehicles of state and nation making are racializing machines, Dawes details just how much subtle shades of brown matter to reveal the cultural frustrations feeding into this intimate register and the aspirations for mobility thwarted.[16]

Resentments are often thought of as expressions of injustices structured around class, but the novel prompts a more nuanced conceptualization of resentments as negative intersectionality, which plots structural distinctions of difference along the intertwined grid of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. In the quotidian language of Jamaican discourse, resentments are negative emotions that are harbored or *ugly feelings* that one holds on to.[17] Throughout the novel, Dawes

15 Dawes, *The Last Enchantment*, 146; hereafter cited in the text.
16 See Stuart Hall's reflections on life in colonial Jamaica in his memoir, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). See also John Akomfrah's documentary film, *The Stuart Hall Project* (London: Smoking Dog Films, 2013).
17 See Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

frames resentments as a dialectic: all of the characters "harbor" various resentments that structure the nature of intimacies possible. It is not simply that a character has resentment against a particular person or group, but relationally the other side of the encounter also brings his or her own set of resentments. Thus, when they meet, these mutual histories of resentments that have been held on to, and from which neither side can move on, order social relations. Dawes explores how these feelings impact cultural politics, arguing that any viable construction of the nation would have to not only come to terms with but meaningfully transform the way these intimate resentments have disciplined social values and hierarchies. Resentment, therefore, resists claims for newness—new nation, new man, new woman. Instead the novel examines who attempts to lay claim to newness as a way of shedding an unfavorable or stigmatized past and who holds on to the other's past as a way of keeping them in their place. In this social drama, the marginalized claim newness while long-standing elites remain unmarked. Thus, through intimate resentments, Dawes discloses that pessimisms are unevenly distributed and lived. Because resentment is about holding on to various objects, histories, and feelings, with this plotline Dawes delineates the various colonial histories and their attendant hierarchies, embodiments, and accumulations of power relations that characters are unable to let go of or move on from.

Ramsay Tull and Cyril Hanson serve as each other's foil in the novel. Both are scholarship boys: Ramsay, the protagonist, is from the black lower-middle class, and Cyril, Ramsay's classmate and friend, is a middle-class brown boy clawing his way into Kingston's elite networks. On the surface, Cyril appears destined, by virtue of his color and social networks, to achieve the happy ending of the creole romance by marrying the prime minister's near-white daughter and solidifying access into the capital city's elite homes and clubs, spaces in which heretofore he was merely tolerated. But even this ambitious brown boy's story, Dawes demonstrates, is more nuanced. In contrast, Ramsay's story has a more tragic ending: he retreats to the countryside in defeat to recover from physical and psychological injuries and exhaustion brought on by political warfare. Through the plotline of resentment, the novel exposes both characters as perpetual intimate outsiders to the various social circles to which they aspire to belong.

Structured in three parts—home, abroad, and the return home—the novel begins in 1947 Kingston with the two young men interviewing for island scholarships to study at Oxford University. Having the shared local experience of Surrey College, modeled after British grammar schools, they understand that rather than simply closing the class gap, educational institutions highlight generations of racially based material and social privileges. Ramsay's racial consciousness is first awakened in this boarding school: "The school soon made him aware of the gaps that separated them. They were all complexions, all races—Negro, Indian, European, Chinese, Syrian, Jew, in purity and in endless variations and mixtures. They slept in the same dormitories, ate together, played together but they also learned that the [wealth] found [its] way into the hands of the fairer boys in direct proportion to their near-whiteness. . . . 'Great harmony among different races' was an inaccurate interpretation of a very precarious compromise" (51). Perhaps precisely because their illiberal education made them aware of racialized hierarchies, the assumption is that Cyril, the brown athlete, is the ideal candidate for a Rhodes scholarship, whereas Ramsay, the bright black student, should

compete for the less prestigious Chelaram scholarship (92). Positioning himself as exemplary, Cyril convinces himself that his mixed-race identity and athletic prowess are his natural vehicles for uplift (90): "Jamaica belongs to the half-breed Cyril said, with personal assurance, Not the blacks or the whites. Look at athletics. The best athletes are half-breeds" (132). As Cyril pushes his way into social circles in which he does not historically belong, it is this discourse of newness—new race, new nation, new men—on which creole nationalism rests, that he marshals to stake his claim.

Yet Cyril is very aware that this emerging myth is not available to all; thus it is only after Ramsay secures the scholarship that Cyril is willing to take him to the old-moneyed Myrtle Bank Hotel for lunch: "It would not be fair to say that he took Ramsay to the hotel simply because he had won the Chelaram scholarship. He had always wanted to take him there but he couldn't do it until Ramsay had achieved something" (132). This inability to inhabit the elite space of Myrtle Bank Hotel shows self-doubt on both sides: Cyril is not confident enough to be seen in this place with Ramsay because he lacks legacy; as an aspiring black young man, Ramsay would not have dreamed of going there without a sponsor. This insecurity that is both classed and raced persists despite the fact that "[Cyril] had already begun to move out of Ramsay's sphere, having by then gained fully the freedom of those houses in the elite suburbs of upper St. Andrew into which he previously forced his way, much to their owners' annoyance. He was now going to the beach and the Myrtle Bank pool with apple-blossom girls with names like Myers, Hopwood, Brandon, Fonseca" (143). In the late 1940s into the 1950s, it would have been too early for elites to feel themselves inauthentic. Relying on their generational privilege, these elites are the unmarked arbiters of social capital and the only characters who do not mobilize claims to new Jamaicanness. By the close of the novel, despite Cyril's marrying into the most visible of these elite families, the young male members of this social circle disclose the following sentiment about Cyril: "A man who can play a brilliant game of soccer but cannot ride a horse has a kind of moral inadequacy that can easily make him a socialist" (312). The very sport Cyril lays claim to is understood in hierarchical terms. Rather than the elite status of horse riding, his sport forever locates him as a scholarship boy. In spite of Cyril's perceived pragmatic happy ending, the immutable social fact of his birth fixes Cyril in his place, where he remains a perpetual intimate outsider. Similarly, after Ramsay's return from Oxford, education and cosmopolitan experiences abroad have not destabilized the deep historical and hereditary structures of colorism and class. Instead they expose unspoken quotidian resentments. For example, Ramsay now gains access to "rooms that he had previously seen only through windows" and attends evening cocktail parties in some upper St. Andrews homes whose streets "he would still be humiliated to walk in during the day" (269). He can visit those spaces at night, but in the light of day his out-of-placeness is starkly marked.

While the plotline of resentment centers these boys coming into manhood, the interracial romance between Mrs. Hanson and Dr. Kendal dramatizes the stakes of harboring such negative feelings. Interracial intimacies are often thought in terms of black and white, but Jamaican fictions of the 1960s are keen to show that other interracial intimacies matter (in this case, black and Indian) and in fact perhaps have more local resonance. Cyril's mother, Mrs. Myrtle Hanson, has been granted access to the "upper range of society" based largely on her light complexion and her

pedigree as the daughter of an Englishman and a Jamaican mulatta. Her genealogy coupled with her education in England, a concrete-nog house in Kencot, and the wealth of her estranged husband, who now lives or had died in South America, gives her fragile social capital (71). She clings to the title of "Mrs." even more so given the fact that she was not yet married when Cyril was born (42). Mrs. Hanson is not an uncommon figure in the fiction of the period: an upper-middle-class married woman living separated from her husband who resides in another country, or a divorcee raising children, channeling her energies into getting them into the right schools and social networks.[18] Cyril recognizes his mother's "desperate social uncertainty" (110) even while he reaps the benefits of her rabid social climbing. Despite some material decline after her husband's departure, Mrs. Hanson manages to keep her son on the margins of elite social circles (88). In representing this type of brown middle-class feminine respectability, Dawes divulges the breach of order from the Anglican norm of marriage and domesticity. Ruptured from the conformity of domestic coupling, Mrs. Hanson is left to her own devices and has to find ways to maintain the veneer of respectability.

The other partner in this interracial romance is Dr. Reggie Kendal, an Indo-Jamaican who proves a provocative study in Jamaican masculinity of the period. On the one hand, Mona, the young Indo-Jamaican woman whom he later marries, considers him the personification of the new Jamaican: "[Those] who were Jamaicans first and anything else afterwards. The time had passed when the word coolie by itself, carried any offensiveness" (173). But Kendal inhabits himself in far more measured ways since the stain of his Indian ethnicity precedes him: "In Jamaica, however, there was a still slowly disappearing minority stigma connected with poverty and sugar plantations and lack of education. *He was free in Jamaican society but not privileged.* He boarded quite happily with a near-white family on Seymour Avenue and everybody liked him. Once or twice, however, he had to use his profession and his charm and his R.A.F. [Royal Air Force] record, with a very firm pressure, to establish his importance" (173; emphasis mine).

When Mrs. Hanson and Dr. Kendal meet, these are the backstories and *ugly feelings* they bring to their interracial encounter, in which the structural residues of ethnic tensions are harbored. The fact that their titles, "Mrs." and "Dr.," matter immensely betrays their mutual vulnerability and insecurity. In spite of Dr. Kendal's professional achievement, his ethnicity still casts a shadow in elite circles.[19] And while Mrs. Hanson is divorced and over forty, which devalues her worth in the marriage economy, because of her near-white pedigree she holds herself as superior to Dr. Kendal. Indeed, "she had a deep distaste for very black people believing . . . that people were more or less 'bad' in proportion to the blackness of their skins" (71). At forty-three and on the decline, her own gendered and class needs are exposed, suggesting why Dr. Kendal is now a pragmatic choice for partnership. Readers are privy to the exhaustion of Mrs. Hanson's own class assumptions, his exercise of masculine power, and yet they are mutually vulnerable. Structured around sex, their relationship is relegated to inside her house, where he takes her whenever he wants; their public excursions do not

18 Her type is, for example, in Salkey's *Escape to an Autumn Pavement* as well as *The Last Emancipation of Jerry Stover.*

19 This particularly charged intimacy is also the spine of Fitzroy Fraser's *Wounds in the Flesh*, in which a father having aspirations for this son is disenchanted when the son marries a "coolie" woman, stereotyped as too coarse and unsophisticated to move in respectable circles.

include socialite events but rather only the dark interior spaces of "night clubs and pictures" (110). The narrow confines of their social sphere hurt Mrs. Hanson's pride, especially since in her mind Dr. Kendal is below her standards. His nonchalance leads to her further desperation that comes to a head with her confrontation of his current partner, Mona, which becomes physical. However, the real intimate wounding occurs when Mona figuratively and literally undresses Mrs. Hanson:

> "You think you are a white woman but you neither flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. You think Reggie could really want a St. Andrew whore that used to run after the white soldiers in Up Park Camp? You just' poppy show to him!" . . . So Mona simply tore off every stitch of Mrs. Hanson's clothes and she stood there with sagging breasts and a sagging, ungirdled stomach looking in amazement at her nakedness. She began to whimper, trying to cover herself with the rags of her clothing. "I can't go out into the street like this?" (130–31)

Mona's insinuation of Mrs. Hanson going after the white soldiers reminds contemporary readers of the British Army's presence in Jamaica through independence in 1962. Here it is helpful to take our cue from Harvey Neptune's reading of the uses white Trinidadian women (mothers and their daughters) made of the presence of US soldiers in Trinidad as a vehicle of financial and racial uplift via reproduction. Given Mrs. Hanson's desire for whiteness, we can imagine her interest in these soldiers, especially after her husband's unexplained departure. But Mona sullies those liaisons by marking them as no different from other forms of prostitution. Mrs. Hanson's closing words are uttered as a question rather than a statement, suggesting fear of public humiliation and pleading with her tormentor not to dehumanize her any further.[20]

This is more than simply a fight between women, with Dr. Kendal as the desired outcome; his personhood is also brought into question: whom he can marry and who marries him. While Mona wins this round with Mrs. Hanson, in that Dr. Kendal marries her, their marriage lasts only two years, and the text discloses that it fails based on his "degeneracy." Following their divorce, Dr. Kendal flees Jamaica for the United States. When Mona's former roommate runs into Ramsay at a club in London, she describes the marriage's demise: "Oh, Mona had a terrible time with that coolie man, you see. A reely wutliss divorce case. The things he wanted Mona to do!" (240). Mona's own take on the ending of her marriage highlights the imbrications of ethnicity, class, and sex: "Her marriage had failed for her at the social level long before she began to be disgusted with what she had said in court had been a gradual physical degeneracy in Kendal" (257). What do "degeneracy" and "the things he wanted Mona to do!" here signal? What does it say about his masculinity that he is not fully accepted into these elite circles, and that prior to him Mona had been with both Cyril and Ramsay? Furthermore, what does it mean that he cannot stay in Jamaica and has to flee to remake himself elsewhere? The strength of the novel, then, is its sorting through these various interlinking plots that disclose public and private humiliations. It gives weight to intimate resentments as keys to understanding how these sovereign subjects in the making feel out of sorts during this period. Radical skepticism of the nation-building process in this instance takes readers through the last enchantment of our central characters to where they have to face up to the sobering reality of

20 See Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees*.

enduring the structural limits (intimate and otherwise) of living with internalized and operationalized colonial values and hierarchies.

Autobiographical Skepticism

At the other end of the spectrum, in terms of time and form, Joyce Gladwell's 1969 *Brown Face, Big Master* strips away the mask of fiction to reveal the vulnerabilities and stakes of a middle-class Caribbean woman writing autobiographically about the 1940s through the 1960s.[21] The memoir's very title asserts that such a female writer has to prove her respectability in terms of moral and social standing and that she secures her literary authority through Christianity. Charting her transnational movements from Jamaica to London and the United States, before settling in Elmira, Canada, Gladwell's text closes the decade with an autobiographically skeptical illumination of the intimate politics of color, class, race, and respectability. While it covers the period of 1962, independence as an event does not appear in this memoir; instead Gladwell is more concerned with chronicling a woman's version of migration and perpetual exile from her intellectual self. Exploring the psychological terrain of brown womanhood encased in the strictures of respectability and Christianity, Gladwell argues that the cost of respectability is depression and recounts the structural conditions of racism, patriarchy, and the familiar 1950s women's "problem without no name" that served as catalyst. Despite her training in psychology and anthropology at University College London, as a housewife and mother of young boys, Gladwell is literally outside of London's literary circles. This circumstance is perhaps most evident in the fact that her memoir is published with Intervarsity Christian Press when she is thirty-seven years old, while her male colleagues published with more prestigious presses, such as Heinemann and Jonathan Cape. Similar to her male intellectual cohorts, she is concerned with both racism and existential questions.[22] But unlike her male counterparts, rather than repudiating Christianity as empire's handmaiden and embracing purportedly more evolved secular explanations such as Marxism, she actually grapples with the ambivalence of this religious heritage. In Christianity, Gladwell finds tools to recognize and confront her own discriminatory practices. That she goes to Christianity rather than Marxism or nihilism has made her less recoverable in our reconstructions of the period's writings.[23]

Revisiting the insecurities attending brownness, the first half of the autobiography depicts Gladwell's early life and the disciplining of desire as a way of performing and maintaining class identity. The second half relays how this socialization travels with her to the heart of the British Empire and the various metropolitan locations to which she migrates. She carefully uncovers the very religious making of her class sentiments to demonstrate how she can at once readily map an entanglement of sexual pathologies onto working-class Afro-Caribbean womanhood and also

21 For fuller discussion, see Donette Francis, "'Neither Pathological nor Perfect': Joyce Gladwell's Late Autobiographical Challenge to the *Windrush* Generation," in J. Dillon Brown and Leah Reade Rosenberg, eds., *Beyond "Windrush": Rethinking Postwar Anglophone Caribbean Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 97–112.

22 Curdella Forbes, *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, and the Cultural Performance of Gender* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2005).

23 Here I have in mind Carole Boyce Davies's recuperation of Claudia Jones for a Marxist black radical tradition in her recent *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

experience an ontological wounding when she is negatively fixed racially and sexually as a black woman—despite her disciplined bodily performances meant to mark her distinction in terms of class, color, and Christianity. Gladwell narrates her early socialization in color consciousness and its stakes. Among the social values of her class that Gladwell records is the reproductive investment in whiteness. Consequently, she and her sister understood their mother's expectations for partnership: "To marry and produce children of lighter colour than oneself was to 'raise' the colour of the family. To raise the colour of the family was to raise its social status."[24] Her mother's focus on social status, moral standards, and skin color meant an intense policing of her daughters' sexuality. Gladwell nonetheless exposes the precarity of their brownness, underscoring that one "wrong" reproductive choice could devalue the family's status. Throughout the memoir Gladwell attends to the complexities of the gaze, highlighting that the discriminatory gaze is not always white and that in her milieu it is mostly brown.

If the first half of the memoir focuses on discrimination vis-à-vis Jamaica's racial, color, and class hierarchy, the second half engages the psychic life of racism as the emotional color line that structures black quotidian life in metropolitan locations. Part 2 effectively opens aboard ship during Gladwell's transatlantic crossing to the metropole, where her experience of racial othering is violently sexed. This ship in movement along the black Atlantic at once captures the past Gladwell has left behind and the horizon before her. But rather than relaying the excitement of "journeying to an expectation" that her male cohorts chronicle, Gladwell narrates her ship passage by emphasizing the attending dangers for female travelers: by the end of her first evening she is sexually assaulted by a vacationing British doctor.[25] Anathema to her self-perception as a young brown middle-class Caribbean Christian woman, she is simply seen and treated as a potential concubine. The ship's doctor gets the historical moment wrong. If history predisposes him to read her brown body as sexually available, she is indignant that he fails to recognize her as a respectable woman, fully cloaked in three generations of respectable marriage on both sides of her family. In the 1950s context of imperial decline and impending national sovereignty, she is the idealized face of the nation, and everything about her self-presentation was designed to make that legible. Yet his dominant white male gaze nonetheless sexualizes her brown female body. This encounter destroys her at all levels, not just racially. It haunts her, and even as she published in 1969, "the sadness remain[ed]" (114).

Throughout the narrative Christianity serves as an interpretative tool that gives Gladwell space for cognition and empathy and enables her to deal with such violent scenes of subjection. Yet she is careful to illustrate that Christianity is not a monolithic community of practitioners. When the community most immediately available to her is too conservative, rather than join them she withdraws and seeks "to work out [her] own salvation" (161). For example, once she arrives on the agnostic campus of University College London, Gladwell seeks out a Christian group in an attempt to create an alternative public sphere. In spite of the university's secularism, she integrates Christianity into her intellectual life on campus, noting a sense of "security" in this place where "books, ideas and

24 Gladwell, *Brown Face, Big Master*, 68; hereafter cited in the text.
25 I borrow the phrase from George Lamming's *Pleasures of Exile* (1960; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 218.

conversation come first" (143). Nonetheless, inside this faith community she confronts the sexualized sentiment of racial difference. She meets Graham Gladwell in the context of this on-campus intervarsity Christian assembly. Even while her experience with the ship's doctor left her harboring resentment toward British men, the practice of Christianity, readers are led to believe, allows her not to discriminate against the entire population based on one individual's actions. Despite her initial reluctance to form an amorous attachment, the friendship gradually develops into a romance, in which race matters centrally. Gladwell first meets her future in-laws in the context of a platonic relationship with their son. And under those conditions, they welcome her into their home as a part of their international Christian family. However, once the friendship blossoms into romance, his parents discourage the union based strictly on her race and the projected problems the couple would encounter with societal acceptance, as well as the complications of having biracial children. By contrast, for Gladwell, raised as she was with the reproductive investment in whiteness as a central value, the possibility of biracial children was not an obstacle but had been an education in desire.

The memoir performs a dialectical engagement with discriminatory acts against her as well as her ability to commit discrimination. Acknowledging the privileges attached to her brownness, when confronted with racism, she has to reconcile that "as a colored Jamaican" her family "benefited for generations from the hierarchy of race," and therefore she could not, as Malcolm Gladwell writes, "reproach another for the impulse to divide people by the shade of their skin."[26] Where Joyce Gladwell attributes this critical self-reflection in part to Christianity, readers appreciate the comparative evaluation of shifting racial meanings in the different geographical contexts she inhabits. Certainly, wrestling with the ideals *and limits* of her Christian faith would not be viewed as a revolutionary ideological position during the period; Gladwell, nonetheless, presents it as an alternative to conventional ways of thinking about liberatory politics. In *Brown Face, Big Master*, Gladwell articulates a radical skepticism that could expose as racial the fault lines in a Jamaican brown creole project and a myth of racial indiscrimination in North Atlantic Christian communities. In this way, Gladwell is an early progenitor for a modern Caribbean feminist autobiographical tradition—especially one that explicitly writes about race, sexuality, and depression.[27]

Ultimately, we witness in this Jamaican literary archive writers accepting that the end of British imperial rule will not grant their freedom dreams, since a change in the face of the nation will not change the structural conditions (both material and affective) for the majority of Caribbean peoples.[28] In this way, the coming of, and granting of, independence in the English-speaking Caribbean foreshadows the pessimistic sensibility many in the United States grapple with in the wake of Barack Obama's presidency. In his recent, eloquent *New York Times* op-ed reflecting on systemic racial inequalities and the meaning of the Obama presidency, Khalil Gibran Muhammad asserts, "We cannot engineer a more equitable nation simply by dressing up institutions in more

26 Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 284.

27 For this autobiographical tradition, see Rosie Stone's 2007 memoir, *No Stone Unturned*, which chronicles her positive-HIV-status resulting from her husband's sexual indiscretions. Rosemarie Stone, *No Stone Unturned: The Carl and Rosie Story* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007). See also Stacey Ann Chin, *The Other Side of Paradise* (New York: Scribner, 2009).

28 Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon, 2003).

shades of brown. Instead, we must confront structural racism and the values of our institutions."[29] This sentiment that speaks to entrenched institutional and cultural values is the disenchantment of the Caribbean 1960s, when writers sought to trouble a dangerously romantic view of the victories of independent nation-state formation. Such sensibilities of radical skepticisms are the substance of Jamaican 1960s writings.[30] A return, then, to this archive—complete with thick descriptions of its literary sensibilities—reveals more nuance and complexity than our retrospective claims based on a select few novels. Instead, the decade's long and diverse temporalities of pessimisms, with their attending multiplicity of plotlines, capture the rise and fall of hopes and dreams during the first decade of Jamaican independence.

29 Khalil Gibran Muhammad, "No Racial Barrier Left to Break (Except All of Them)," *New York Times*, 14 January 2017.

30 To this archive of 1960s fiction, I would add the South African-born Jamaican writer Peter Abrahams's *This Island, Now* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).