“IF THE MASTERS BE CRUEL”: VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY IN THE EARLY MODERN BRITISH CARIBBEAN

by

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(Under the Direction of Daniel Rood)

This thesis argues that members of the white, elite planter class of Barbados used punitive violence against European servants and African slaves to assert their masculinity – through which they gained their authority. In doing so, they further solidified class differences in Barbados’ highly stratified “Little England” society. Social position impacted the behavior of the white men in Barbados and, ultimately, their masculinity. Men marginalized other men to assert their dominance across lines of race, ethnicity, and class.

INDEX WORDS: Atlantic World, 17th Century Barbados, 17th Century Jamaica, Early Modern Caribbean, Anglophone Caribbean, Labor, Gender, Slavery

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DEDICATION

For my parents – thank you for getting me here.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1676, an account of a plot by enslaved Africans to kill their masters – and, purportedly, all the white people in Barbados – was published. Included in this publication was a detailed account of the punishments suffered by the those accused of being involved with the conspiracy. The story goes as follows:

> This conspiracy first broke out and was hatched by the Cormantee or Gold-Cost Negro's about Three years since, and afterwards cunningly and clandestinely carried, and kept secret, even from the knowledge of their own wifes. Their grand design was to choose them a king… to give notice of their general rising, with a full intention to fire the sugar-canes, and so run in and cut their masters the planters throats…

Anna, a house slave who belonged to the local judge, Justice Hall, overheard two enslaved Africans discussing the plot and instantly went to her master and mistress. Hall also called upon one of the young men who Anna overheard. The young slave "discovered and impeached several, as well his own master's negro's as others belonging to the adjacent plantations who had a hand in this plot…"[1] The enslaved persons who allegedly came up with the plot to murder "all the white people" were cruelly punished.[2] Six of the conspirators were burnt alive and eleven were beheaded, "their dead bodies being dragged through the streets, at spikes a pleasant Port-Town in that island, and were afterwards burnt with those that were burned alive."[3]

The intensely masculine, stratified society of Barbados was ruled by narrow class of wealthy, white male slaveowners. As such, the violence enacted on the alleged creators of the plot held two purposes. On the one hand, it served as "just" punishment of slaves who dared to imagine

[1] Unknown, pp. 10.
[2] Unknown, pp. 10.
[3] Unknown, pp.12.

an uprising in which they secured their own freedom through the deaths of those that enslaved them. On the other, it was a warning to those who might try and subvert the authority of rich, white men in Barbados – attempts to dismantle the carefully constructed hierarchy would not be well received. As noted by Garthine Walker in her book, *Crime, Gender, and Social Order in Early Modern England*, men in Barbados used violence to define themselves and others. In this case, Justice Hall – and whomever he enlisted to help him dole out punishment – had to not only punish the lawbreaking slaves, but also reinforce the system that kept lesser groups subordinate. Male violence was essential to keep the masses subordinate not just because it created fear, but also because it marked other groups of men as inferior to the ruling class.

Ultimately, the English constructed notions of difference in the West Indies that largely celebrated persons who were "Christian rather than heathen; Protestant rather than Catholic; English rather than Irish or African or Indian; civilized rather than savage".[4] As colonial sugar production boomed, categories of labor – that is, free or unfree, indentured servant or slave – became significant markers of difference. As such, Africans and various European people were ideal sources of labor to the English, although the Europeans required little capital expenditure. The experience of enslaved Africans, however, is markedly more significant, and carries a darker legacy of trauma, genocide, and abuse. In the 1680s – as the sugar industry reached its peak – the fortunes of even poor European and African Barbadians diverged dramatically, and it is clear how the status of enslaved Africans declined over this time period. Social position impacted the behavior of the white men in Barbados and, ultimately, their masculinity. "Male honour was manifest not only in reputation and in physical prowess, but also in the ability to compel others to subordinate themselves," writes Walker. "Male violence was at once a personal act and

[4] Shaw, pp. 5.

vehicle for cultural expression and lay at the heart of the way cultural groups defined their masculine identities."[5] Men marginalized other men to assert their dominance across lines of race, ethnicity, and class. Furthermore, the supposedly contentious behavior of servants and slaves was a challenge to masculinity and, therefore, colonial order and hierarchy. In turn, planters resorted to violence – to secure obedience from their subordinates, and to establish themselves as rightful patriarchs in a strange new world. This thesis argues that members of the white, elite planter class of Barbados used punitive violence against European servants and African slaves to assert their masculinity – through which they gained their authority.

The processes that took place during the British conquest of Ireland would be mirrored in the settling of Barbados in the early seventeenth century. Both islands, once settled, would be intensely class-conscious societies, concerned with maintaining gentlemanly authority. Accepting English notions about class, race and gender was imperative, and doing so established violence as a means by which men could assert their masculinity. English prejudices were imported alongside their values as they arrived in the New World. Non-English, European servants immediately found themselves in a dangerous social position. Made subordinate in ways that were unlike the forms of indentured servitude found in England, now laboring alongside enslaved Africans.

As sugar production thrived in Barbados, so did the growing need for enslaved laborers. Unlike indentured servants, slaves did not enjoy the same – if limited – protections because they were not considered English subjects. A close examination of Caribbean labor codes reveals just this, as differences in physical punishments between African slaves and "Christian" servants were established for the first time. Furthermore, the passing of these labor codes codified race as

[5] Walker, pp. 128.

a category of difference, strengthening the imbalanced hierarchy of Barbados. The small class of elite, white male planters had found another effective way subjugate the laboring masses.

Violence, of course, was another effective method to ensure obedience. Barbados was a departure from typical English society. Planters frequently crossed the line from "reasonable" to "unacceptable" violence. Additionally, given the uneven demographic makeup of the island, men usually performed violence on other men. Travel narratives, such as the one written by French priest Father Antoine Biet, took note of this violence. So did other outside writers, such as V.T. Harlow and César de Rochefort. They extended limited sympathy only in certain situations, usually when shocked by the treatment of white, Christian servants. When they rarely found the abuse of slaves to be excessive, they ultimately found it to be justified as a means to ensure subservience. However, performing violence was complicated. It could only go so far to ensure one's masculinity, and in turn, their authority. Many viewed some acts of violence – such as fist-fighting – as endemic lower and middle-class masculinities. Therefore, engaging in violence could be damaging to a gentleman's reputation. The fact that Barbadian planters effectively threw caution to the wind when abusing servants and slaves was, understandably so, shocking to outsiders.

The English constructed difference both in Europe and in the Caribbean in ways that created highly stratified societies. The rapidly booming sugar industry in Barbados demanded subservient labor forces, and by the 1680s, European indentured servants were no longer preferred to enslaved Africans. Given the tenuously defined nature of their social status, men performed violence on other men to assert their authority. They did so across lines of race, ethnicity, and class. Elite white men used violence to ensure subordinance from servants and slaves, but there were limits to what violence was acceptable. In Barbados, planters frequently

crossed this line. Furthermore, violence – perceived or actual – committed by those who were not members of white elite was looked down upon. Ultimately, violence was for some a vehicle for social mobility, and for others, a force under which they suffered.

CHAPTER ONE:

"Óró, sé do bheatha 'bhaile"

The British Conquest of Ireland: A Brief Overview

Understanding the processes involved in England's conquest of Ireland is essential to understanding Barbadian society as it reflected the nuances of English values. If Ireland was to become a "settled" society, it would be brought about by British hierarchy and order. The creation of a social order in early seventeenth-century Ireland found that it required (or even, perhaps, preferred) the spread of English settlement, dress, language, and manners. The same would occur later among the white, male population of Barbados. In doing so, they further solidified class differences in Barbados' highly stratified, "Little England" society, effectively creating a system that prized male violence as a means of subordinating others. While Barbadian society valued the violent actions of gentlemen, this was not always the case. When it came to low-ranking men, violent actions directed at superiors was seen as criminal, and violence against peers disruptive.

Conflict between England, Ireland, and Scotland existed well into and beyond the sixteenth century. The Protestant Reformation mirrored the British conquest of Ireland as it was marked by general Irish resistance to British government policy. It had "reconfigured the religious landscape" of Wales, Scotland, England, and Ireland, but Wales and England alone had firmly adopted Protestantism as the "legally-mandated faith".[6] However, even as the Protestant Church was imposed upon Ireland, many Irish remained stoutly Catholic. Alongside the fact that they did not undertake the great task of converting the indigenous people of the Americas, this

[6] Pestana in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 70.

meant that missionaries ultimately failed in the primary mission given to them by early colonial promoters.

The quest to settle Ireland did not end there. Historians have argued over the significance of the year 1603, which marks both the ascension of James VI to the English throne and the completion of the British conquest of Ireland. While James' strongest claim to the throne was his direct descendance from Margaret Tudor, there were issues. Perhaps most concerning was the fact that his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, had been executed for treason against Queen Elizabeth. English law at the time dictated that any claim to the throne was lost not only by traitors, but the descendants of traitors as well. However, James VI still ascended to the throne, at last uniting the kingdoms of England and Scotland. Additionally, the end of British conquest marked the end of the Nine Years War. Fought against English rule, the Nine Years War was perhaps the largest conflict England had been engaged in against Ireland. Hugh O'Neill and Hugh Roe O'Donnell – the primary leaders of the Irish rebellion – were pardoned by James VI upon his ascension.

A settled Irish society would be an intensely class-conscious one. The fashioning of gentleman required one to keep up appearances in order to maintain authority. Gentility was "closely associated with the power to govern," as "social order could only be maintained by a securely established social elite."[7] That security came from an acceptance of English values and notions of civility. Uncivil societies functioned in the reverse – they rejected these values, which had larger implications for one's role in society. Relations between men and women, Protestants and Catholics, rich and poor were interpreted and measured against the familiar social roles of proper English society – and found lacking. For example, in theory, the English man was head of

[7] Braddick in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 102.

household, "who was expected to monitor the behavior of his family and also his servants."[8] Despite the fact that in practice this was not always the case in England – where economic hardship might dictate new forms of masculinity and femininity – Irish women were still expected to conform to these models of subjectivity. Yet (aristocratic) Irish women held other roles, such as landowners or preservers of Roman Catholicism. There was a concern that Irish wives in general would be "treacherous."[9] The English perceived Irish women as insubordinate, which in turn weakened Irish men's masculinity in their eyes. In the context of a society concerned with colonialism and its aims, the gender hierarchy became increasingly crucial to maintaining order. Therefore, the need for stable households modeled after proper English gender norms became essential for successful English settlement. Advocacy for civility in Ireland was more or less a government policy, with legitimacy being grounded in the elite's ability to subjugate those of inferior identity. Included in the aims of conquest were attempts at reform. Writers Edmund Spenser, Rowland White, and Edmund Tremayne all assumed that political instability within the Irish government was caused by Irish lordship. The resulting incivility was "a problem both of social and political order".[10]

The British Conquest of Barbados: A Brief Overview

Like their colonial aims elsewhere, English interest in the West Indies in the 1580s and 1590s was "mobilized by a crude combination of profit, patriotism, and Protestantism."[11] There was also a tension between the desires to plunder and to settle, which influenced the interests of merchants, mariners, and settlers well into the seventeenth century. England occupied the island of Barbados in 1625, and three decades later, colonies had been established elsewhere in the

[8] Pearsall in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 116.
[9] Pearsall in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 119.
[10] Braddick in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 101.
[11] Appleby in Paquette and Engerman, pp. 87.

Caribbean in locations such as Nevis, Antigua, and Monserrat. By 1655, Britain had not only made major land gains in the Caribbean, but their imperial system had also rapidly expanded due to the adoption of slave labor.

In the 1640s, English colonists adopted a system of African slavery in Barbados, alongside the previously established one of indentured servitude. The island led the world in sugar production from 1640 to 1700, and during this period, imported over 150,000 slaves.[12] This system of forced labor, coupled with the painstaking yet profitable work of harvesting sugar, thrived under a socioeconomic system that prized corrective violence and order. However, for British imperial aims to be successful, a hierarchy had to be established between white, European servants and African slaves. This was in part done by creation of two distinct labor codes created by the Barbados House of Assembly – one for "Christian Servants", and the other for "Negro" slaves.[13] The establishment of these codes helped the Barbadian elite subjugate an unruly, unwilling labor force. After continued resistance to the code by servants and slaves, the slave code was "revamped" in 1688, with "additional measures to enhance the power of the slaveholding regime."[14] Before the establishment of these codes, distinctions in physical punishments were rarely established between "Christian" servants and "Negro" slaves. These legal codes served to aid the development of race as a concept and further strengthen the slave-owning system. As put by Edward B. Rugemer, "race as an ideological construction had not yet fully emerged, but race as an exercise of power was clearly at work."[15] In 1681, Jamaica's Servant Act dropped the term "Christian" in favor of the word "white" for the first time.[16]

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[12] Paquette and Engerman, pp. 8.
[13] Rugemer, pp. 430-433.
[14] Rugemer, pp. 430.
[15] Rugemer, pp. 442.
[16] This takes on special significance after the 1676 rebellion in Barbados, where the accused conspirators (enslaved Africans) planned to take revenge on their white masters.

"In Barbados, as in Virginia," writes Rugemer, "the historical foundations of race and slavery can be traced to the struggle between the planter elite and a labor force of bound servants and African slaves who resisted oppression."[17] The leading slave societies of the Caribbean therefore typically had an elite white minority at the top and a mass of enslaved people at the bottom. As one plantation agent in Barbados put it, "'a plantation in this place is worth nothing unless they be a good store of hands upon it.' Without able hands, 'there is no way to live.'"[18]

Despite their small number, the elite were able to take land from non-elite white settlers. To be sure, poorer whites had trouble acquiring land in the first place. The cost of emigrating to Barbados from Europe would have been prohibitively high for most looking to find fortune in the islands. Many poor whites paid for their passage by indenturing themselves to others. But by becoming indentured servants, these migrants had condemned themselves to a difficult fate. Oliver Cromwell's conquest of Ireland and the expansion of sugar in the 1650s resulted in many Irish political prisoners being sent to the island. Other "undesirables", such as the poor and infirm, were forcibly shipped to the Caribbean. These forced migrants were often also indentured to serve out their sentences.

Indentured servants had organized plot to rebel as early as 1634.[19] By 1652, laws passed by the Barbados Assembly indicated their unwillingness to be servants. Many ran away in "in significant numbers, fought back against violent overseers, and stole from their estates."[20] In 1657, after multiple rebellions from unruly Irish servants, Governor Daniel Searle "made a public declaration that cited the many Irish who were 'now forth in rebellion' and instituted a raft of social control regulations including a pass system and a ban on Irish servants' possession of

[17] Rugemer, pp. 431.
[18] Games in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 38.
[19] Rugemer, pp. 435.
[20] Rugemer, pp. 435.

weapons."[21] Laws passed against servants governed personal behavior and were often met with violent punishment when violated. Aside from additional years added to their terms of service, servants could be whipped on their bare back, spend days in the pillory, or lose both ears for various infractions. Establishing prohibitive laws and the threat of violence kept the elite of Barbados secure in their positions, despite their relatively small number. However, this violence did not necessarily need to be legally sanctioned to be considered legitimate and reasonable – it just could not explicitly go against the limits in place.

The switch from indentured servitude to slavery as the dominant system of labor in Barbados required a major sociological transition. The initial dependence on tobacco was not sustainable, and in response to the drop in cotton and indigo prices, the island began growing sugarcane in earnest in the mid-seventeenth century.[22] Englishmen in the 1640s and 1650s were among the first to adopt slave labor in the Americas, in Barbados especially. While the pre-sugar economy and first phase of sugar production remained dependent upon servant labor, it soon became much more economically beneficial for planters to adopt slave labor. Enslaved Africans would account for about 95 percent of the Barbadian labor force by the 1680s.[23] Laws passed in response to resistance from below would later be applied to the growing number of African slaves, solidifying the Barbadian slave system for centuries to come.

[21] Rugemer, pp. 436.
[22] Beckles and Downes, pp. 226.
[23] Beckles and Downes, pp. 227-228.

CHAPTER TWO:

Reluctant Men: Irishness and Masculinity in the British Atlantic World

Exporting their prejudices to the New World, the English Caribbean elite expressed anti-Irish sentiment in a variety of ways. Beckles notes that "English planters were hostile to Catholic Irish servants, who were stereotyped as lazy, drunken, noisy, and opposed to the Protestant colonial interest."[24] For example, many Irish were transported in the 1630s after being forced to take the Allegiance of Supremacy.[25] This oath, while previously only required of members of Parliament and religious clergy, was to be taken by the Irish as a sign of fealty to the English crown. Shaw notes that "the Irish were encouraged to transform, to transgress a boundary, but only if they were willing to swear fealty and remain on its right side, together with Protestant English officials and colonists."[26] Notably, the records and passenger lists in James Hottens's *The Original Lists of Persons of Quality* only include those who emigrated legally – so criminals and rebels are included, but not those who departed secretly or were kidnapped. What Hotten's records reveal about Irish "criminality" not only reinforce the evidence of anti-Irish sentiment among the English Caribbean elite, but how gendered criminalization was manifested.[27] Women were most commonly accused of crimes relating to sexual morality, such as illegitimacy, or social crimes, such as scolding and witchcraft.[28] Even when men and women would be convicted

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[24] Beckles, pp. 38.
[25] Hotten, pp. 142-43. It is interesting to note that decades later, many Irish men achieve their social status by denouncing Roman Catholicism.
[26] Shaw, pp. 40.
[27] For example, records of male convicts show that they are transported to the island for a variety of crimes. For women, however, they are exiled for one alone: prostitution. Given the subsequent sexual exploitation and vulnerability of indentured Irish women, it is interesting that prostitution is the crime worthy of exile.
[28] Pearsall in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 118. Scolding was a crime as it could bring about social disturbance.

of the same crimes – such as disturbing the public peace – for women to be "'disturbing' or 'unruly' was particularly worrisome."[29]

"In the essay "A Changing Presence: The Irish in the Caribbean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", Nini Rodgers argues that "the Irish struggled to benefit from their whiteness in a colonial society based on color."[30] However, she also notes that a growing number of Irish were able to achieve a "startling degree of wealth and power" in the eighteenth century.[31] The available evidence demonstrates that categories of difference were imposed on the Irish – and they would have likely dealt with these categories in their own way. For example, in the early seventeenth century Irish Catholics had to make choice between their Protestant and Catholic rulers. Faith was a seemingly obvious mode by which Irish indentured servants could create a shared identity. This is not to say, of course, that all Irish people in the Caribbean were Catholic, or that all Catholics were Irish. Furthermore, conversion or imitation of Anglo Protestantism was a means by which the Irish could begin their upward social climb. As put by Rodgers, "it was a difficult position, forcing [the Irish] to stress different parts of their identity – acceptance of the state or dedication to religion – in order to survive and pursue profit."[32]

According to an unknown source cited by Shaw, the servants made a "sociological transition" into the higher social category of freemen and freewoman and found themselves newly situated in the social structure of 1675 Barbados: "the inhabitants of this island are of four sorts. First the freeholders who formerly held land from the Earl of Carlisle… [T]he next sort are those they call freemen who are such as having served out the time they contracted for are freed from their masters and serve in the country for wages." This was an extremely significant

[29] Pearsall in Armitage and Braddick, pp. 118.
[30] Rodgers, pp. 17.
[31] Rodgers, pp. 17.
[32] Rodgers, pp. 18.

moment for history of race and masculinity in Barbados, marked by quashed rebellion and the emergence of distinct social categories. These distinctions are not only made by racial and freedom status, but also – and perhaps more explicitly so – by class. Interestingly, the list seems to rank the type of inhabitants, with "those they call Christian servants for distinction whose time of service is not yet expired" and "the negroes… who live as absolute slaves to their masters" described last.[33] Class, freedom status, and race were categories intimately connected and used to determine one's social standing. The transition from indentured laborer to freeperson surely required an adjustment. For example, the 1690 Barbados census recorded the rise of Irish laborer Cornelius Bryan to island planter. As a European, he was able to become a member of the planter elite, but his social status remained tenuous. As a Catholic, he was viewed with suspicion by members of the Protestant English authority. Others like Bryan occupied and "uneasy space" in the colonial hierarchy, and as such, had to carefully navigate a space that deemed them simultaneously white and non-white.[34]

The research shows that the servants were seen as a status lower than the dominantly English planter class; they were viewed largely a class of male, non-English convicts of various offenses. Women were also indentured and could be convicts, but primarily on the charge of prostitution. Furthermore, they made up only twenty-five percent of transportees.[35] Within a generation, some servants were able to emerge at the top of Caribbean society by adopting forms of elite English manhood through acquiring property, distancing themselves from Catholicism, and accepting English ideas about race and gender.

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[33] Shaw, pp. 141.
[34] Shaw, pp. 1-3.
[35] Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in,* pp. 46.

Historians have long been interested in the contentious nature of these ideas. Relevant scholarship has had much to say about early modern forms of English masculinity, as well as the relationships between violence and manhood. "In most studies, family-focused patriarchal masculinity is held as the normative, or even the hegemonic form, of masculinity in early modern Europe," writes Androniki Dialeti in their essay "From Women's Oppression to Male Anxiety".[36] Men defined themselves in gendered ways in Barbados – especially the colonial elite. Upholding certain aspects of English ways of life – including ideas about servitude, masculinity, and propriety – were important to maintain hierarchy. Without wives or families, many white men in Barbados had to assert their masculinity through violence towards their subordinates – that is, their servants and slaves. Planters effectively treated male servants and slaves, who were the majority, as they might have treated women and children in England and Ireland. The overwhelmingly male demographic of Barbados would have produced a masculine society that presented challenges at every turn. As a result, some planters chose to secure their masculinity through violence towards others.

However, Dialeti demonstrates that masculinity was not always a secure category. They assert that "manhood could easily be challenged when a patriarch failed to fulfill his duties as a husband and father, to support his family, to assert his authority over his subordinates, and especially to be self-controlled."[37] For example, children and adolescents (who are positioned as subordinates) often engaged in behavior that challenged the patriarch: "A most indicative example of explicit resistance to patriarchal dictates can be found in the rites of youthful misrule

[36] Dialeti in Muravyeva and Toivo, pp. 31.
[37] Dialeti in Muravyeva and Toivo, pp. 29.

– excessive drinking, gambling, rioting, and sexual prowess – which often seemed threatening to the established order in the eyes of their elders."[38]

In her book, *Crime, Gender, and Social Order in Early Modern England*, Garthine Walker writes that "early modern patriarchalism endorsed violence as a means of maintain gender and social hierarchy. Righteous violence therefore included 'reasonable correction' of wives by husbands, children by parents, and servants by masters and mistresses."[39] So what, then, happens when the 'correction' is no longer reasonable? Island planters who engaged in such excessive violence were looked down upon by outsiders. Walker also notes that "others identified violence as a means of attaining manhood and affirming it publicly but have seldom interrogated 'violence' itself as a category."[40]

[38] Dialeti in Muravyeva and Toivo, pp. 30.
[39] Walker, pp. 49.
[40] Walker, pp. 33.

CHAPTER 3:

Strong and Violent Men

Establishing Control

"As they created slave societies in Barbados and Jamaica, planters used increasingly violent methods to discipline individual slaves, attempt to control runaways, and prevent and punish rebellions," writes Richard Dunn in his groundbreaking text, *Sugar and Slaves*. "Such brutal coercion of servants by masters violated English norms…"[41] Clearly, there was a line to what violence was acceptable, and apparently Barbadian planters frequently crossed that line. There were legal protections to this violence (most commonly during the early seventeenth century) but ultimately, violence towards servants and slaves was expected. Furthermore, the few protections that had existed had limits. In 1683, the Jamaica Council for Trade and Plantations rejected a law that proposed only a fine for the murder of a slave. The Council ultimately decided that a three-month imprisonment would be an appropriate punishment for free white men who committed such acts of cruelty. However, a servant that murdered a slave would "receive thirty-nine lashes and serve the owner of the dead slave for four years after their current term of service had expired."[42] Meanwhile, the primary concern of legislation governing the behavior of indentured servants was too "ensure that [masters] obtained a return for their investment in [indentured servants], or were compensated if the laborer was lost."[43] For

[41] Dunn, pp. 179
[42] Amussen, pp. 142.
[43] Gragg, pp. 117.

example, a servant could suffer penalties for marrying without a master's permission or impregnating another servant. As put by Dunn, "the punitive dimensions of the servant code in Barbados were amplified by the extensions of service that followed infractions and the limitations of servants' lives that guaranteed control of their labor."[44]

Even though they shared measures of oppression early in the history of the Barbadian sugar industry, differences of status between slaves and servants became codified in these legal codes. In *Caribbean Exchanges*, Susan Amussen notes that the Caribbean elite viewed indentured servants as English subjects, and as such, they had certain rights and liberties that slaves did not. This was not the case, however, for Irish servants. Planters and propertied men viewed servants in a similar manner and could control their labor in recognizable ways. However, the reciprocity inherent in service did not apply to slaves, which meant that the new slave-holding system was a departure from the English experience. While indentured servitude in Barbados could be modeled after the English system of service, planters now had to learn how to own slaves.[45] "Slaves were always treated not just as people who needed discipline," writes Amussen, "but rather as laborers who did not deserve the same legal rights as white people, whether planters or servants."[46] By 1661, different legal processes and standards of punishment had been established between African "savages" and Christian Europeans.

Early modern forms of English masculinity dictated that men were patriarchs over family and home – which included apprentices, servants, and slaves. Hans Sloane's travel narrative of Barbados, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christopher's and Jamaica*, provides an excellent description of how these men exerted authority over slaves in particular.

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[44] Dunn, pp. 126.
[45] There were, of course, major differences as well. See Gragg pp. 115-117 for more.
[46] Amussen, pp. 143.

They punished and erased the threat of rebellion by "burning them, by nailing them down on the ground with crooked sticks on every limb, and then applying the fire by degrees from the feet and hands, burning them gradually up to the head, whereby their pains are extravagant."[47] For crimes less egregious than rebellion, the punishment might be gelding – that is, the chopping off of half a foot with an ax. Even though enslaved people consistently suffered through acts of violence such as these, Sloane claimed that African slaves were "more easily treated by the English here, than by their own country-people."[48] Sloane's narrative is useful not only as a record of masculine violence, but as it also reflects the ways in which prevailing beliefs about the "savageness" of African people justified such violence.

Clearly, a patriarch's authority descended from his masculinity. The white male planters of Barbados, however, performed masculinity in their own way. Without wives or children to serve as subordinates, many planters primarily asserted their masculinity by performing violence on other men.[49] Marianna G. Muravyeva and Raisa Maria Toivo write that "early modernists have indeed underlined that patriarchal ideology often created anxiety among men by constantly testing their manhood or even by marginalizing specific groups of men."[50] They could do so across lines such as race, ethnicity, or class. For example, early Irish planters would have faced extra challenges when it came to asserting their masculinity in the Barbadian "Little England" society. Strong colonial influence on Barbados neatly created a society modeled after British culture, value, and systems. However, there were also departures from the British norms.

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[47] Sloane, pp. lvii
[48] Sloane, pp. lvii.
[49] Women as well, of course, but Barbados was an overwhelmingly male island. As such, much of the violence would have been enacted upon men – which is why I chose to say men were violent to other men. This gender imbalance remained constant, and such a homosocial society established few forms of acceptable masculinity. Establishing all other ways of "being a man" as inferior to the dominant masculinity helped keep the hierarchy in place.
[50] Muravyeva and Toivo in Muravyeva and Toivo, pp. 9.

Uniquely situated in the Atlantic theater, Barbados' almost entirely male population meant that relations between men and women looked different. In the early days of English conquest few wealthy planters had wives or children, and indentured servants were often forbidden from having children, or could only marry with their master's permission. The same is true for relations between white and African people. Overwhelmingly populated with black people, the white elite counted on violence – and, eventually, white immigration from Europe – to help subjugate enslaved people. This also meant, before the later years of the seventeenth century, European servants held status over enslaved Africans due to their supposed Christian faith. This does not mean that it was by any means easy to place people into racial categories. For example, the Irish Catholic population, who resisted easy categorization, troubled the emerging racial hierarchy. As the seventeenth century progressed, some made the transition from servant to planter and acquired property in land and in slaves. Others arrived with enough capital to buy sugar plantations outright. These Irish "laid their own claims to a place among the planter elite."[51] Yet the Irish also interacted with English elite and enslaved Africans, and could do as peer, troublemaker, fellow laborer, or master. But as race became a more firmly established idea, so did the difference of status between European servants and enslaved Africans, slowly erasing these ambiguities.

Wicked Behavior

Father Antoine Biet, a French priest, visited Barbados in 1654. His account – while limited by his beliefs and perhaps shortsighted – reveals much about the abuse enslaved people faced of Barbados. "Tobacco is only produced on the island for the use of the English and the slaves who are given some time off when working, in addition to the mealtime," writes Biet, "to

[51] Shaw, pp. 3.

rest and smoke tobacco."[52] The little kindness on behalf of the masters is motivated by the fact that "their greatest wealth are their slaves, and there is not one slave who does not make a profit of more than one hundred ecus each year for his master. Each slave does not cost four ecus per year for his upkeep."[53] Biet paints the stark reality quite effectively, noting that the slaves are rarely clothed "except on Sundays when they put on some worthless canvas breeches and a shirt. The small Negroes and Negresses always go about completely naked until they are fourteen or fifteen years old."[54] The paltry cost for the upkeep of the enslaved comes as no surprise, because "as for their food, there is no nation which feeds its slaves as badly as the English because for all meals the slaves only get potatoes which serve them as their bread, their meat, their fish, in fact, everything. The slaves raise some poultry so as to have eggs which they give to their little children. They are only given meat one time in the whole year, namely Christmas Day…"[55] Like the slave codes, Biet's narrative reduces enslaved Africans to their relative costs and benefits to slaveowners – even in its attempt to be sympathetic.

Masculine violence was often judged by the English as necessary to bring about obedience and maintain authority over subordinates. In the following excerpt, Father Biet notes the abuses faced by white indentured servants. However, it is important to note that the experience of enslaved Africans is markedly more significant, and carries a darker legacy of trauma, genocide, and abuse. Biet still finds the experiences to be similar, noting that "the English servants and those of this nation [i.e., France] 15 are not much better treated. They are

[52] Biet, pp. 66.
[53] Biet, pp. 66.
[54] Biet, pp. 66.
[55] Biet, pp. 66.

indentured for seven years, and also get only potatoes."[56] They were also mistreated by overseers, who might jab a servant with a cattle prod if they were not working fast enough.

Punitive violence functioned to establish and maintain class differences. This proved particularly helpful for the white elite, who had to distinguish themselves from poor Europeans of the servant class. While violence was an accepted means to assert one's masculinity and status in early modern England, there were limits to what kind of behavior was acceptable. These limits were abandoned in Barbados. For example. Rochefort wrote about the necessity of keeping enslaved Africans "obedient": "but by fair means [the Indians] will do anything, contrary to the Negroes, who must be roughly dealt with, otherwise they grow insolent, slothful, and perfidious."[57] Violence enacted by enslaved Africans was almost never viewed with a positive light because it violated the carefully constructed, yet shaky social order – an exception being in this case, when it benefited a military expedition:

> "At this plantation the armie rested one houre, where we found an old Spaniard that would give us noe material intelligence… there came in also a negroe who had formerly served Sir Thomas Warner, Governour of the Iland St. Christophers, and was taken [and] enslaved by the Spaniards; he spoke very good English and Spanish, and proved very true, and killed 2 of Spaniards charging with us, he obtained his freedom."[58]

This excerpt provides a remarkable example of a rare exception to the rules of acceptable violence in Barbados. Military violence benefitted the hierarchy.

As previously mentioned, patriarchs could enact "reasonable violence" upon their subordinates – to a certain degree. The exceptionally vicious nature of some Barbadian inhabitants was met by shock and disapproval from visitors. Richard Ligon wrote "… I have seen an Overseer beat a Servant with a cane about the head, till the blood has followed, for a

[56] Biet, pp. 66.
[57] Rochefort, pp. 266.
[58] Venables, pp. 174.

fault that is not worth speaking of; and yet he must have patience, or worse will follow. Truly, I have seen such cruelty there done to servants, as I did not think one Christian could do to another." For Ligon, violence among (white, male) Christians was almost unimaginable. Father Biet similarly wrote about violence, but his observation was of the 'lower' classes: "They settle their differences by fist fighting. They give each other black eyes, scratch each other, tear each other's hair, and do similar things." Ultimately, violence among whites was uncivil, but white-on-black violence (within reason) was indispensable to a civilized social order.

Perhaps because he was French, or perhaps because he was a priest, there were limits to how much violence Father Biet could tolerate – even when directed towards people he deemed necessary of 'correction'. Biet wrote that "they treat their Negro slaves with a great deal of severity. If some go beyond the limits of the plantation on a Sunday they are given fifty blows with a cudgel; these often bruise them severely. If they commit some other slightly more serious offense they are beaten to excess, sometimes up to the point of applying a fire brand all over their bodies which makes them shriek with despair."[59] Biet also wrote of a female slave he believed to be thirty-five or forty years old who was covered with scars – her master had fire branded her. As with slave and servant codes, violent punishment was used to limit the behavior and control the labor of slaves.

Like other narratives, Biet wrote that the enslaved people he had seen were very poor fed. Because of this, "a few occasionally escape during the night and go to steal a pig or something similar from a neighbouring plantation. But, if they are discovered, there is no forgiving them. One day I went to visit my Irishman [Captain Halay?]. He had in irons one of these poor Negroes

[59] Biet, pp. 67.

who had stolen a pig."[60] Situations such as these created opportunities for other sorts of punitive violence – such as a white overseer to exercise control over the slaves, or for slaves forced to be violent upon one another:

> Every day, his hands in irons, the overseer had him whipped by the other Negroes until he was all covered with blood. The overseer, after having had him treated thus for seven or eight days, cut off one of his ears, had it roasted, and forced him to eat it. He wanted to do the same to the other ear and the nose as well. I interceded on behalf of this poor unfortunate, and I pleaded so well with the overseer that the Negro was freed from his torment.

Biet captured a unique situation where violence that might otherwise be viewed as uncivil at best (or forbidden at worst) – that is, violence by Africans and lower-class whites – was encouraged, if not commanded. Furthermore, he described a situation in which white-on-black violence went too far in his view. "It is an unhappy state of things to treat with such great severity creatures for whom Jesus Christ shed his blood, Biet wrote. "It is true that one must keep these kinds of people obedient, but it is [inhuman] to treat them with, so much harshness.[61]

Father Biet was not the only traveler to be struck by the suffering of the enslaved. Hans Sloane noted that "for negligence, they are usually whipt by the overseers with lance wood switches, till they be bloody, and several of the Switches broken, being first tied up by their hands in the mill- houses."[62] Beating with manati straps, he notes, were too cruel and therefore was a prohibited practice. However, this concern for the wellbeing of slaves was not born out of kindness, but because the resulting scarring would lessen their potential value. However, being "whip'd till they are raw, some put on their skins pepper and salt to make them smart, at other times their Masters will drop meltedwax on their skins, and [the] use [of] several very exquisite

[60] Biet, pp. 67. The use of Irish overseers may have also been strategy to distance gentlemen from the risk of engaging in unrestrained violence themselves.
[61] Biet, pp. 67.
[62] Sloane, pp. 80.

torments" was deemed acceptable.[63] Ultimately, according to Sloane, "these punishments are sometimes merited by the blacks, who are a very perverse generation of people, and though they appear harm, yet are scarce equal to some of their crimes, and inferior to what punishments other European nations inflict on their slaves in the [east indies]... [64]

Like Sloane, Ligon was more sympathetic towards slave owners in his account. "Now for the Masters, I have yet said but little, nor am able to say half of what they deserve. They are men of great ability and parts, otherwise they could not got through with such great works as they undertake; the managing of one of their Plantations, being a work of such a latitude, as will require a very good head-piece, to put in order, and continue it so[65]." Evidently, Ligon still considered cruel masters to be great men. He also observes the behavior of a 'proper' patriarch. "I can name a planter there," writes Ligon, "that feeds daily two hundred mouths, and keeps them in such order, as there are no mutinies amongst them…"[66]

This does not mean, however, that he was immune to the abuses he witnessed – at least in the case of European servants: "as for the usage of the servants, it is as much as the Master is, merciful or cruel… But if the Masters be cruel, the Servants have very wearisome and miserable lives."[67] He goes on to note that "… I have seen an Overseer beat a Servant with a cane about the head, till the blood has followed, for a fault that is not worth speaking of; and yet he must have patience, or worse will follow. Truly, I have seen such cruelty there done to servants, as I did not think one Christian could do to another."[68] From the early stages of settlement, servants and slaves were treated harshly in order to turn a higher profit for their masters. As already noted,

[63] Sloane, pp. 80.
[64] Sloane, pp, 80.
[65] Ligon, pp. 107.
[66] Ligon, pp. 107.
[67] Ligon, pp. 94.
[68] Ligon, pp. 94.

most servants were poorly fed, and from their initial arrival to the island, planters allowed them little to no time to recover from their voyage. Planters also often required extensive physical labor on their sugar plantations and punished servants with beatings both frequent and severe. While servants had some legal protections in England, this was not the case in Barbados, where "the chronic shortage of labor led planters to seek more complete control of workers… In Barbados, servants were no longer participants in a reciprocal social exchange within an ordered civil society but commodities whose labor was bought and sold without their consent."[69] This treatment was a characteristic of a very particular moment in early Barbadian history, before the overall switch from indentured to enslaved labor that had occurred by the 1660s.

In England, the practicing of polite arts – essentially, the art of having manners – was "central to men's fashioning as gentlemen."[70] This can in part explain why violence enacted by the white planters of Barbados was met with disapproval from outsiders. The planters' cruelty threatened the English social order planters in Barbados aimed to mimic. In the case of John Bretland, during the mid-seventeenth century in England, "the code of manners served contrarily as a language of exclusion to deny 'status' to [him], a gentleman, because he 'hath of late uttered foul speeches and behaved himself uncivilly' towards Sir George Booth and Thomas Marbury, esquire."[71] In Barbados, Father Biet recognized the masculine politeness of the colonial elite: "Our arrival in the island of Barbados where we were very well received by the English."[72] In doing so, he establishes that violence and abuse could only go so far to secure one's masculinity.

In other ways, violence was endemic of middle- and lower-class masculinities. Of the servants, Father Biet wrote that "they settle their differences by fist fighting. They give each

[69] Dunn, pp. 126.
[70] Cohen in Hitchcock and Cohen, pp. 46.
[71] Walker, pp. 42.
[72] Biet, pp. 57.

other black eyes, scratch each other, tear each other's hair, and do similar things."[73] The line is drawn between certain masculine violences – and often class decided what was acceptable. The direct involvement in violence by elites could both be necessary to, and hazardous to, their status as English gentlemen. In this way, masculine identity was very much a marker of an elite lifestyle, available to the more refined upper strata of the lower classes, but "scarcely relevant to the broad mass of working people."[74] This is also seen in James Boswell's musings of 'manliness'. James Boswell, a Scottish biographer, diarist, and lawyer, was particularly sensitive to the subject of manliness. "In these discussions, Boswell appears to consider manliness as a universal category for men, an ideal to which all were able to aspire, though in which not all men were equally competent… Boswell's manliness was a subject complicated and contorted by other questions of identity, of which social status was perhaps the most pervasive," writes Carter. "Boswell's bid for respectability, while closely bound up with being manly, was also infused with snobbery that often problematized this category, blurring the line between manliness, a gendered identity, and the class-based identity of gentlemanliness."[75]

It might be interesting to note that violence was not the only behavior outsiders noted was done in excess. In his book *Englishmen Transplanted,* Larry Gragg notes that "the copious drinking of the inhabitants most disturbed visitors… Inhabitants, particularly the indentured servants, also frequently fought among themselves."[76] Father Biet also concerned himself with the morals of Barbados's inhabitants, as might have been done had the planters been English gentlemen. Aside from fighting, Father Biet disapproved of the culture of drunkenness he found in Barbados. "The greatest of all the vices which prevail in this country is lewdness. It is a

[73] Biet, pp. 68.
[74] Tosh in Hitchcock and Cohen, pp. 236.
[75] Carter in Hitchcock and Cohen, pp. 126.
[76] Gragg, pp. 24-25.

horrible thing to think about: adulterers, incest and all the rest. I will not say anymore on this. Drunkenness is great, especially among the lower classes. Cursers are rare because the police punish them severely."[77] He does not hesitate to critique this culture of excess, even within subtle mentions of their day-to-day routines. Father Biet notes that "the afternoon passes thus, in drinking and smoking, but quite often one is so drunk that he cannot return home. Our gentlemen found this life extremely pleasant."[78]

Biet's account reveals that, perhaps especially so, there was a culture of excess among the elite. "Everyone was very pleased with the frequent visits of Monsieur de Bragelonne, and the ladies were de- lighted to converse with Madame du Plessis who was a very virtuous lady… They were treated magnificently by everyone. Sometimes I went along but, not taking pleasure in this visiting because one has to drink in an extraordinary way, I did not always go."[79] He also writes that "in speaking of morals, extravagance is very great among the English in these parts. They came here in order to become wealthy."[80] Biet seems to suggest that from the very outset, the migrants to Barbados bring a culture of excess with them. When they could not import wines, ales, and other forms of alcohol, planters made drinks from materials readily available on the island – such as sweet potatoes, cassava, and eventually sugar cane.[81] The number of licensed and unlicensed taverns on the island grew substantially, worrying island authorities. For example, in the 1650s Governor Daniel Searle worried the growth of these taverns would bring "ruine" to laborers and their families due to drunkenness.[82] If Barbados was truly a "Little England" society, then it likely also mirrored English desires for and ideas of extravagance

[77] Biet, pp. 68.
[78] Biet, pp. 62.
[79] Biet, pp. 62.
[80] Biet, pp. 67.
[81] Gragg, pp. 7.
[82] Gragg, pp. 7-8.

among the elite – perhaps, even more so among those who sought out their fortune on the island. This extravagance betrayed a lack of self-control that the English feared, yet was reflected in violent behavior towards those who were not members of the white elite.

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