

***“Sites of Terror” and Affective Geographies
on Thomas Thistlewood’s Breadnut Island Pen***

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As architectural historian Louis P. Nelson points out, “sites of terror” in the eighteenth-century Caribbean like the whipping post, or the scenes of rapes, don’t survive physically, nor do they appear on plantation plans, since they were often marked out by ephemeral constructions (2013). Here, I begin the work to address that lacuna by using the extensive diaries of one slave-owner in late eighteenth-century Jamaica, Thomas Thistlewood, to map and think through the distribution of these “sites of terror” on his property in Westmoreland Parish, which he named Breadnut Island Pen (Nelson 2013)¹. Although Thistlewood’s diary has become widely known since Douglas Hall’s and Trevor Burnard’s major works on it (1990, 2004), it is a rich source that demands further exploration. While the general trajectory of Thistlewood’s life in Jamaica is not unusual among land-owning whites, what makes Thistlewood such a profitable object of study is that from his arrival in Jamaica in 1750 to his death there in 1786, he kept a detailed daily diary, now located in Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, that offers a very full picture of what life was like in Jamaica at that time. I focus on Breadnut Island Pen because, of the various properties Thistlewood lived on in Jamaica, this is the one he owned, and therefore had the most control over, and so it will tell us the most about how he thought about space and delineated different kinds of actions to different spaces.²

The diary gives particular attention to the way the Pen’s spaces were used in Thistlewood’s interactions with his slaves. As Stephanie Camp puts it in her work on slave

¹ The term “Pen” was used to describe a livestock farm.

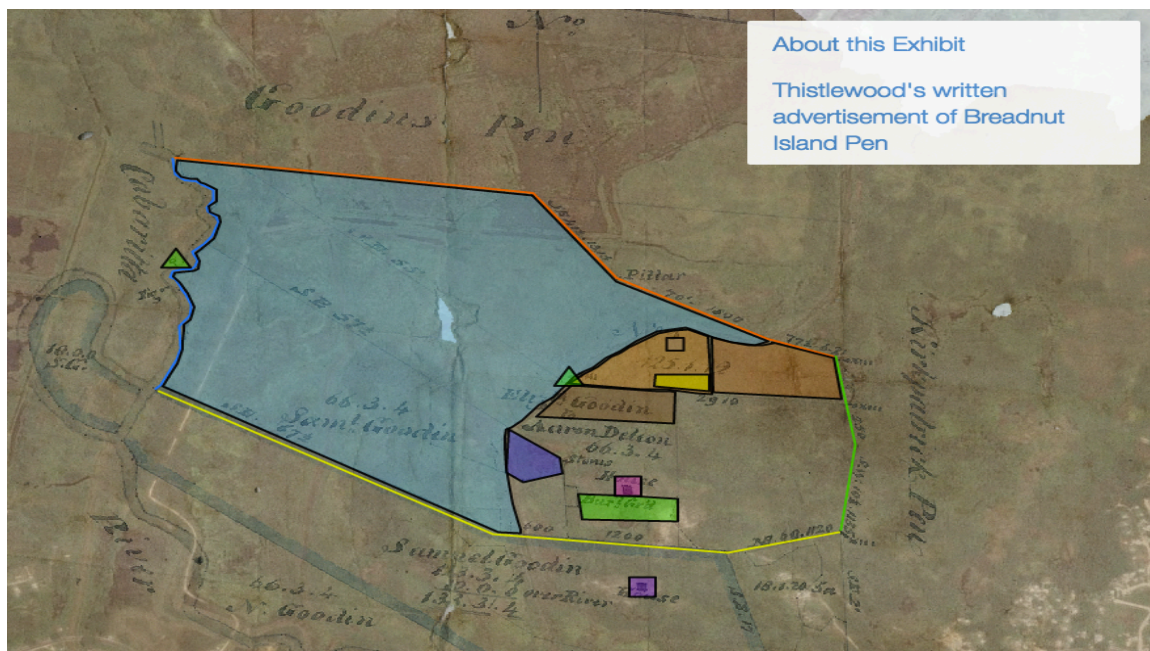
² For detailed and rich analyses of Thistlewood’s life in Jamaica, see Trevor Burnard’s *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaica World* (2004), and Douglas Hall’s *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (1990).

resistance in the United States, “[s]paces mattered: places, boundaries, and movement were central to how slavery was organized and to how it was resisted” (6). I benefit particularly from Camp’s concept of the “rival geography,” which she defines as “alternative ways of knowing and using plantation and southern space that conflicted with planters’ ideals and demand” (7). I claim that the affective geography of Thistlewood’s plantation is incongruent with, and “rival[s],” the official, plantation plat description of the space. Further, Thistlewood’s reports of his own actions and those of his slaves who lived on the property demonstrate that the affective geography of the land does not always correspond in obvious or predictable ways with the property’s physical geography. The notion of two geographies helps to bring to light new questions about the atrocities that took place on Caribbean plantations. Rather than trying to reconcile the logic of plantation planning with the seemingly indiscriminate deployment of violence across different spaces of the plantation, the affective and the physical geographies can be seen as discrete and investigated as such.

My central methodological innovation is the construction of a set of digital maps of Breadnut Island Pen (a project that is still in progress). The base layer of each of the maps is a survey of the property conducted in 1835 by Morris and Cuninghame. The survey was digitized by, and the digitization purchased from, the National Library of Jamaica, after which the digitized survey was georeferenced. I have used the Neatline tool (<http://neatline.org/>) to create each map, which allows the user to make interactive, geotemporal exhibits, which map events in time and space. In Neatline, individual maps can be digitally hand-annotated to illustrate a particular analysis, narrative, or visualization. The first map of the project (below) is an attempt to show the location of different physical and natural features on Breadnut Island Pen. In order to locate these features (the morass, marked in pale blue), the provision grounds (in different shades

of brown), the slave village (in purple, bordering the morass), Thistlewood's house (in pink), and his new garden (in pale green, in front of the house), I used Thistlewood's descriptions of where these features stood in relation to features already marked on the survey, in concert with consulting scholars of Caribbean architectural history on where such features were most likely to be found on a property such as Breadnut Island Pen. As a result the map is necessarily provisional and some of these locations are best guesses. I provide several images of different Neatline maps in this article, and each of them can be more fully explored by using their interactive features online. For this reason, I provide the URL for each map as well as a screenshot. The mapping project can be found at:

[<http://www.breadnutislandpen.net/neatline>]



(Image Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica)

Using this map, I am in the process of creating a series of maps that locate acts of sexual violence on Breadnut Island Pen in an attempt to retroactively map these “sites of terror” on the landscape, and to visualize and analyze Thistlewood's rapes on Breadnut Island Pen (Nelson 2013). In Thistlewood's time on Breadnut Island Pen from September, 1767, until his death in

November, 1786, he committed fifteen hundred and eighty four acts of rape, per his own meticulous records. Thistlewood's consistent reporting of the locations of each rape on the Pen make these acts peculiarly mappable. Thistlewood raped thirty-three women on Breadnut Island Pen, and the digital mapping project will eventually include a map that visualizes each individual woman's experience of rape on the Pen. In addition to providing a visualization of each individual's experience of rape, each woman's map includes as full a narrative of her life on the Pen as possible, gathered from information provided in Thistlewood's diaries. These narratives include details of the women's husbands and domestic partners, the births (and sometimes the deaths) of their children, their illnesses, the nature of their work on Breadnut Island Pen, and what can be gleaned about their relationships with other slaves on the Pen. The narratives are provided so that each map records not only the violence done to these women, but as full a picture of their lives as is available.

The sheer number of rape events limits the ability to clearly represent them in one visualization. I wrestled with a method that would allow an ethical and sensitive representation of the large numbers of rapes that took place on multiple locations across the plantation. On one map (titled "Sed Non Bene," and appearing on p.18 of this article) a differently shaped marker for each of the women who was raped is used, and is placed on the locations of the rapes in order to preserve the differentiation of each woman as much as possible while depicting her experience.

The Neatline maps can be viewed as leading to new topics of research. These visualizations of the plantation's sites of terror prompt the questions that will structure my article: what was the affective geography of the plantation? How was it related, if at all, to the plantation's physical geography? Close attention to the co-existence of affective and physical

geographies provides important insights about life on the eighteenth-century Caribbean plantation, and may help us to reconcile scholarly dispute about the nature of that life. The idea of these dual plantation geographies can inform an approach to the critical conversations that debate alternative ways to read or think about the history of this period. Orlando Patterson claims that Thistlewood's diaries are emblematic of Jamaican society in the late eighteenth century, and uses Thistlewood to push against what he refers to as Barry Higman's "revisionis[m]" (160). In "The Paradox of Freedom: An Interview With Orlando Patterson," published in *Small Axe*, Patterson argues:

white society was totally chaotic. Now people like Barry Higman have been working hard to show that the system was much more robust. But I don't believe it. I think the best model comes out of the diaries of that planter, Thomas Thistlewood. *That* was Jamaica ... it was a *chaotic* society. ... the most recent work on Jamaican slavery, drawing on [Thistlewood's] amazing diary ... completely supports my position against the revisionists such as Barry Higman, who have done everything possible to normalize Jamaican slavery and to underplay its uniquely catastrophic and near genocidal cruelty. (160)

Barry Higman's *Jamaica Surveyed: Plantation Maps and Plans for the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (1988) and *Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy* (2005) provide formidably detailed accounts of the Jamaican landscape and of the properties I am most interested in, and as such I rely on Higman for my understanding of what Thistlewood's Breadnut Island Pen would have looked like, and how it would have been run. However, it is easy to understand some of Patterson's frustration with Higman's view here. In the introduction to *Plantation Jamaica*, Higman writes that he "attempts to approach the

questions from a broadly social and moral point of view,” but that “[i]n order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to attempt to see the system largely from the perspective of the capitalist and manager” (xiii). Higman goes on: “[t]heir business was exploitation and part of my task is to assess how efficiently they carried out that enterprise” (xiii). An assessment of the “efficacy” of the “exploitation” seems to be largely beside the point if the primary questions are social and moral. Higman concludes:

It is only by taking this perspective that it is possible to understand the working of the larger system of plantation economy and the role of enslaved and free workers within the society. The people who did the hard work of the plantations remain essentially voiceless in the narrative, reduced to the tools of capital and themselves literally to human capital.

It is a harsh story. (xiii)

I will be arguing that some of the differences between the views of Higman and Patterson can be resolved by an understanding that there are two different plantation geographies that the two scholars are implicitly referring to. Higman, focusing in much of his work on physical geography, sees a robust world. Patterson emphasizes instead the chaos of the plantation as evidenced by its unstable affective geographies. My descriptions and visualizations of Thistlewood’s Breadnut Island Pen will make clear that we need to consider the physical and the affective geographies as distinct, if related, entities.

A note on methodology: the ethics of representation

The question of what kind of representation best expresses and dignifies these enslaved individuals’ experiences is one I take seriously. As Saidiya Hartman puts it in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (1997), “how does

one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence of the benumbing spectacle or contend with the narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response to such displays?" (4). My work aims to engage in the space between "the benumbing spectacle" and "the narcissistic identification." Rather than try to elaborate or untangle Thistlewood's motivations, or to begin to excavate the horror of these slaves' lives, in this manifestation of my archival work in the Beinecke's Thistlewood Archive, I follow the example of affect scholars like Heather Love, who argue for the importance and power of description in textual engagement.

Instead of offering deep interpretation of Thistlewood's diary, here I will practice close description as a means of analyzing my research. In "Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn," Love stages what she calls an "encounter between literary studies and sociology" that "take[s] its cue from observation-based social sciences" that "rely on description rather than interpretation," through which, she contends, "we can develop modes of reading that are close but not deep" (375). Love's article focuses on the work of two social scientists, Bruno Latour and Erving Goffman, both of whom "suggest an alternate model of reading that does not depend on the ethical exemplarity of the interpreter or messenger" (375). I contend that this method of close attention through description allows a clear focus on the affective and physical geographies of Breadnut Island Pen, without falling prey to the numbness, narcissism, and prurience that are justly condemned by Hartman. In an attempt to uncover the relationship between the affective and physical geographies of the Pen, and the coordinates of the affective geography, I will consider a series of spaces on the plantation and the events that took place in them as described by Thistlewood.

The House

Thistlewood's house was the site of only parodic sympathy, and rape and violence still happened within it and beside it. As such, the physical site of domesticity bleeds into an affective site of violence. In Thistlewood's most intimate relationships, although they were with persons whom he enslaved and oppressed, he was able to parody sympathy. In the years that Thistlewood lived on Breadnut Island Pen, his great house was the space in which those scenes that came closest to domesticity and tenderness took place, affects that I consider subcategories of this parody of sympathy. I am persuaded by Orlando Patterson, who writes, in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, "No authentic human relationship was possible where violence was the ultimate sanction. There could have been no trust, no genuine sympathy, and while a kind of love may sometimes have triumphed over the most perverse form of interaction, intimacy was usually calculating and sadomasochistic" (12).

At his house, Thistlewood kept a small family: a woman named Phibbah, whom he both enslaved and kept as his common-law wife, and their son, whom Thistlewood refers to in the diaries as "Mulatto John," born in 1760 while Phibbah and Thistlewood were still at the Estate they lived on prior to Breadnut Island Pen – Egypt Estate – and freed by Thistlewood in 1762. The house was the locus of Thistlewood's sexual and emotional relationship with Phibbah. Thistlewood's relationship with Phibbah began while he was working as the overseer at Egypt Estate, where Phibbah was enslaved. When Thistlewood left Egypt Estate on September 3rd, 1767, he was not able to convince Phibbah's owner, John Cope, to sell her to him, but shortly afterwards he did negotiate a situation in which he hired Phibbah from Cope on an annual basis. On November 16th 1767, Thistlewood reports: "In the morning sent the battoe to Egypt, by Lincoln & Pompey in which come Phibbah, and many things belonging to her – her time at £10

per ann commences today.”

The entries that record sex with Phibbah are demonstrably different from those that record sex with other enslaved women. To see this, it is necessary to consider Thistlewood’s system of notation in recording rapes. Most importantly, he recorded instances of sexual intercourse in simple Latin, and logged each and every sexual congress: where and when, with whom, what sexual position was adopted, and whether or not he gave the woman any money afterwards. A few entries from the early 1770s illustrate this. On Tuesday January 29th 1771, he records: “xxx A.M. Cum Nanny (mea) Sup: Terr: in Limekiln Negroe ground Morass, West from house.” On 30th January he writes: “xxx P.M. Cum Maria (Mea) about WSW from my house, in the pasture, near the fence. Stans.! Backwards.”

Thistlewood begins each record of rape with the notation “xxx,” a note that seems to signal that he considers the event he is about to record particularly important. Next comes the time of day, which is often no more specific than “A.M.,” or “P.M.,” but occasionally he reports an hour of the clock. He then begins the Latin quotient of the entry, where “Cum” always indicates sex with a person. Following this, he names the woman whom he raped, and, if he names an owned slave, often qualifies with “Mea,” in parentheses following the name of the woman. After this, he describes the location, which is often extremely specific, and which he usually describes using other landmarks on his property such as his house, the lime kiln, the Morass duck pond, etc. The notation “sup terr” indicates that the rape took place on the ground. In this entry he includes the position: “Stans!” meaning standing, and “Backwards.” The exclamation mark which sometimes follows a description of a standing sexual position could plausibly indicate sexual excitement. Absent from this record is a note indicating whether or not he gave the woman payment following the rape. He usually paid, either “a bitt,” which was a unit

of small change, or “two bitts.”³ To slaves whom he thought of as troublesome or difficult, he often gave nothing, so the lack of payment to Maria in this record might suggest that he thought she had been difficult, although she is certainly not a slave who is often mentioned, either in a negative or a positive context. The slave Thistlewood most often rapes without subsequent payment is Sally, who, unsurprisingly, also ran away frequently.

Thistlewood’s sexual relationship with Phibbah took place in the trappings of what we might think of as domesticity. This suggests something substantively different about Thistlewood’s sex with Phibbah: that it was less of a conquest than those slaves he overtook on his property as they went about their day. It seems most plausible that their sexual relationship took place in his house, and his bed. The diary presents a series of entries that suggest that he and Phibbah slept in the same bed. On Tuesday 12th March 1771, he reports, “at Night had words with phib: about going to Bed, &c,” an entry that suggests the interactions of a cohabiting couple negotiating their daily routine. In addition, Thistlewood often reports on the quality of his sleep, particularly at times when he is sick, and comments on the quality of Phibbah’s sleep also feature in this entry: “I rested very badly last night. Phibbah’s arm troubled her much” (Friday 16th March, 1770). From this entry we can conclude not only that Phibbah shared Thistlewood’s bed but that he talked with her about what troubled her sleep, and that he was also affected by it. This is also one of the few entries in Thistlewood’s diary that records the lived experience of another person. Further, Thistlewood’s sexual relationship with Phibbah also took place exclusively “at night,” and he never records paying her. Tips were a regular feature of Thistlewood’s sexual encounters with his slaves, and there is no record of Phibbah ever receiving money after sex with Thistlewood. This seems to be because he considers her his domestic partner to all intents and purposes, and therefore his rapes of Phibbah are categorized differently than his rapes of other

³ For a complete catalogue of each of Thistlewood’s rapes on Breadnut Island Pen, see Appendix 1.

slaves. None of this is to imply that we should think of their relationship as consensual, but on the scale of tenderness of which Thistlewood was capable his sexual congress with Phibbah at his house came closest to a relationship of affection and companionship.

The house also seems to have been the scene of rapes of slaves whom Thistlewood favored. The connection made here between an act of sexual violence and a mark of regard further indicates the tension between the physical and affective geographies of the plantation, even as they overlapped. He seems, for instance, to have felt increasingly positively disposed towards a slave named Abba, and this correlates with a change of the location of his sex with her from predominantly outside in various locations in the working spaces of Breadnut Island Pen to the bedrooms of his great house. Thistlewood's increasing regard for Abba over his years at Breadnut Island Pen can be traced across a series of gestures, beginning with small acts such as the one recorded on Friday 9th October 1767, "Gave Abba a pint of Rum; She having begged hard for a little." He also provided for the burial of her husband in January 1771: "gave Abba Rum to entertain her Company at the Burial." It is after her husband Johnnie's death that Thistlewood changes the scene of raping Abba from outside on the larger property, to predominantly in his house, which might, on the limited spectrum of Thistlewood's good will, be considered a movement up the index of affection. Towards the end of his life, after the devastating hurricane of 1780, and in his ill health, Thistlewood's gestures become even less ambiguous. On Saturday 5th November 1785, Thistlewood reports that he "gave Abba a dollar to assist her, she being ill, and a large Family to maintain"; on Thursday 29th June 1786 he writes, "gave Abba a dollar to assist her Family this hard time." The increasing goodwill that Thistlewood seems to have felt towards Abba, coupled with his moving the scene of her rape to his house, suggests that the space of the house was used primarily for acts that came closest to

affection for Thistlewood.

This hypothesis is supported by an entry made in the diary on Friday June 11th 1773, when Thistlewood records curtailing a sexual encounter with Abba in his bedroom on hearing Phibbah approach. He reports: “xxx In the Morning Cum Abba (Mea) Sup:Lect:domo xGave do: 2 bitts! phib: Come in to the piazza So: end.” This entry is unique in the diary, but is nonetheless suggestive of a sense on Thistlewood’s part that in the space of the home Phibbah has earned something like deference. Of course, that deference does not extend to abstaining from raping other women in her bedroom, but it does extend to terminating the rape if she is in earshot.

The house was also a space where Thistlewood showed something like tenderness towards his son. His tenderness is complicated by the fact that he usually describes him in his diary as “Mulatto John.” Thistlewood had a nephew named John, who came to join him in Jamaica in 1764, and worked with him on Egypt Estate until his unexplained death by drowning on 30th March 1765, so the descriptor “Mulatto” might serve to distinguish between his nephew and his son, but after the death of his nephew in 1765, the racial modifier becomes superfluous. But for this telling detail, Thistlewood’s relationship with John, especially when he was a young boy, often appears as an unremarkable parent-child relationship in his diary. John was sent away to school between the ages of five and twelve, and when he came home from school for the Easter holiday at the age of nine, Thistlewood records that John slept in his bed on several nights. On Saturday 25th March, Thistlewood writes, “John slept with me,” and two nights later, “Last night John lay in my bed again.” This picture of father and son, reunited after an absence, is perhaps a tender one, and the fact that it happens within the walls of his great house is significant. In his house, Thistlewood’s interactions are primarily with his nuclear family.

As John grew older, his relationship with Thistlewood seemed to deteriorate.

Thistlewood arranged for John to be apprenticed to a carpenter, but John frequently shirked his work, and on several occasions absconded for days, coming home to Breadnut Island Pen.

Thistlewood's punishments on these occasions were brutal, and were of the sort usually reserved for slaves. On Friday 3rd July, 1778, Thistlewood reports, "John at home this morning before sunrise & wanted to go to Carawina ... but I had him ... laid down & flogged, then sent him on a rope by Solon home to his master at Sav la mar." Just five days later, Thistlewood reports John's unauthorized presence on Breadnut Island Pen again, and another punishment usually meted out only to slaves: "In yl: evening caught John in Cudjoe's watch hut put him in yl: bilboes."

John's treatment by Thistlewood is a strong indicator of the porous boundaries between domesticity and brutality on Breadnut Island Pen, and dissolves the idea of a stable geography of safe and dangerous spaces. When John attempted to return to Breadnut Island Pen and its implied safety and bonds of affection he found that the space had changed for him as a result of his physical maturity. He now experienced the plantation's unforgiving landscape where, despite his freedom, his blood relationship to Thistlewood, and Thistlewood's seeming earlier affection for him, he was subjected to the punishments that any other person of color might expect when Thistlewood was displeased.

Despite this fraught relationship, however, when John died of a fever at the age of only twenty, Thistlewood buried him in the ground by the great house, something of a return to the safety, familiarity, and affection of the domestic sphere, and a further ripple in the porous geographies of Breadnut Island Pen. On Thursday 7th August 1780, Thistlewood records, "a little after sunset buried John in the old garden, between the pimento tree & the house, mr Tho: mordiner said the service over him." Thistlewood seems to have been deeply affected by John's death, describing himself, a week after John's burial, as "exceeding dejected and low spirited,"

one of the very few occasions on which he expresses his emotional state in the diary.

There is one more unique entry that points to Thistlewood's use of the house as a space primarily of parodic sympathy. On Friday March 4th, 1768, he records: "about eleven AM as I was sitting in my hall reading Hanway's Travels, a pea dove, who was chased by a hawk flew in at y^l: back door, and sat on my knee, I took hold of her, and when the hawk was gone, let her go again." Thistlewood's protection, and release of the pea dove seems significant in this landscape of brutal, arbitrary violence which most certainly extended to animals as well as to slaves. This entry is one of the very few that literalizes David Hume's metaphor that there is, as Hume puts it: "some Particle of the Dove, kneaded into our Frame, along with the Elements of the Wolf and Serpent" (*Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 175-6).

As with all permanent or semi-permanent landmarks on Thistlewood's property, like the standing lime kiln, the Morass, and various trees, Thistlewood uses his house as a marker for the locations in which he raped his slaves. A few entries from the early 1770s illustrate this. On Tuesday January 29th 1771, he records: "xxx A.M. Cum Nanny (mea) Sup: Terr: in Limekiln Negroe ground Morass, West from house." On 30th January he writes: "xxx P.M. Cum Maria (Mea) about WSW from my house, in the pasture, near the fence. Stans.! Backwards."

New Garden

Despite being a "horticultural show-piece," and "one of the earliest and most spectacular gardens of western Jamaica" (Hall 115, 10), Thistlewood's new garden – just outside his house – was the site of a significant number of the rapes that victimized women other than Phibbah. Of the fifteen hundred and eighty four acts of rape committed on Breadnut Island Pen, Phibbah was the victim of nine hundred and fifty four rapes, or a little over sixty per cent of the total. Of the

six hundred and thirty remaining rapes, one hundred and forty seven took place in his new garden, a highly concentrated number unusual in one location outside Thistlewood's house.

The concentration of sexual violence in a space whose horticultural focus was nurturing and caretaking may seem jarring. However, the violence that took place in the new garden is another picture of a plantation space that made geographies unpredictable and allowed for eruptions of sexual violence so close to the domestic sphere, and in the cultivated, aesthetic parts of the Pen. The tension between care and sexual violence is explicable within the terms of the colonial project. We can see Thistlewood's practice of raping on this piece of land as being congruent with his cultivation of it. The new garden was a site in which Thistlewood took pleasure in exerting mastery over nature and imposing himself on the landscape, and the rapes are a natural extension of that imposition. As Jill Casid puts it,

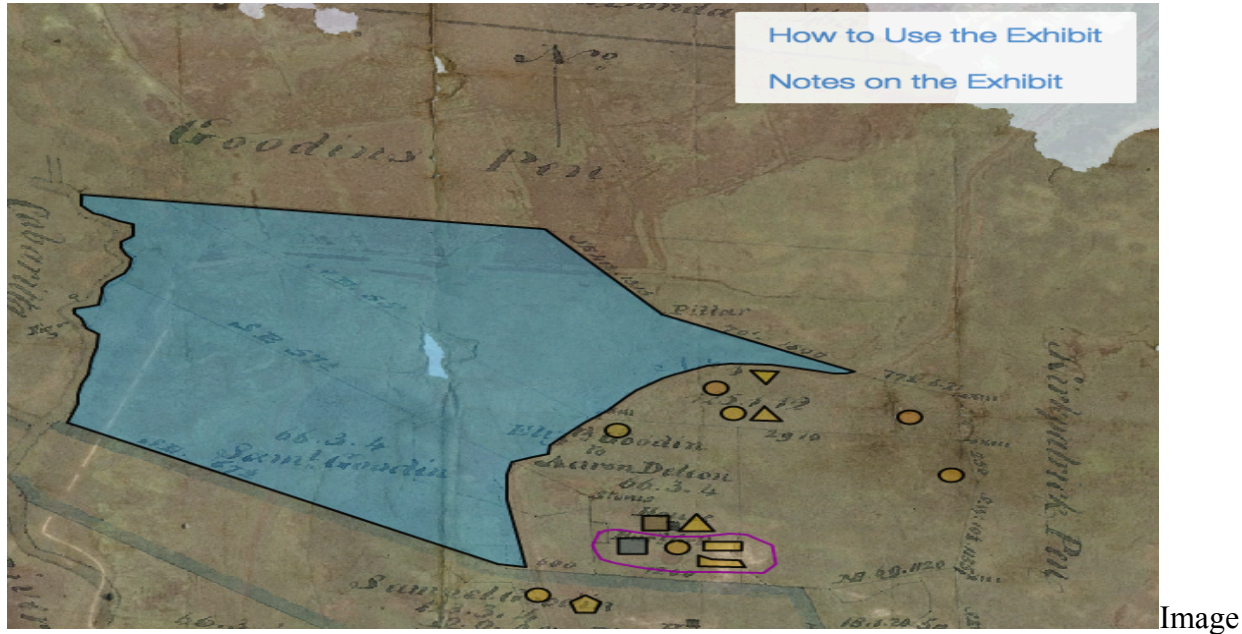
the practices of landscaping that emerged in the eighteenth century are inextricable from the contested terrain of empire within which they operated. Landscaping functioned as an imperial mode ... the landscape garden, with its inescapable history of the effects of the imperium ... [is] a material, political, and figurative territorialization . (xxi, xiv)

As part of this construction of an aesthetics of rape, the literary construct of the "locus amoenus," or "pleasant place" as it was used by Ovid is also a compelling possibility. Thistlewood was a reader of the classics, and his private collection included favorites by Ovid (Burnard 112). In Ovid, the "locus amoenus" is a place that is beautiful, but also dangerous, and is very often the site of violent rapes: in this construction, gardens and sexual violence go together.

The new garden was also the site of a noteworthy number of a particular kind of rape: those which Thistlewood recorded with the qualifier, "sed non bene," meaning "but not good."

The use of “sed non bene” is rare: it appears only thirty three times in fifteen hundred eighty four reports of rapes. For the most part it is up to Thistlewood’s reader to speculate about what might have made a sexual encounter “non bene” for him. Possible explanations include resistance on the part of the woman, or, perhaps more likely, performed indifference (as opposed to distress or resistance) to the act, which could well have frustrated the erotics of domination for Thistlewood. It is conspicuous that of those thirty-three incidents, fourteen of them took place in the new garden.

Below is a screenshot of the digital map illustrating the locations of the rapes with the “sed non bene” descriptor. On the map, each different shape corresponds with a woman who suffered rape by Thistlewood. When the user selects the shape, a popup appears that reports the woman's name, and details the event or events that took place in the location on the map. The different colors of these shapes represent the frequency of events of sexual violence on that location. The paler the color, the fewer events took place there. The darker the color, the more events took place there. The four shapes appearing within the purple line indicate the thirty-three “sed non bene” rapes in the new garden, perpetrated against Egypt Bessie, Sally, Damsel, and Bessie Hungerford.



(Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica)

Standing Lime Kiln and Provision Grounds

The standing lime kiln and the slaves' provision grounds were some distance from Thistlewood's house, and both were very frequent sites of rapes. In addition, the two features seem to have been close to each other. For these reasons, I will treat the standing lime kiln and the provision grounds as a collective space.

In Thistlewood's diary, the standing lime kiln is most often cited with reference to the rapes that took place either in the "entrance" to the lime kiln, or "near" its structure. The entrance to a lime kiln would have been a short tunnel of sorts that then opened into the chamber of the kiln interior. This is a specific kind of space: dark, small, sheltered, and with sound echoing through the interior of the empty kiln. The lime kiln's proximity to the provision grounds – the land provided for the slaves' subsistence farming – would have made it a site frequented by female slaves, and so a likely spot for apprehending them.

It is also possible that the lime kiln was a favorite spot for Thistlewood's rapes because it was such a stable landmark, and allowed him to easily record the sites of sexual activity. The fact that Thistlewood refers to his lime kiln as "standing" tells us that it was an immensely durable landmark. There were two types of kiln used for burning lime in early Jamaica: the first a massive inward-sloping log platform that collapsed in on itself as it burned, and the second, the type that Thistlewood had on Breadnut Island Pen, was a permanent structure made of stone that would have withstood the passage of time as well natural events as destructive as earthquakes.

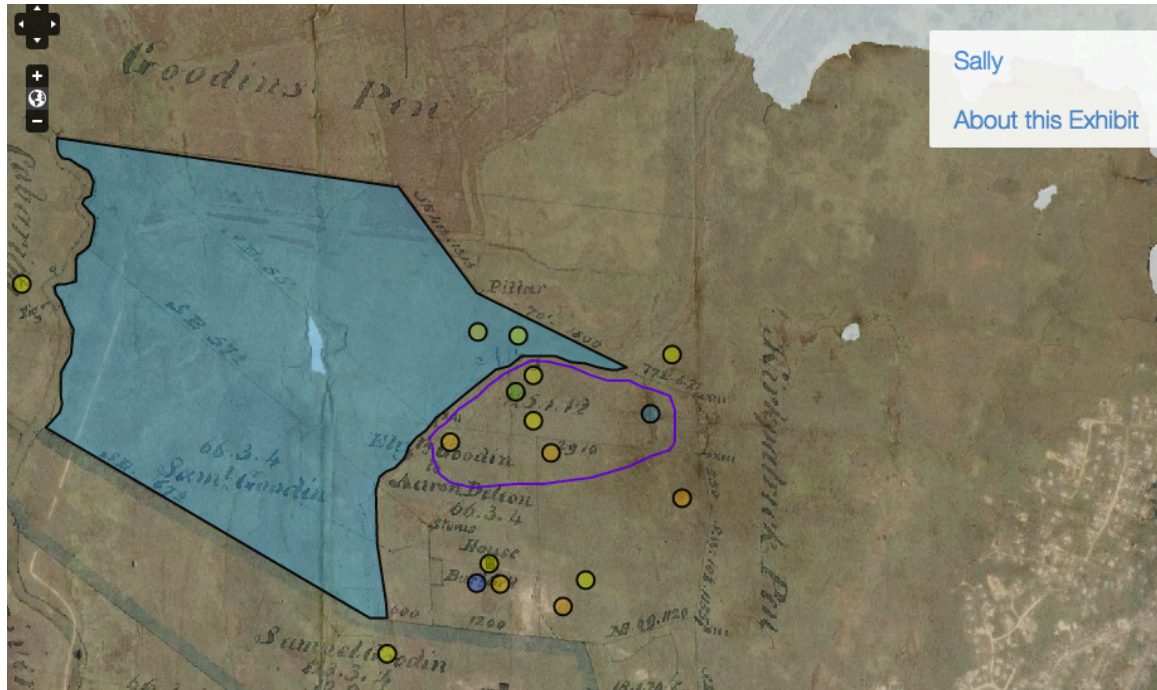
The provision grounds are a continual site of Thistlewood's molestation of his female slaves. In Jamaica, Woodville Marshall reports, "most of the slaves subsisted not on rations of imported or locally grown food but on the produce of own-account cultivation of provision grounds" (470). Higman corroborates: "Provision grounds, on which slaves were expected to produce their own food, existed on most Jamaican plantations after 1780. Only where almost all of the land within an estate was suited to the cultivation of sugar and backlands were not accessible did planters choose to purchase food or produce provision crops by supervised gang labor" ("Evaluating Jamaican Estate Maps" 158).

In the provision grounds, as with the standing lime kiln, Thistlewood seems to have favored spaces that provided some physical cover – caves and "Rock Holes" – as sites of rape. These caves and rock holes would be quite like the entrance to the kiln in being covered spaces. On 11th January 1768, for instance, he records "xxx AM cum Sukey mea sup terr in the large rockey cave in the nigroe ground - gave d: 2 bitts," and on 29th September 1770, "xxx AM cum phoebe /mia/ sup terr: in large rock hole, in provision gd: gave d: 2 bitts." This desire for cover is a recurring feature of Thistlewood's sexual violence on Breadnut Island

Pen. It gains significance when examined in the larger data set of the rapes he committed on Breadnut Island Pen. Of the six hundred and thirty rapes committed on Breadnut Island Pen that did not victimize Phibbah, five hundred and three indicate some concealment or cover for the rape. This cover took the form of built structures on the Pen, as well as natural features, such as rock holes and caves. Of the five hundred and three rapes that took place behind some kind of concealment, two hundred and forty four happened in a built structure: his house, a slave's house, the watch hut (a surveillance feature of the Pen), the storm house, the cook room, the storeroom, or the standing lime kiln).

This raises the question: why does Thistlewood seek protection and shelter when he dominates the landscape? Thistlewood does not record his affective responses to his experiences, so no indication of an answer to this question appears in the diary. This also speaks to the ways in which affective and physical geographies in plantation Jamaica: that even when Thistlewood was away from the house, and in some cases far away from it, he sought to commit his acts of violence under cover, creating a more domesticated setting for them. This also seems to be the same impulse that caused him to record the rapes in Latin in his diary. The code-switching makes a kind of partial obscuration possible while not foregoing the recording of them. In the same way, he does not forego the rapes, but overwhelmingly seeks a form of concealment for them.

Below, see Sally's map for one woman's experience of sexual violence in this area of the Pen. Sally was raped fifteen times in the provision grounds and standing lime kiln. Each point marks a number of instances of rape, and the darker the color of the point the more rapes took place there. For the purposes of this visualization, a purple circle encloses the standing lime kiln and provision grounds.



(Image Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica)

The Morass

Thistlewood experienced the large Morass on Breadnut Island Pen as a space in which he exerted control, while also finding it a foreign and wild place where slaves could slip his domination. Here, too, two geographies operated. The Morass seems to have spread out from the Cabaritta River that bordered Thistlewood's property on its west side, comprising a large portion of the Pen and spreading out eastwards from the river across the property. We can also infer that the Morass spanned from Thistlewood's property line at the north to the one at the south. The information about the Morass meeting his property line at the north comes from a letter he wrote to Robert Goodin, his neighbour to the north, asking Goodin for "leave to get Logwood ... on your Land," "to fence ... between your Land and our Morass" (Thistlewood reproduces Goodin's reply, in which Goodin expresses his "enjoyment" in refusing Thistlewood's request,

“for that Man divested of Neighbourly Friendship has no right to ask Favours, and Consequently to expect their being granted.”) The fact that Thistlewood reproduces Goodin’s unflattering refusal of his request suggests either that it did not cause Thistlewood to feel embarrassed, or that Thistlewood recorded it because he recorded his life in an obsessive way, which did not censure embarrassing material. We know that the Morass stretched as far as Breadnut Island Pen’s southern property line as a result of entries like this one made on 18th August 1773: “xxx P.M. Cum Mr:S.’s ... Sally, Sup:Terr: ... by morass Side and South from dividing ffence and, in Mr:S.’s Land. xGave do: 2 bitts.”

The Morass was an area where slaves could more easily escape and were more familiar with the land than Thistlewood was. Just as the Morass transformed from marsh to pasturage depending on the season, its purpose varied for Thistlewood. It was the source of plentiful fish, which he consumed himself and sent out as gifts to neighbors and friends in the parish. How rich a resource was a point of contention between Thistlewood and his fisherman, and arguably most trusted slave, Lincoln. Over the years on Breadnut Island Pen, Thistlewood frequently accused Lincoln of keeping some or most of the fish he caught for himself. In addition to its offerings, it was also a largely uncultivated part of the property, through which his own slaves could flee for their best chance of not being immediately retrieved, and where slaves and runaways from other plantations could easily poach fish and water birds from his property.

Thistlewood’s experience of the Morass as something of a wild exterior on his own property is illustrated by this entry from Monday January 29th, 1776: “About 11 A.M. Lincoln Come with Fish, but did not bring enough ffor a Cat. ordered pompey to take hold off him in the CookRoom, but While I was getting the Bilboes, he escaped ffrom pompey & run into the Morass, & pompey affter him: but he Could not Come up with him.” Lincoln’s familiarity with

the Morass meant that he could easily navigate it at speed, and Thistlewood's unfamiliarity with it meant that a slave like Pompey would have little to fear from telling Thistlewood that he was unable to retrieve Lincoln from it, and would perhaps have used this as deniability in the case of his unwillingness to run Lincoln down and enable his confinement in the bilboes. Thistlewood's inability to confine Lincoln's activities once he had entered the Morass is reflected again in an entry on May 17th 1776: "about half past noon, Lincoln Come, but did not bring ¼ off a bitts worth of fish ... & when he perceived I would punish him, he threatened to make away With himself if I troubled him: however gave him a good flogging & put him in the bilboes! ... Cannot be kept fishing in my Own Morasses ... but will go out to Sea ..." Here, it is clear that once Lincoln has entered the Morass, his whereabouts are of his own choosing. This entry also suggests that Thistlewood considers Lincoln's body as part of the theft at issue. When Lincoln threatens "to make away With himself," by running away Lincoln would be stealing property (in the form of himself) from Thistlewood, in addition to the fish. Even Lincoln's reaction to Thistlewood's threat of punishment – "he threatened to make away With himself if I troubled him" – indicates that Lincoln retained the sense of liberation gained by a morning spent in relative autonomy obtained via the Morass.

That the Morass landscape was a useful place for runaway slaves to lose their pursuers is illustrated by this entry from 19th July 1776, where Thistlewood records an escaped slave evading capture in the Styx Morass: "It Seems the Negroe got away ffrom the Troopers about the Styx Morass." Although the Styx Morass is not the Morass on Breadnut Island Pen, the entry demonstrates the strategic advantages for escape and evasion that the Morass land presented for absconding slaves. On September 5th 1776, Thistlewood records: "*Solon do: brought bad fish, Flogged him again & put a Collar about his Neck; Note he Started from Lincoln, Jimmy, Strop,

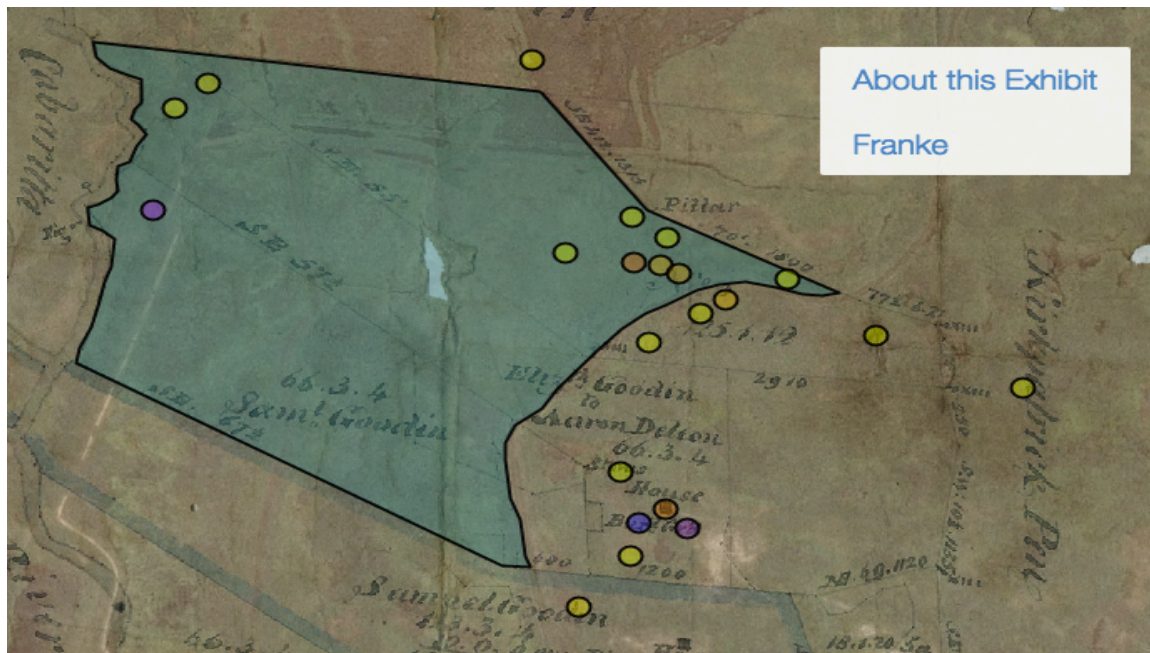
Cæsar & pompey, when going to be put down, but they Caught him again in the Morass.” The fact that it took five slaves to apprehend Solon, including Lincoln, who, as the primary fisherman of the property, arguably knew the Morass of Breadnut Island Pen better than anyone on the Pen, speaks for the benefit of the Morass as hiding place, even despite Solon’s eventual capture. And Thistlewood’s punishment of Solon with flogging and a collar gestures to the impotence Thistlewood himself had felt to prevent his near escape. However, as this incident demonstrates, the Morass was by no means a guaranteed means of escape, especially when the pursuers included fellow slaves.

Thistlewood’s diary also reflects his awareness and experience of the theft and poaching that went on in his Morass. On 18th April 1767, he records, “walked in the ruinate over the morass duck pond, and frightened some Negroe men there.” The Morass and its duck pond are far enough from the house, open land, and centers of activity that “Negroe men” who seem to be strange to Thistlewood (or he would name them) can be discovered, presumably fishing, and that Thistlewood felt the need to “frighten” them off.

However, a sense of Thistlewood’s control of the Morass is reflected by his seeming awareness that the duck pond in the Morass made for a good location for, or possibly marker, for rapes. On 5th January 1769, he reports: “Cum Mirtilla Mea. Sup: Terr: on the West Side of the Morass Duck Pond.” We cannot discount the possibility that Thistlewood, who was seemingly obsessive compulsive in his attitude to recording the locations of the rapes he committed, might have chosen particular locations because they lent themselves to description and identification. The recurrence of certain landmarks in his rape records – the Morass duck pond, the “bench under [the] shed in [the] garden,” and the “standing lime kiln” – indicate that Thistlewood may have focused his rapes on these locations because their presence enabled ease of recording the

exact location of the event later. Thistlewood seems to have tried to create experiences that he could document.

On the next page is a screenshot of the digital map illustrating the sexual violence perpetrated against a slave named Franke. The map shows Franke's experience of rape in the morass (the morass is the area highlighted in pale blue).



(Image Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica)

Conclusion

The descriptions and visualizations of the violence on Breadnut Island Pen provide a picture of a plantation world in which the affective boundaries between the domestic and violent were porous, and geographies became unpredictable. The house, although it was a site of sympathy, was only the site of parodic sympathy, and instances of rape still happened within it. In the plantation's outlying areas, where Thistlewood was supposedly in the domain of the wild, he generally wanted to commit his acts of violence under cover or shelter. Despite the abundance

of useful information we can glean from careful observation of plantation plats and surveys, we must consider another kind of geography to begin to understand life on the Caribbean plantation.

Affective geography does not correspond to physical geography in some obvious way in the plantation properties of late eighteenth-century Jamaica: there is a physical geography to the plantation, and there is an affective geography that overlaps with it and is situated within it, but this affective geography has its own coordinates.

Appendix A

Appendix 1 comprises the complete data set of sexual violence events on Breadnut Island Pen. It is published online at the following location:

file:///C:/Users/Jennifer/AppData/Roaming/Microsoft/Windows/Network%20Shortcuts/Data%20Thistlewood%20Sexual%20Violence%20on%20Breadnut%20Island%20Pen.htm

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