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Warped: Contesting Visions of Empire in Agostino Brunias's Market Scenes

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Warped

Contesting Visions of Empire in Agostino Brunias’s Market Scenes

Rebecca E. Selch

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Prerequisite for Honors in Art History
under the advisement of Professor Liza Oliver

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Introduction

Negroes are naturally fond of gay dress, and tho’ allowed sufficient working day cloaths, they buy fine cloaths for Sundays. It is very common, in Grenada and the Ceded Islands, to see field-negroes in white dimity jackets and breeches, and find [sic] Holland shirts; and the women in muslins, and 4 or 5 India muslin Handkerchiefs on their heads, at 8 or 10 fh. Each.

House of Commons, 1790

The black morning at length came; it came too soon for my poor mother and us. Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs in which we were to be sold…

Mary Prince, 1831

Agostino Brunias’s Caribbean

Agostino Brunias arrived in Dominica ca.1770 as the patron painter and draftsman to William Young (1724–1788), the President of the Commission for the Sale of Lands in the Ceded Islands and the first British lieutenant-governor of Dominica from 1768 to 1773. Enlisted to entice British settlement, Brunias built much of his reputation on an ethnographic style that presented the British West Indies as profitable and picturesque. From Brueghelian scenes of dance and merrymaking to erotic ménages of bathing women, Brunias gave off, or, “hallucinated” the impression of successful British rule over land and people. In reality, however, imperial control in the 18th-century British West Indies was neither as obvious nor as secure as these canvases may suggest at first glance. New theories on nationhood, economic and social organization, and human difference produced ill-fitting and incoherent conceptions of empire. The Anglo-French War was fought in Caribbean waters, local merchants lobbying for

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1 House of Commons, *Abridgement of the minutes of the evidence, taken before a committee of the*


3 Jacques André uses this term to describe the response of Europeans upon “discovering” the West Indies instead of India. Instead of seeing the West Indies in its reality, Europeans imagined a brutal and fantastical paradise based on their visions of the East Indies; Jacques André, *Caraïbales: Études sur la littérature antillaise* (Paris: Éditions Caribéennes, 1981), 7.
free trade endangered British national industry, and the threat of conflict between indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans was an ever-present reality. There is a need, therefore, to recuperate a history of instability and revise our narratives of successful imperial conquest in the colonial Caribbean. To do so will better our understandings of the crossings between the multiple colonial projects in their conception and their implementation in reality. Brunias’s market scenes, *The Linen Market, Santo Domingo* (figure 1), *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2), *Market Day, Roseau, Dominica* (figure 3), and *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4), which are at once images of civility and prosperity in the Caribbean, allow us to explore the various readings of resistance and contestation back into 18th-century history. In turn, these canvases suggest a history marked by negotiation and conscription rather than domination and hegemony.4

Large swaths of Brunias’s own biography remain shrouded in mystery, however, the general consensus is that he was born in Italy around 1730 and died in Dominica in 1796.5 He studied in Rome at the Accademia di San Luca, and during this time made the acquaintance of Joseph-Marie Vien (1716–1809). Vien included Brunias’s likeness in his illustrated book, *Caravane Du Sultan à la Mecque* (figure 5), which commemorated the Turkish masquerade at the carnival of 1748 in Rome.6 The only extant portrait of Brunias, he wears in this engraving the exoticized costume of a Turkish eunuch. Upon finishing his studies, Brunias worked as a painter of souvenir pictures for wealthy Europeans on the Grand Tour, leading him to meet the

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4 David Scott introduces the idea of “conscripts of modernity” to describe how Toussaint Louverture worked within a system of modernity but was not a voluntary agent of its incorporation. Mary Louise Pratt illustrates how the production of canonized knowledge was and is informed by conscious access to indigenous knowledge. I will return to the idea of history (as concept, as discipline) as something that is negotiated at different sites, with different agents, in different discourses throughout this thesis. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2004); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation* (New York; London: Routledge, 1992).
5 Mia L. Bagneris, *Capturing the Caribbean [sic] (c. 1770-1800)* (London: Robilant + Voena, 2010).
Scottish and French architects, Robert Adam (1728–1792) and Charles Clérisseau (1721–1820), respectively. The architects employed Brunias as a draftsman while studying Diocletian’s palace in Rome, and Adam encouraged Brunias to return with him to England after his sojourn in Rome.7 Brunias accepted the advice and spent the following ten years or so painting decorative interiors for British elite in London.8 During this period, Brunias became acquainted with Sir William Young, and between 1767 and 1770, he travelled to the West Indies to perform the duties of the new governor’s draftsman. Young’s patronship evidently had a great impact on Brunias practice, as he continued to paint for and dedicate his works to colonial officials and military officers even after the end of his employment with Young.9 We can see this influence in Brunias’s various ethnographic conversation pieces, painted for the enjoyment of plantocratic and military patrons. These works in large part represent a concerted effort to advertise the West Indies to potential capitalist vanguards who would manage production on the Ceded Islands.10

On the surface, Brunias’s Caribbean imagines a fantasy of virgin territory, respectable sexual escapades, naval domination, and unprecedented wealth. But while an initial view of his paintings may emphasize civility and possibility, Brunias also visualizes the anxiety of European

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7 Bagneris, Capturing the Carribean [sic] (c. 1770-1800), 13.
8 John E. Crowley, Imperial landscapes: Britain’s global visual culture, 1745-1820 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 118.; The Sir John Soane Museum in London, UK holds a large number of the drawings he completed for Adams, many of which appear to be for home interiors.
Creole life and the resistance of people of African descent. The job of the art historian, like that undertaken by Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby and Christopher Pinney, is to shed light on what has remained invisible to the discipline and its scholars. I contribute to this restructuring by emphasizing the multiple ways in which various colonial agents constructed the Caribbean.

Brunias’s four West Indian “Negro markets”, described from here on as Sunday markets or just markets, _The Linen Market, Santo Domingo_ (figure 1), _A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller_ (figure 2), _Market Day, Roseau, Dominica_ (figure 3), and _Linen Market, Dominica_ (figure 4) illustrate and provide evidence for a British West Indies whose control was constantly negotiated and reformed in the face of competing interests. The weekly markets, where enslaved Africans sold produce they had grown on their provision grounds, suggest that enslaved men and women of African descent navigated trauma to fashion new, if fragmented, systems of meaning.

Each oil painting depicts a group of market-goers organized horizontally within an urban scene of wooden buildings and portable kiosks. Some images open up to include views of the ocean, while others focus on the mountainous terrain of the Windward and Leeward islands.

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13 Though I touch on all images throughout the chapters that follow, I focus most of my attention _Linen Market, Dominica_, which is the most detailed of the four paintings.
Some of the market-goers that parade across the paintings participate in the sale of cloth, others sell gold jewelry, and others yet, like the cluster of African and indigenous figures seated low to the ground in the right foreground of all four canvases, produce local foodstuffs for sale. Labor and dress correspond to skin tone and gender, as the lighter-skinned men and women generally wear multiple layers of rustling white cloth, and those with darker skin increasingly shed items of clothing and corresponding quality.

The four market paintings deviate crucially from Brunias’s larger body of genre paintings and that of contemporary painters of colonial territories for how he envisions and complicates a modern empire built on liberal ideals, service labor, and racial métissage. Importantly, though many of Brunias’s other images involve peddling, these are the only four that render organized markets. Amidst a highly regimented colonial imagery that usually places either happy or brutalized slaves outdoors, Brunias’s market scenes exist in flexible space and by extension, suggest flexible access points to citizenship in a newly forming British national identity. Through their ambiguity and flexibility, the market scenes illustrate not the stability of viable cultivation, as they have been discussed, but the very conflict of gendered and racialized colonial life. Through a loose focus on cloth, I explain how Brunias’s genre paintings engage the commercial agency of people of color in the West Indies, particularly that of women, as well as a European fascination with Sunday markets.

Towards a Consideration of Cloth

Planters and overseers, the theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, managed and maintained their authority by engaging “in a system of visualized surveillance.”14 Under this oppressive eye,

Mirzoeff argues that enslaved Africans and Maroons produced forms of countervisuality that disrupted and renegotiated assumed European power. These communities also enacted their power through non-visual modes of communication. Éduoard Glissant, literary theorist and father of the late 20th-century Créolité movement, writes that créolité, or, the heterogeneity of Caribbean culture that came out of the trauma of slavery, resulted from the need to legitimate “exchange and mutual change” within the diverse environment of the plantation. Writing on the development of creole languages, Glissant contends that “ambiguity was the first necessity for survival” and oral expression was the only available means to “tell without telling.”

By virtue of créolité’s inherent discontinuity and fragmentation, its producers were able to imagine new ways to express one’s regulated humanity. English literature scholar Paul Gilroy follows this point as he argues in his landmark book, *The Black Atlantic* (1993), that “approaches to black culture that have been premised exclusively on textuality and narrative rather than dramaturgy, enunciation, and gesture” miss out on nuances of cultural production particular to black diasporic communities.

For Gilroy, the multiple origins of the black Atlantic result in the production of cultural modes, such as music, that reveal a hybridity indicative of modernity and central to the development of the nation.

Like language or music, fabric moves through global networks that connect disparate communities and because of its social, spiritual, and economic values, takes on many layered meanings that “tell without telling”. Throughout my thesis, I periodically return to cloth as object, as symbol, and as system to reexamine history and incorporate a methodology inclusive of countervisuality. As the two quotes that opened this chapter highlight, cloth is received across a spectrum of experiences and intentions. For the House of Commons to record an ethnographic

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description of enslaved Africans that gives by name specific kinds of cloth points to a widely shared technical vocabulary that went beyond relaying the weave or blend of a fabric to communicating the treatment or character of the enslaved. Further, English and African American Studies scholar Nicole Aljoe points out in her study of slave narratives that enslaved people did not merely regurgitate empirical observations, but instead, had considerable bargaining power over their stories and chose which details to reveal and which to hide.\textsuperscript{17} To that point, it is important that Mary Prince, writer of the famed slave narrative, mentions by name the osnaburg cloth she was forced to wear; by revealing the weave, Prince intimates that the enslaved shared this vocabulary and that this particular form of cloth held meaning understood by the abolitionist public. If we understand that cloth holds many meanings and positions within different societies and cultures, then the task with Brunias’s paintings is to read the textiles and clothing as broadly and with as much nuance as possible.

Another way to understand these complicated histories of textiles and how they tie the globe together requires a consideration of how textiles operated in global and local trades. The importance of India’s textile trade here cannot be overstated. India’s textile trade dominated the globe from the 17th to the 18th century, being the “single most-discussed commodity in the plentiful European sources from the seventeenth century.”\textsuperscript{18} Their markets produced luxurious sheets of chintz, calico, and muslin that supplied slave traders with goods to keep the wheels of the transatlantic slave trade running. Art historian Liza Oliver points out that the trade, sale, and management of textiles paralleled in practice the trade, sale, and management of victims of the

\textsuperscript{17} Nicole Aljoe, \textit{Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709-1838} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 16.

\textsuperscript{18} Amelia Peck and Amy Elizabeth Bogansky, ed. \textit{Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500-1800} (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 19. However, it is worth noting that there were various other textile production centers, for example, the West African textile market that exported to the Americas prior to the Industrial Revolution. See: John K. Thornton, \textit{A Cultural History of the Atlantic World, 1250-1820} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 68.
Placing these two systems of trade alongside each other, Oliver discusses a set of buttons that show replicas of Brunias’s paintings and apocryphally belonging to Toussaint Louverture (figure 6). In doing so, Oliver allows us to better understand the histories of the black Atlantic as it was implicated within mercantile and liberal trade networks.

The subject of the Sunday market, as I will return to frequently throughout this thesis, unsettled the identity of the nation, empire, and the physical and epistemological security of settlers. Market vendors primarily sold goods grown on meager plots of land that planters were required to provide for the enslaved. White Creole populations treated the markets with a mixture of awe and fear; the text sources describe these markets as spectacle for the white visitor, undermining the glamour of colorful dress and jewelry by bemoaning the miasma that they alleged rose from the unwashed bodies of the free and enslaved. Narratives describe the markets in excruciating detail, from smell, to sound, to the varieties of dress worn, prompting the subject of the Sunday market to develop in the colonial imagination as both an exotic economic paradise and a putrid basin of immorality.

Glissant picks up on this pathology, writing that “one sees an underlying curiosity—fixed, troubled, and obsessive—every time there is a question about the slaves that he is struggling to pacify.” The enslaved Africans made up the vast majority of the West Indian population because, unlike the American colonies in the North, absentee planters owned large plantations run by a sparsely settled overseer population. The Code Noir, Louis XIV’s 1685 edict that set the precedent for over one hundred years of slave regulations across the Caribbean, initially outlawed the Sunday markets. White plantocrats, however, did not enforce this out of

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fear of retaliation for denying the slaves their one day of leisure. At the same time, plantocrats also worried that markets would enable enslaved Africans to make enough profit to buy their freedom or that the freedom to congregate at markets would encourage the slaves to form militias to overthrow the white plantocrats. In the words of one planter, “[I]n fact Sunday is their day of trade, their day of relaxation, their day of pleasure, and may, in the strictest sense of the words, be called the negroes holiday.”

The site of the marketplace destabilized racial relations as it engaged the commercial agency of people of color in the West Indies, capitalized on European fantasy, and threatened white control. Therefore, though Brunias proclaims the economic possibilities of the West Indies by picturing these markets, he also unsettles the standard canon of colonial imagery through envisioning the lived position of the West Indian population.

Organization

I organize my thesis in three chapters. Across these chapters, I first consider the broader iconography of the sea and related British anxieties, then I discuss the role of the international and local textile trades in dressing the colonial Caribbean, and finally, I reflect on the unique situation of women in building a gendered, racialized, and sexualized social hierarchy that inform and are informed by access to dress and labor. Through a loose focus on cloth, I explain how Brunias’s genre paintings capitalize on a European fascination with Sunday markets and self-conscious commercial agency of people of color in the West Indies, particularly that of women. Situating these images within their maritime and mercantile contexts elucidates the instability of the ideology underpinning British imperial rule and explains how Brunias’s images

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of abundant cloth both elided and strengthened corresponding anxieties over slavery and expansion.

The first chapter contextualizes the instability and ambiguity surrounding Brunias’s market scenes through a focus on maritime relations in the years following the Seven Years’ War (1754–1763). A consideration of the sea and of British military power departs from previous scholarship on Brunias’s paintings. Though at present overlooked, understanding maritime visual culture and the magnitude of Dominica’s location offers a key piece to understanding Brunias’ *oeuvre* generally, and these four paintings specifically. Over the course of the 18th century, Britain envisioned a national identity that portrayed the Crown as keepers of the sea. In fact, though land control clearly had its place in imperial expansion, domination over trade routes played a larger role in sculpting a new collective identity during this time period. Understanding the relationship between the movement of textiles and the movement of the military is key to seeing how Brunias’s market scenes construct a unique nationalist vision and identity after the Seven Years’ War.

I will use the next chapter to explore how debates about the economics of colonialism, surveillance, and cloth all converge in Brunias’s market scenes. I hone in on the textile trades within the West Indies and across the globe to consider the growth of free trade in Dominica and the rise in British linen manufacturing in opposition to various competing imperial powers and their developing industries. I argue that the abundance of textiles in Brunias’s market scenes speaks to the instrumentality of Dominica in building up a British textile manufacturing industry in the wake of demands for a free port on Dominica during the 1760s. The development of new markets in Dominica legitimized British colonial control in a way that foregrounded the
economic potential of building a national textile industry, while downplaying the infertile island’s true economic and naval value in light of Anglo-French conflict (1778–1783).

The concluding chapter will build on previous scholarship by adopting a gendered lens to explore how labor and agency all inform and are informed by access to cloth within the British West Indies. Looking at laws and social practice, I interrogate the complexities of textile as fashion and as currency within West Indian communities of color. I hope to demonstrate how Brunias’s detail to the skin color of women in particular maintains a racial hierarchy that privileges whiteness and simultaneously marks colored women’s participation in textile commerce as a vital instrument of wealth for the British Empire. These women, I argue, exist at the nexus of commercial and sexual interests within the marketplace and within the empire. I suggest that these images engage the commercial agency of women of color in providing access to wealth and, by extension, liberation from a British control of bodies, of labor, and of self-fashioning.
Chapter 1: Sink or Swim: Visualizing the British Maritime Nation

[Dominica] is said to be one of the best Places to Water at in the West Indies

Boston Evening Post, January 19, 1741

Four-Breasted Vessel, Three Women
in Front of a Steamy Pit, Two-Faced
Head Fish Trying on Earrings, Unidentified.

Robin Coste Lewis, 2015

It’s Sunday in Roseau, Dominica, and groups of indigenous, enslaved, and free women
and men of color have traveled to sell and purchase wares at the weekly market. Fine cloth
spreads through the arms of vendors, intricate handkerchiefs piled high soar into the air, and gold
jewelry glitters in the Caribbean sun. However, the hyper-detailed textiles that dominate the
canvas say little about local industry and agriculture, despite ostensible efforts to paint the island
as rich in resources. Indeed, the visual feast of consumption spread across Linen Market,
Dominica (figure 4) seems to gloss over the fact that the experiment in Dominican sugar
cultivation has largely been unsuccessful due to the ill-suited mountainous terrain. How, then,
do we make sense of this sexual and economic utopia in the Torrid Zone? If we look past the
excess, past the courtship and the commerce to which we will return throughout this thesis, the
Caribbean Sea receding into the distance reminds us of the mercantile domination expressed
through the very textiles, military men, and enslaved women and men present in frame. At the

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22 Boston Evening Post (Boston, MA), Jan. 19, 1741.
24 I use this term in the way that historian Felicity Nussbaum uses it, that is, as “both the geographical
torrid zones of the territory between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, and the torrid zone
mapped onto the human body, especially the female body.”; Felicity Nussbaum, Torrid Zones: Maternity,
same time, winds whispering anxieties around Britain’s imperial and inter-imperial relations break upon the shore. We see that life for the plantocracy in the West Indies depends on the sea and her ships to survive; as art historian Eleanor Hughes writes, “empires were implemented and maintained— physically and ideologically— on the oceans”25, and Dominica was no different.

Reframed within the developing genre of 18th-century maritime painting, Brunias’s two seaside markets, *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4) and *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2), provide a pathway to consider a (threatened) potential for national prosperity. In this chapter I explore how the entanglements of British national identity with the successes and threats of maritime expansion and the slave trade. While other British colonial artists attempted to incorporate the far-flung territories around the world into the colonial imaginary through picturesque landscapes, Agostino Brunias asserted the presence of a culturally distinct people within the imperial land- and seascape in a way that forced a reconsideration of nationalism in relation to imperialism.26 I focus on Dominica’s role in maintaining Britain’s land- and sea-based empires, and how a strong British military benefited their trade network, and vice-versa. I end the chapter with an analysis of the sexual tensions that undergird these images in light of maritime relations. I argue that the sexual tension between European and African Creoles and soldiers represents anxieties regarding British and Creole dependencies on the sea that were integral to West Indian life and colonial projects.

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26 I use “nationalism” here to describe the ways that the metropole constructs its identity in opposition with other imperial powers. I recognize that “nation” during this period referred to different cultural or ethnic groups rather than a particular territory. In this chapter, I explore how the metropole included or excluded colonies in this regard; Rebecca Parker Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 75.
The Nation and the Sea

Art historian Geoff Quilley writes that, “the subject of the sea, far from being marginalized, was in fact integral to British society in a variety of material and ideological ways.” The rise in “blue-water policies” in the wake of the English Civil War (1642–1651) informed the possibilities for commercial dominance and subsequently laid the foundation for what it meant to be British and what Britishness would mean for the world. These policies, exemplified in the Navigation Acts (1651–1849), strengthened the nation through increased trade, shipping, and naval forces within the growing British Empire. The Acts ushered in a period of mercantilism, which refers to a protectionist economic ideology and policy that regulates trade and manufacture to privilege national production and reserves of bullion. Merchants could export from the colonies to certain countries under only specific circumstances, goods were subject to duties that would protect some goods over others, and merchants could only transport their wares in certain ships with crews of particular nationalities. The Navigation Acts, for example, suppressed the development of manufacturing in the colonies and required that products be transported on British ships with crews of at least three-quarters British origin. Importantly, mercantilism worked in and through the sea to almost exclusively benefit the metropole, and thus incorporated its iconography into images of the symbolic nation.

Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards (1743–1800) in his History of the British West Indies (1793) makes the connection between the sea and prosperity when he writes, “His Majesty’s Dominions in the West Indies; which under his mild and auspicious government, are become the

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principal source of the national opulence and maritime power”\(^{29}\). Insistence upon British control of the seas, and by extension, the preservation of the nation, is in part what prompts Geoff Quilley to revise W.J.T. Mitchell’s assertion that landscape, is the “dreamwork of imperialism”; Quilley emphasizes that seascape, too, fills this function within the marine context of the nation.\(^{30}\) As proxy for the metropole, images of the sea and its conflicts provided both allegorical and literal representations of state power. Quilley argues that after the Seven Years’ War, artists contributed to making the sea not only conceivable in national terms, but actually seeable, or, visualized.\(^{31}\) For example, the Royal Academy began exhibiting marine paintings with greater frequency, and image-makers increasingly represented the nation through symbolic marine personas, such as ships and mythological forms.\(^{32}\) Perhaps the most well-known of these images is Francis Hayman’s *The Triumph of Britannia* (figure 7), exhibited at Vauxhall Gardens at the end of the Seven Years’ War and now known only from Simon Ravenet’s 1765 engraving of the painting. In the image, Neptune blesses Britannia with his favor by steering her through the tumultuous waves; she, in turn, joins the nympha lons in the water by flaunting portrait medallions of famous admirals from the war. At right, Britain defeats a French fleet.\(^{33}\) Through classical imagery, Hayman’s representation of Britain’s divinely ordained defeat of France places the island as the natural heirs of Western civilization.

The unprecedented period of expansion that followed the end of the Seven Years’ War challenged Britain’s self-conscious identity as commercial keepers of the sea. The Treaty of


\(^{32}\) Eleanor Hughes, “Ships of the ‘Line’: Marine Paintings at the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1784”

Paris (1763) brought in territory from across the world, transforming what was previously an insular commercial empire to a heterogeneous military force felt around the globe. The new territories, for example, Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica, and Grenada in the Caribbean, prompted a crisis in what Britishness meant if territories were spread across the globe and what British power meant in a world where previously the public saw “Trade, without enlarging the British Territories” as the preferred policy. Historian Linda Colley outlines how the incorporation of new land, new people, and a foreign policy based on conquest all contributed to British anxiety in the wake of their monumental victory in the war. The conflict of war and its cultural, economic, and symbolic aftermath therefore required a reconciliation between a national identity based on a well-known commercial sense of empire and an unfamiliar military might. In doing so, it heralded in a new era of British Empire that was founded on a developing nationalist identity in the face of imperial expansion.

Brunias’s body of work cannot be understood apart from this colonial anxiety. Colonial patrons, like William Young, tasked Brunias and his contemporaries George Robertson (1724–1788) and Thomas Hearne (1744–1817) with sanitizing and normalizing the people and places of British expansion in the West Indies. The question for imperial image-makers was how to visually incorporate new territory without aggravating anxieties over expansion, with the new people, spaces, and identities that went along with the shift in Britishness. George Robertson and Thomas Hearne made picturesque landscapes in Jamaica and Antigua respectively that employed the Claudian formula to ease the colonies into the metropole’s imaginary (see figures 8

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36 Fordham, *British Art and the Seven Years’ War*, 2010.
37 William Young, first lieutenant-governor of Dominica employed Brunias during the 1770s; Robert Payne, governor of the Leeward Islands, commissioned twenty landscapes from Thomas Hearne in Antigua from 1771-1774; and William Beckford of Somerley, a wealthy slave-owner, employed George Robertson to paint landscapes in Jamaica in 1774-1775.
and 9). We see the employment of the Claudian formula in these paintings through the use of framing devices that cast shadows on the foreground, and in the increasingly brightened background as the eye looks to the horizon. Though exotic in their flora, the winding roads and bright backgrounds in both images reflect Caribbean land through this highly recognizable visual code for European civility. Unlike Robertson and Hearne, however, Brunias primarily focused on integrating civilized and sociable people into the national imaginary, even when painting landscapes. In View of the River, Roseau, Brunias expresses the fecundity of Dominica at the same time that he draws attention to the clean and bathing bodies of women (figure 10). The bright and varied colors of their clothing, as well as a warped scale between their bodies and the mountains in the near distance, draw the eye into the center and into their bathing spree.

Though concerned with landscape instead of seascape, art historian John E. Crowley holds that representations of the distant territories of the new empire helped visualize the previously imagined expansion in a new way after Britain’s victory in the Seven Years’ War. He contends that attention to topography distinguished the colonies from the metropole, while the familiar aesthetic quality encouraged a shared imperial fabric; landscape, therefore, could both elide and aggravate national anxieties as the metropole wrestled with its newfound expansion. In other words, the visual arts, through landscape, seascape, or some other seemingly imperially unrelated genre, projected Britain’s status as a global power at the same time that it promoted an upset in national identity. Brunias’s paintings are significant in that they are both seascape and landscape; adopting “an aboriginal point of view”, Brunias treats us to views of the

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38 Crowley, Imperial Landscapes, 2011.
39 Ibid, 2.
mountains settled against the water.\textsuperscript{40} Brunias’s market scenes as landscapes and seascapes, with their attention to flora arranged like a feast, make visible the “vast contents” of the colonized land from the perspective of the indigenous inhabitant.\textsuperscript{41}

Art historian Douglas Fordham contends that the Seven Years’ War served as a catalyst for the creation of a national school of art, and further that art and arms worked in tandem with one another during and in the wake of the Seven Years’ War.\textsuperscript{42} In part, the artistic possibilities for reforming this national identity stem from highly regimented conventions specific to the system of image-making. Sunil Agnani, historian of the European Enlightenment, writes that, “in order to operate, hegemony requires constant repetition and reiteration; in one formulation, it depends upon coercion and consent.”\textsuperscript{43} The shared aesthetic and organizational idioms of visual culture, such as landscape, seascape, history painting, and beyond, help the viewer to internalize and normalize symbolic messages of imperialism. Though his paintings are in many ways distinct from his contemporaries, Brunias participates in this project just as much as other colonial painters. His repetitive imagery of marketing \textit{mulâtres}\textsuperscript{44} and dancing slaves reflect the hegemonic framings within this new system. Through figures and scenes that combine in endless combinations, Brunias replaces the observable islands with a fantasy of consensual colonialism that, in effect, aims to reproduce the same hegemonic structures it envisions.

If we are to properly understand the significance of the ships in Brunias’s paintings, we must think about them both for what they symbolize (wealth, triumph, etc.) and what they carry.

\textsuperscript{40} Patricia Mohammed uses this phrase to signal the difference between looking upon land from the water, or, as the foreigner, and looking upon water from the land, or as the indigenous person.; Patricia Mohammed, “Gendering the Caribbean Picturesque” \textit{Caribbean Review of Gender Studies} 1 (2007).
\textsuperscript{41} Mary Louise Pratt explains the shift in depicting shorelines to the internal contents of colonized land as a move from navigational to global, planetary imaginings of space.
\textsuperscript{42} Fordham, \textit{British Art and the Seven Years’ War}, 2010.
\textsuperscript{44} I follow Kay Dian Kriz here in using the term “mulâtresse” to signal that many of the women pictured in Brunias’s paintings were likely of French-African heritage.
(slaves, textiles, food, etc). As Quilley writes, Britain reframed the ship not as a single entity in transit, but as the very image of the nation itself. Well-situated within the collective imaginary through exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Art, art historian Eleanor Hughes shows how marine paintings employed conventions of landscape and history painting to contribute to an aesthetically familiar and symbolically important narrative.

Quilley, for example, compellingly uses the Brookes print (figure 11) to visualize the distinction with which we hold the abstract and concrete qualities of shipping industries. James Phillips published the Brookes print in 1789, perhaps coinciding with William Wilberforce’s famous Abolition speech. The print spread through British society quickly, and became one of, if not the most well-known, abolitionist image of all time. Quilley writes that what was so persuasive about this abolitionist image was the way it represented the exchangeability of the ship as heroic symbol of commerce and as container made up of numbers and abstracted cargo. He refers to this dualism as aesthetic “visibility” and “invisible”, a practice that allows the cut-and-dry fact of slavery to go unseen. Quilley speaks solely on trade but we can also think of the ship as a symbol of military triumph and as a tool moving across the board of naval strategy. In that, for the West Indies at least, images of ships do the symbolic work of both commercial and martial interests.

Though the six ships in the Roseau harbor will determine what life will look like on the island, few, if any of the market-goers, seem to pay attention to the sea in Linen Market, Dominica. Everything that Dominicans produce will leave on those boats, and all of the human and material capital they need to sustain plantocratic life will arrive on them. A strong trading

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45 Quilley, Empire to Nation, 168.
presence claimed marine territory for the British as the “definition of empire was shifting from military conquest to commercial domination.”

Naval and commercial forces moved through similar channels, intersecting at various points as interest in one supported interests in another. This was not lost on the British; “The value of the West India trade, as a source of naval power, has of course been increasing, and nearly in the same degree. In 1787, it employed about 130,000 tons; in 1804, above 180,000, navigated by 14,000 seamen.”

Investment in trade or the navy stimulated navigation, building technologies, and the employment of seamen, the benefits of which spilled over into various sea-based industries. Naval officers, forts, and warehouses further legitimated and protected the spoils of expansionism. This was perhaps most apparent in the slave trade, considering the some 12.5 million Africans transported across the Atlantic from 1525 to 1866.

The transportation of Africans and the British and Indian cloth used to purchase them stimulated navigation and employed seamen, while at the same time, built naval power that protected and helped to expand trade. Historian Richard Sheridan writes that colonial projects “build[t] sea power to keep open the lifelines of trade in the formal empire and to expand trade with the informal empires.” Building up mercantile sea power extended to martial aims, as naval ships could be converted into “merchant cruisers”. Illustrating this symbiotic relationship, merchants lobbied Parliament throughout the 18th century for the deployment of militias who would ease part of the danger of trade, from pirates to the threat of war.

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52 Armytage, *Free Port System in the British West Indies*, 2.
The relationship between the trade and the navy became clear in Dominica early one morning in September 1778. On this day, the Governor of Martinique, Marquis de Bouille (1739–1800), and 2000 men on three frigates and a sloop wrestled Dominica from British hands and brought the island back into French possession. Dominica, comparatively, managed to organize a band of around one hundred soldiers and free white and colored civilians. So began five years of French occupation during the Anglo-French War under the leadership of Marquis Duchilleau (1734–1794), de Bouille’s appointee. By the close of the war in 1783, the French had seized Grenada and the Grenadines, St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Christopher, Nevis, and Montserrat, dwarfing Britain’s gain of St. Lucia. Duchilleau was notoriously harsh towards British residents, requiring them to give up their arms, provide cattle to feed French soldiers at the military hospital in Roseau, and lend their slaves to the French official to build public works.

Sugar production stalled and trade fared just as poorly; no British ships could enter or leave Dominica, the British Crown did not recognize British products on French ships, and the use of Dutch ships sent to nearby St. Eustatius was riddled with diplomatic difficulties. Brunias returned to the island sometime during this period, which we know based on a print he completed in 1782, which I will discuss momentarily. Brunias therefore was well-aware of the difficulties of life on Dominica and how insecure this small island in the West Indies truly was. The occupation revealed to British residents, if they didn’t already know, that life on the island depended on secure and open trade routes. Without them, the economy and ultimately their survival were at stake.

We can see, then, how the iconography of ships held myriad meanings for those with specifically with interests in the West Indies. Take for example the watercolor of the battle between Guadeloupe and Dominica on 12 April 1782 during the Anglo-French War (figure 12). Admiral George Brydges Rodney prevented Comte de Grasse in Dominican waters from reaching Britain’s great sugar colony, Jamaica in this key battle in the history of the Anglo-French War. The miniature French and British fleets float within the center of the image on a faint blue wash of color. Handwritten keys to the names of the ships, their guns, and their men accompany the image at the top and bottom of the page. Nearly indistinguishable from one another, the yellow and red vessels string across the page in a uniform manner. On this image of impossible perspective (amorphous representations of Dominica and Guadeloupe shoot straight up the page), the presumably British fleets curve to block the onslaught of the French. However, these clearly are not heroic fleets; the diagram of miniature ships visualizes strategy as a tool for future victories. They are no more than a useful visualization, akin to a check or a dot on a naval diagram. Like the Brookes print mentioned earlier, this watercolor lays out the abstract instrument of ships, but where the Brookes print capitalizes on the horror of dehumanizing abstraction, the watercolor conjures up the sentimental mythology that we attach to ships.

On the other end of the spectrum, Benjamin Toddy’s watercolor of the ship ‘Sandwich’ exists exclusively in its symbolic meaning (figure 13). Benjamin Toddy served five years in the Royal Navy in the Americas during the American Revolution. A well-contrasted ship floats in the middle of the page, set against the muted sky of sunrise or sunset. Five ships fade into the background, and by contrast make the central ship appear all the more superior. Aesthetically it is no more than a pretty picture, but because Toddy includes the caption at the bottom of the page that this ship carried Comte de Grasse, the French general in the West Indies, as a prisoner
of war from May until August 1782, this watercolor suddenly takes on new meaning as it represents the victory of the British. The ship essentially becomes a complete symbol of victory.

Brunias’s print of the British victory at St. Kitts during the Anglo-French War lies somewhere between these two images (figure 14).⁵⁶ Brunias, it seems, offered not only ethnographic paintings for the plantocratic class, but also provided the sketch for an engraving of the British victory at Basseterre on 25 January 1782. In this image, rows of British and French ships draw towards one another in a mist of either seafoam or smoke. Brunias includes views of the land in this naval battle, with patchworked spreads of cultivated land dotted with trees, mills, and houses. A key on the lower left lends the image an air of authenticity, as Brunias points out the locations of relevant forts, cities, and ecological features. Unfortunately, half of the key is missing, but based on the placement of the numbers, we may assume he also included information on the plantation at his feet and the lines of ships in the water. Brunias’s perspective is from an impossible angle (from this view he must have been in the water!), but his choice in drawing the area in this way may indicate the desire to foreground cultivation as well as give a better view of the British military infrastructure and the flag waving patriotically in the background.

Fear in the West Indies

Though the ships and sea may have made the nation in the public’s eye, for potential settlers, merchants, or absentee-landholders, the six vessels in the Roseau harbor as well as the presence of the Light Dragoon in Linen Market, Dominica soothed and triggered the numerous sources of anxiety of colonial life. In constructing an image of a safe and secure colony, the

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⁵⁶ Thomas Maynard’s Repulse of the French in Frigate Bay, St. Kitts 26 January 1782 (figure 14), is after this print. Now at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London.
ships on the one hand claim the sea for British naval supremacy, and, by extension, add a semblance of protection for the potential planter or merchant. The appearance of a well-settled area on the shores of the sea, teeming with commercial activity, rounds out an image of naval and economic supremacy. The Light Dragoon on the right side of the painting signals that the British government will provide brute military force to protect anyone who may consider settling in the Caribbean. On the other hand, the fact that the Dragoon is present at all serves to remind the viewer of danger in the West Indies. His presence resurfaces colonial fears of all he is intended to fight against. Though the canvas eschews any images of actual insurgence or military threat, the soldier and ships allow a trace of that violence to settle in amongst the carefree promenade of the market. This underscores a major reality for life on Dominica and the West Indies more broadly. From slave revolts that increased in frequency throughout the second half of the 18th century to the seizure of land from both the French and the British sides, conflict marked the context surrounding Brunias’s stay in the West Indies.

While on the surface these paintings seem to advertise these islands as rich in sugar, Dominica and St. Vincent were never meant to become sugar powerhouses. In fact, though officials attempted to draw settlers there with the promise of sugar, agents of the West India interest, a lobby loosely made up of absentee planters, merchants, and Parliament officials with ties to the greater Caribbean, advocated specifically for non-sugar producing islands to enter British possession when signing the Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years’ War.57 Established planters wanted to avoid any competition in what was, at this point in time, the wealthiest region in the world, or “the principal Cornucopia of Great-Britain’s Wealth”.58

57 Patrick Baker, Centering the Periphery: Chaos, Order, and the Ethnohistory of Dominica (Kingston: University of the West Indies, 1994).
Instead of wealth in sugar, Dominica offered Britain a strategic military and trade location between Martinique and Guadeloupe, two key French colonies, and an excellent harbor for trading. Dominica could build a presence in the West Indies that would protect the sugar interests of Britain’s other elite “sugar barons”, and maintain Britain’s supremacy over France.

Settlement of the Ceded Islands was the first step in reinforcing British control in the West Indies. Promoting British settlement was rooted in military strategy in the context of Anglo-French conflicts, for “it [Dominica] has moreover many conveniences for the service of both an army and fleet, which few other West India islands can boast.”

Encouraging more white settlers also would bolster the ranks of a private militia against future conflicts with other imperial powers or slave revolts. Thomas Atwood, judge of Dominica in the late-18th century writes, “in case of a rupture with France, it [Dominica] being the key of the British dominions in that part of the world [...] is the only place in the West Indies, by which there is a possibility for Great Britain to maintain the sovereignty of those seas [emphasis mine].”

The fall of Dominica could trigger the loss of Britain’s newfound global power and was therefore in Britain’s interest to settle the island quickly, lest they remain “exposed to the assaults of a foreign enemy, and to the insurrection of their own slaves.” These low and middling settlers would “intimidate a foreign enemy, and take away all hope of liberty from the negroes [...] all

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59 To illustrate Dominica’s importance, when signing the Treaty of Paris, Britain considered ceding Canada or Guadeloupe to the French in exchange for Dominica, ultimately deciding upon Guadeloupe. Baker, Centering the Periphery, 59.

60 As historian Nicholas Rogers argues, maintaining supremacy over France was of greater importance than managing empire until around 1770, when “empire” entered more common usage.; Nicholas Rogers, “From Vernon to Wolfe: Empire and Identity in the British Atlantic World of the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” in Frans de Bruyn and Shaun Regan (eds.) The Culture of the Seven Years’ War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 25-52.


62 Atwood, History of Dominica, 3.

the while [...] enriching their mother country and paying a large interest for the sums she expended in their establishment."\(^{64}\)

Managing Dominica’s population therefore played an important role in William Young’s tenure in the West Indies, and by extension, that of Brunias. Young’s main task, first as the Land Commissioner and then as the lieutenant-governor, was to find men and women to settle the island, thus minimizing the island’s vulnerability to the French and African-majority population. Young muses on the difficulties of settlement in his 1764 pamphlet *Some Observations; which May Contribute to Afford a Just Idea of the Nature and Importance, and Settlement, of Our New West-India Colonies*. He surmises that “few [settlers] will come from America,” that the “better sort of people in Great Britain… do not chuse [sic] to trust their property so far out of their sight [in the Americas],” and that neither the British poor nor the middling classes will choose to settle in Dominica.\(^ {65}\) Though he was wrong that the wealthy would not purchase land so far away (nearly all land was allocated within a few years), his prediction that few would settle in the Dominica turned out to be true. Young, however, found great difficulty in luring white men and women to settle Dominica at all, as compared to the more established and profitable British-controlled islands, such as Jamaica and Antigua. The dearth of Dominican and St. Vincentian settlement is all the more impressive, considering that across the British West Indies at least 80 percent of plantation owners managed their properties remotely and white settlers made up around only 10 percent of the Caribbean population.\(^ {66}\) The problem of settlement proved so difficult that by 1768, the King’s Authority decreed “that for every hundred Acres of cleared Land, the Purchaser is or shall be possessed of, he shall keep theron one White Man, or two

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\(^{64}\) Burke, *An account of the European settlements in America*, 120.

\(^{65}\) William Young, *Some Observations; which May Contribute to Afford a Just Idea of the Nature and Importance, and Settlement, of Our New West-India Colonies* (London, 1764).

\(^{66}\) Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies*, 11.
White Women, under a Penalty of Forty Pounds sterling for every white Man, and Twenty Pounds sterling for every White Woman that shall be wanting. “67 Settling the land was thus so integral to British interests that Parliament regulated private ownership to encourage population growth.

Historian Sunil Agnani writes that in texts by Enlightenment thinker, Denis Diderot, “wealth… is often explicitly understood as population.”68 Writing around the time of Young’s arrival in Dominica, Diderot’s passages in Raynal’s widely read Histoire dans les deux Indes (1770) and Diderot’s Supplément au voyage de Bougainville (1772) redefined wealth as potentially laboring bodies rather than land to be labored upon. The ideal population mixed indigenous bodies with European minds. This shift in thinking about the characteristics of successful expansion reflects the unintentional ethnocide of indigenous people in the West Indies and the forced migration of Africans.69 Though Diderot’s vision of the mixed empire was not widely adopted as the ideal in the colonies due to fears of miscegenation, his conception of population as wealth reflects similar thinking of the time. Therefore, the ideal population in the West Indian colonies did not simply include the largest number of (slave or indentured) laborers; imperialists consciously managed the demographics of population to maximize colonized labor and minimize the presence of the capitalist colonizer.

Those that ultimately settled in the Caribbean came from middle to low social classes, in pursuit of wealth and status greater than what was possible in England. Though these individuals came to the Americas in search of increased wealth and social status, Europeans looked down on

67 Dominica Mercury, or Free-Port Gazette (Roseau, Dominica), Sep. 3, 1768, p. 3.
69 Ibid.
white Creoles as degraded nothings.\textsuperscript{70} Perhaps most concisely written by John Gabriel Stedman (1744–1797), author of the infamous 1776 “abolitionist” narrative set in Suriname: “Such absolute power indeed cannot fail to be peculiarly delightful to a man, who, in all probability, was in his own country, Europe, a - nothing.”\textsuperscript{71}

Debasing the Creole was part of a larger project concerned with maintaining the moral and racial purity of the nation in light of slavery and imperial expansion. Historian Jack P. Greene argues that metropolitan Britons defined colonial agents in terms of alterity or otherness, thereby distancing the metropole from involvement in the making of empire.\textsuperscript{72} Greene writes that metropolitan Britons could place all their dissatisfactions and anxieties over empire onto the white Creole abroad. In doing so, the Creole became the symbol for all things dishonorable abroad and within polite British society. British society, historian Eliga H. Gould writes, conceived of the colonies as a place of lawless hedonism and rudeness for “even ‘law-abiding’ peoples (metropolitan as well as creole) were free to engage in practices that were unacceptable in Europe.”\textsuperscript{73}

Not only were the colonies thought to attract impure undesirables from Europe, but also what little respectability European settlers had was thought to diminish over time in the Torrid

\textsuperscript{70} Per Thomas Atwood, Creole during this time was used to describe, ”English, French, Spaniards, Italians, and Genoese, who are natives of those countries in Europe, or their issue, born in the West Indies;...to distinguish them from Europeans.”; Atwood, History of Dominica, 208.

\textsuperscript{71} John Gabriel Stedman, Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition; Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the Year 1772, to 1777 (London: J. Johnson & J. Edwards, 1796), 60.


Prolonged exposure to heat, contact with enslaved Africans, and excess consumption and laziness encouraged by plantocratic society contributed to an image of the culturally and racially degenerate Creole. Historian Joan Dayan summarizes texts by Edward Long, Bryan Edwards, and Lady Nugent to argue that in the eyes of these planters, West Indians of African descent only mimicked, but did not transform, European culture, while white Creole civility degenerated in the presence of Africans and in response to the environmental conditions. Coupled with their mediocre status in the motherland, the “whims of climate” fashioned an image of the Creole as brutish, lacking in respectability, and perhaps sexually impaired.

Lieutenant Abraham James’s satirical print *Segar Society in Jamaica!* (figure 16) illustrates this perceived lack of civility in his image of smokers airing themselves in a Jamaican dining room. A member of the 67th Regiment of the Foot in Saint Domingue and Jamaica, James witnessed many of his fellow countrymen succumb to tropical disease. Horrified by biological and moral sickness, he took to caricature to amplify his discontents with the white Creole specifically and slavery generally. His most famous and striking image, *The Torrid Zone, or, Blessings of Jamaica* (figure 17), represents the relationship between literal and moral death. Creoles lounge in immodest postures, mimicking the appearance of exoticized others through the addition of a teal fan and parasol. From beneath, an angry representation of

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77 Roger N. Buckley argues that James’s caricatures participate in a visual culture of abolition. William Holland of Cockspur Street, London, was a known “radical” publisher in the late 18th- and early 19th-centuries who only published works that “were critical of slavery and slave society.” Holland published James’s images.
Yellow Fever, flanked by non-Western masks, waits to devour the Creoles. In *Segar Society in Jamaica!* (figure 16), Creole men and women similarly laze about the room filled with exotic pineapples and massive carafes of wine. The alternating heights of the carafes and legs perched on the wall give the impression of disorder that matches their indecent postures and smoking.

Encouraging settlement therefore required both assurance of wealth and a promise to settlers that they would remain included within the national moral fabric. Part of the problem was that Britons and the metropole put the moral deficiency upon Creoles but they also needed them to maintain the colonies. Either they could morally sacrifice their fellow countrymen or they could employ those outside the nation. Brunias’s market scenes emphasize civility as a way to mitigate this problem. The fine clothing expresses wealth in a sea of harmonious market-goers. Though the women are sexually available, they are respectably covered.

British policy also sought to retain the French majority population already living in Dominica as a way to mitigate British moral corruption while maintaining the requisite population levels. Officials encouraged French residence by pledging to protect their freedom of religion and property rights, as well as the right to vote, provided they took the oath of allegiance and understood English. Though many French did choose to leave once the island entered British hands, the population in Dominica remained largely French; for example, in 1778, two-thirds of the 1574 white people living on the island were of French national origin. Even going through newspapers of the time, it was not uncommon to see both French and English postings.

By extension, this also meant that Africans forcibly shipped to Dominica prior to 1763 would

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80 Boromé, “Dominica during French Occupation, 1778-1784,” 36-50.; Patrick Baker argues that many of the small French landholders seen in John Byres 1776 map of Dominica (figure 19) were free people of color left over from French control of the island; however, officials stripped Creoles and Caribes of their land upon British takeover and so it seems more likely that the French population was European in origin. See Baker, *Centering the Periphery*, 64 and John Greg, “By the King’s Authority.” *Dominica Mercury, or Free-port Gazette* (Roseau, Dominica), Sep. 3, 1768.
have been socialized into French plantocratic society. The allegiance to French masters would prove to be a point of concern for the British.

Without highly populated islands, the lack of any real military or naval protection became excruciatingly obvious. West India merchants and planters, even then Governor Shirley (1727–1800), repeatedly complained to Parliament of their need for military or naval forces, the absence of which left them exposed to attack from European neighbors, Caribes, or runaway slaves. Compared to other British West Indian islands, Dominica did receive marginally better military and naval accommodations, being outfitted with an artillery of 164 canons and 24 mortars, however, this was not enough to prevent the island’s capture on 7 September 1778 as part of the Anglo-French War.

Shifting imperial allegiances as various European powers sought to integrate their new territories from the Seven Years’ War aggravated settlement anxieties. Brunias references this imperial tension a mere five months after de Bouille’s landing on Dominica in 1778 in his engraving of a symbolic cudgeling match, or fight of honor, between French and English slaves, *Cudgeling Match Between English and French Negroes on the Island of Dominica* (figure 18). Engraved for Sir Ralph Payne, former governor of the Leeward Islands, Brunias metaphorically renders the fight for honor between the French and British through the bodies of the enslaved. The group on the right, presumably made up of the British slaves, are fully dressed in clothes without holes, and must be held back to fight for Britain’s honor. The French slaves on the left wear tattered clothing and idly watch on. Not only does this image do the work of showing the loyalty and courage of British slaves, and by extension, Britons more generally, but also it makes the case that Britons are morally superior to their French counterparts; the well-dressed Africans

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in this engraving were meant to provide evidence for the kindness and benevolence with which members of the planter class treated their slaves.\textsuperscript{83}

Indeed, in light of conflict, imperial powers drew upon the moral right to justify their claims to colonies and delegitimize the claims of others. Brunias alludes to the kind treatment of enslaved persons on plantations by showing their freedom and luxurious clothes. The benevolent treatment of enslaved Africans in theory justified forced migration and labor and, similar to the treatment of women, indicated a high level of social development. For this reason, the depiction of woman at labor would, on the one hand, highlight the efficacy of the slave empire, and on the other hand, contradict the supposed civility of British society that honored women. As Kriz suggests, picturing the enslaved woman expressed a barbarity on the side of the British, as the treatment of women was thought to be a marker of developed society.\textsuperscript{84}

“In America,” writes Arthur Young (1741-1820), a British agricultural reformer, “Spain, Portugal and France have planted despotism; only Britain liberty.”\textsuperscript{85} John Stedman stakes a similar claim when he writes that, “I doubt whether Surinam, in the hands of any other nation than the Dutch, would not cease to be of its present consequence, the Hollanders being indisputably the most patient, preserving, industrious people that inhabit the globe.”\textsuperscript{86} The best-selling anti-slavery novels in France took place not in the French Caribbean, but in Surinam, Spanish America, and Jamaica.\textsuperscript{87} The anti-Spanish Black Legend circulated in British and Dutch

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\textsuperscript{84} Kriz, “Marketing Mulâtres in Agostino Brunias’s West Indian Scenes,” 52.
\textsuperscript{85} Greene, \textit{Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain}, 101.
\textsuperscript{86} Stedman, \textit{Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition}, 331.
\textsuperscript{87} Voltaire’s \textit{Candide} and Laplace’s \textit{Oronoko} were set in Surinam, Montesquieu’s \textit{De l’esprit des lois} in Spanish America, and Saint-Lambert’s \textit{Ziméo} and Prévost’s \textit{Le pour et contre} in Jamaica.; Doris L. Garraway, \textit{The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 5.
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media and outlined the alleged crimes of the Spanish, particularly with regards to slave torture.\textsuperscript{88} The following British author in Parliament, even when commenting on the successfulness of French slavery, cannot help but point out that the French treat their slaves worse than the British; “the French planters in all the settlements belonging to that nation have their negros [sic] baptized, and taught some prayers, which they repeat on their knees every morning before they go to work, and every evening after finishing it. This has a good effect on their conduct, attaches them to the interests of their masters, cements their union with each other, and is productive of many advantages to the French planters, who, notwithstanding \textit{their being actually more rigid to their negros [sic] than the English, yet have better and more faithful slaves}” (emphasis mine).\textsuperscript{89}

Obviously, though, this was all a facade, for slave-holders across the Americas treated Africans with the utmost cruelty and metropolitan Europeans knew it. Anti-slavery movements gathered momentum in the 1780s and 1790s with the aid of a developing abolitionist visual culture. One particularly gruesome and well-known story of a West Indian planter boiling a slave in sugar cane made its way into the abolitionist press (figure 20). This story was recounted at the debate on William Wilberforce’s motion to abolish slavery. William Wilberforce (1759–1833) lobbied against Parliament for the emancipation of slaves in the West Indies. Satirist James Gillray (1756–1815) published this image less than a week following the debate in 1791 and depicts the Creole planter torturing the enslaved African as their limbs flex out in pain. The planter wears checked pants and a checked scarf, and he stands in front of a wall with vermin and body parts nailed to it. The hand and ears recall images of cannibalism amongst indigenous people in Western art, for example, the woman in Albert Eckhout’s (c.1610–1665) \textit{Tupuya Woman Holding a Severed Hand Dutch Brazil, Netherlands} (figure 21). Gillray applies the

\textsuperscript{88} Greene, \textit{Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain}, 2013.
\textsuperscript{89} Atwood, \textit{History of Dominica}, 259.
visual language of the colonized to the Creole planter to indicate his savage primitivity; in Gillray’s caricature, the planter wears the dress of the enslaved African and enacts sadistic torture, thus undermining narratives of benevolent slavery through racist transferal.

It should come as no surprise, then, that men and women frequently tried to escape the horrors of the plantation; in fact, every extant and accessible newspaper that I have seen from Dominica during this time has included runaway notices. The notices almost always include a name, language ability, physical attributes, and sometimes, clothing. For example, one reads, “Run away from Joshua Snook, the following Negroes, one called Boo, a short thick well set new negro man, can speak but very little English, has a few marks in his face, his country not known, though bought cut of a cargo of Ebbo’s [sic] from Mr. Judah; he run away from a boat at Prince Rupert’s Bay about two months since. The other is a creole fellow called Billy, he speaks both English and French, and has been gone about ten days. Whoever will bring the said negroes, or either, to their master shall receive a johannes reward for each.”

Europeans in the West Indies heavily surveilled the enslaved, and passed numerous regulations that would bar them from accessing potential weapons, such as gunpowder and in Cuba, the sale of paints. However, slave revolts both large and small happened across the Caribbean with relative frequency and a deep fear ran through the white populations of retaliation from enslaved African. The mountainous and forested topography particular to both Dominica and St. Vincent advanced the development of maroon communities as the difficult landscape provided refuge for runaways; Governor Ainslie described such Dominican

90 Freeport Gazette, or the Dominica Advertiser (Roseau, Dominica), Jul. 18, 1767, p. 4.
encampments in 1814 as “imperium in pero” (a state within a state) for their organization and size. Members from the maroon communities instigated numerous revolts big and small on the islands of Dominica and St. Vincent during the years that Brunias resided there. A significant revolt began in Dominica in 1785 that went on to involve troops from St. Vincent and Grenada in an effort to stamp out the hundreds of maroons supposedly supplied with guns and ammunition by the French. Brunias possibly references this revolt in *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2) through the inclusion of two soldiers from the 66th Berkshire regiment, identifiable by their green uniform and the “66” inscribed on their grenadier hats. 

Residents of St. Vincent feared that the revolution occurring on Dominica would spread through the Caribe population, and perhaps as a result, the 66th Regiment arrived in St. Vincent on 4 June 1785. Not only does Brunias choose to identify the regiment, but also this is the only market to include views of the mountainous terrain, evidence of military infrastructure (Fort Charlotte), and a pronounced presence of Black Caribes. Considering this context, and its pairing with a Sunday market, it seems likely that Brunias is playing on anxieties regarding revolts in order to visualize the potential for an independent West Indies.

Sex and the Sea

A well-to-do man in a top hat hawkishly ogles the woman clad in a pristine muslin gown as she inspects the vendor’s linen. His hat dwarfs his already impish face as he twists his ruffled and effeminate body to face her. To her left, a Light Dragoon hoists a bundle under his arm and glances longingly at her body under hooded lids. His arched eyebrows, loosened lips, and

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glistening eyes point to his beautiful youthful luster. The soldier has perhaps only recently arrived on the island and is now taking in the commercial and sexual prospects the island has to offer. And so, though she doesn’t seem to notice, the woman in white completes a triangle of desire in *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4) on this “general day of coquetry” that represents the sexual competition of men in the West Indies.95

And in fact, all four market scenes feature either a moment of courtship or of unrequited longing; *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4) includes the triangle of desire as well as a less subtle encounter to the left of the image, where the mulâtresse’s arm disappears someplace in the vicinity of the well-endowed man’s torso that she is smiling at; in *Market Day, Roseau, Dominica* (figure 3), a young free man of color stands close enough to the mulâtresse to toe her ruffles with his buckled shoe as he stares up at her with longing; a dark-skinned free man of color stands at attention, hat in hand facing the voluptuous central mulâtresse in *The Linen Market, Santo Domingo* (figure 1); and in *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2), three flirting couples echo one another across the canvas, first with a mulâtresse and a free man of color, then a marketing woman in a check petticoat and a soldier, and finally with a topless laundress and a faceless osnaburg-clad man (figure 22). These encounters speak to the centrality of reproduction and erotics in the Torrid Zone and will be discussed more fully in the final chapter. To close this chapter, however, I will focus on only the two images that feature flirting soldiers for how they exemplify anxieties at the center of the imperial project. In these two seaside markets, sexual desire pervades the racial regime that undergirds trade and naval operations.

Soldiers and sailors were a common sight at Sunday markets. As Thomas Norbury Kerby (1758-1819), President of the Council of Antigua writes, “the men of war, as well as

merchant ships, are constantly supplied on a Sunday with vegetables, the property of the Negroes”.

Europeans and white Creoles alike relied heavily on Sunday markets for their food, as enslaved Africans grew the islands’ vast majority of produce independent of their masters. One way that we can understand the market, therefore, is as a site where enslaved and free women of color literally sustain and satisfy the Europeans in exchange for economic freedom. Thus for people of African descent, Sunday markets were for enterprise and freedom while for Europeans and white Creoles, Sunday markets were their literal lifeline. But for soldiers and sailors, in particular, however, Sunday markets were also for sex. In the words of one sailor,

“We have a general visit every Sunday from the negroes [sic] of the different parts of the island, who hold, in all other places as well as here, their markets on the Sabbath, - being the only day of relaxation they are indulged with by the tyrants they are slaves to[…] bad smells don’t hurt the sailor’s appetite, each man possessing a temporary lady, whose pride is her constancy to the man she chooses, and in this particular they are strictly so. I have known 350 women sup and sleep on board on a Sunday evening, and return at day break [sic] to their different plantations. I don’t know what to compare this charcoal seraglio to[…]”

Edward Thompson, the sailor cited above, reframes the Sunday market in Antigua as a place teeming with sexual activity. Lovey, a recurring African figure in the work of Jamaican painter, Isaac Mendes Belisario (1795–1849), sings in his song that “Man-a-war Buckra, man-a-war Buckra, never, never do for me// when me go to man-a-war ship, me get a doubloon...//Man-

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Free women of color often engaged in the informal concubinage system as a way to sustain themselves. One woman, Susanna Augier, made enough money and social connections to legally gain “the same Rights and Privileges with English Subjects born of White Parents”. Therefore, the potential for sexual activity meant a possible avenue for increased economic freedom, or, for enslaved women, funds for manumission. For white sailors, this coupling meant transgressing racial boundaries and threatening the imperial order. Quilley outlines how sailors at once represented the sexual and moral depravity of society, but as managers of the sea, also stood in for heroic symbols of the nation.

The man in the brass-buttoned jacket in *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4), whether white or of African descent, is clearly of a higher class than the soldier arriving on the island. Author Hassal/Sansay (1773-1821) emphasizes the resentment of white planters towards the French army stationed on Saint-Domingue. Creole men saw the soldiers as preying on their women by even going so far as not to protect the men so that there would be more widows to marry. With these officials threatening their masculinity, white Creole men perhaps needed to assert their dominance over enslaved women as well:

“The English sailors, dressed in holiday attire, and frequently more than half seas over, are generally of the party. On these occasions, Jack thinks it

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incumbent on him to step forward and select his sable or yellow partner; and the perfect good humour with which the negroes receive these very noisy and boisterous heroes of the ocean, and allow them to mix in their dances, never fails to conciliate Jack and his associates. Sometimes, however, the white gentlemen assembled to witness these happy holiday folks - scenes being rather uncommon in Hyde Park or Kensington-gardens - are obliged to interfere to restore blackie his partner.”

We see a similar echo of a racial and class hierarchy in *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller*. The paralleled couplings ground sexual desire within a racialized hierarchy that ultimately supersedes class distinction. On the left, a free man of color, as indicated by his fine blue jacket with brass buttons and distinguished top hat, fixes an upward gaze on the statuesque free woman of color in front of him. She in turn looks straight ahead at her wealthy friend. Next to her, a British soldier likely of the 66th Berkshire Regiment chats up a dark-skinned woman, while the cudgeling match to the right holds his comrade’s attention. Beside these two, a topless woman and man in slave clothing complete the pairs of sexual and racial mobility; indeed, the echoing figures suggest that the women may move up in both civility and whiteness.

The potential impact of these couplings depends on the implementation of a racial hierarchy and the confirmed whiteness of the soldiers and sailors. But, are the soldiers in Brunias’s paintings white Europeans? Colonial powers often enlisted enslaved Africans or free

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persons of color across the West Indies to their militias.\textsuperscript{102} It was often far cheaper to enlist local men of African descent to join the conscripted white soldiers than it was to import military might from the metropole. In the 12 years before abolition, 13,400 slaves, or seven percent of the total slave exports to the British West Indies, were purchased specifically for military service.\textsuperscript{103} Further, the route to freedom for many enslaved men was through serving in the military or navy.\textsuperscript{104} And after abolition, Africans were conscripted. Michael Scott in his 1834 novel \textit{Tom Cringle’s Log} describes a parade of Jamaican regiments “being of all colours, from white down to jet-black.”\textsuperscript{105} All companies vary in skin color (one troop even consists of Jews), but “all the soldiers, whatever their cast or colour, [were] free of course.”\textsuperscript{106} This legacy holds true in both St. Vincent and Dominica, where both free men of color and enslaved Africans either fought alongside or carried military equipment for white Creoles. Indeed, if we return to our dragoon in \textit{Linen Market, Dominica}, shadow can hardly explain his darkened skin as he trails behind a glowing mulatress.

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\textsuperscript{102} Charles H. Wesley, “The Negro in the West Indies, Slavery and Freedom,” (1932), \textit{Faculty Reprints}, Paper 211. \\
\textsuperscript{104} Sue Peabody, \textit{Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World} (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Though speculative, it is even possible that Brunias had ties to a free person of color serving in the British navy. Lennox Honychurch has found baptismal records linked to the sons of “Louis Bruneas” and a mulatto woman. Perhaps one of these children, a certain M. Bruneas went on to serve as a clerk in the navy, only to be killed in an earthquake on Martinique in 1839.; “Dreadful Earthquake—Martinique,” \textit{The Times} (London, England), Apr. 2, 1839. \\
\textsuperscript{105} Michael Scott, \textit{Tom Cringle’s Log} (Paris: Baudry’s European Library, 1836), 215. \\
\textsuperscript{106} Scott, \textit{Tom Cringle’s Log}, 216.
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Chapter 2: “Manchester checks, negroes and provisions”:
Liberal Threads of Imperialism

Q: Is not the principal for the African trade cotton manufacture?

A: Yes, and the slave trade the principal trade to America. So cotton the principal of both, and this is to be got only by a free port.¹⁰⁷

“[U]niversally clad in white Muslin”, the men wearing “loose drawers and waistcoats”, and the women wrapped in “handkerchiefs of gauze or silk”,¹⁰⁸ Janet Schaw’s (ca.1731-ca.1801) sensual account of enslaved Africans going to Sunday market materializes as it envisions prosperity for slavery in the colonies.¹⁰⁹ Writing on her travels through the West Indian and American colonies in the years 1774-1776, Schaw’s journal of a distinguished Scottish lady’s reflections joins a canon of travel writing that visualized how the colonized could access the wealth of the metropole while at the same time portrayed their inherent separateness from any notion of shared nationhood. In their clean and expensive clothing, Schaw links the slaves materially to polite British society, thereby dissolving space geographically and temporally.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Janet Schaw, Journal of a Lady of Quality, being the narrative of a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 108.
¹⁰⁹ I turn here to cultural historian Sumathi Ramaswamy, who writes that “[g]iven the complexity of colonial formations over time and across cultures and spaces, it would be naive to speak of a singular ‘imperial’ or ‘postcolonial’ scopic regime.” That is, I can only speak here on the imperial gaze trained on the West Indies. Future projects, however, should seek to find ways in which myriad scopic regimes in the period following the Seven Years’ War and preceding formal decolonization worked with and informed one another.; Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Introduction: The Work of Vision in the Age of European Empires,” in Martin Jay and Sumathi Ramaswamy (eds.) Empires of Vision: A Reader (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 14.
The erasure of cultural difference between Europeans and West Indians as well as links to any African homeland sets up an uncomfortable tension on the backdrop of slavery as the forced laborer is enjoined to the colonial agent.

Passages such as Schaw’s depict the enslaved and colored populations of the West Indies as more than fed, clothed, and housed; in the colonies, they could experience a world of liberty they otherwise could not in their homeland. At the same time, Schaw’s description of muslin, loose clothing, and gauze juxtaposes the dark skin of the enslaved Africans with see-through white fabric; that is, even in dress, Schaw makes the enslaved body available to an intimate circle of colonial viewership.111 The liberty she thus describes is marked by constant surveillance, a point Schaw makes herself only a few lines down from this initial account: “It is necessary however to keep a look out during this season of unbounded freedom; and every man on the Island is in arms and patrols go all round the different plantations as well as keep guard in town.”112 Imperial optics necessarily straddle the tension between liberty and surveillance in the eye of the European colonizer for, in the words of philosopher Michel Foucault, “there is no liberalism without a culture of danger.”113 I will explore this very tension and how it relates to the production of cloth as a material, cultural, and symbolic object in the context of West Indian slavery in this chapter.

Imperial optics grapple with more than a tension between liberty and surveillance, however; Schaw’s sumptuous imagery of slave dress flows from both ideological and lived systems navigated by colonial agents and subjects—flexible labels endowed to groups thrown

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111 It is unclear whether Schaw published her journal more widely, but at least three manuscripts from her lifetime exist. The text studied today was rediscovered in the 1920s at the British Museum.
together in the contact zone.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, at the same time that writers like Schaw sought to weld slavery and empire to liberty and luxury in the colonial imaginary, enslaved Africans negotiated their options for dress and self-fashioning in reality, thereby exerting influence on Europeans wishing to represent them, and on European style.

Determining what slaves actually wore can be difficult. Firstly, the ways in which slaveholders and legislators implemented and managed slavery differed widely across the Americas, contributing to differences in dress by location. Secondly, slaves could not legally bequeath their belongings, and therefore did not leave behind wills inventoried their possessions.\textsuperscript{115} Historians may instead rely on enslaved and European testimony, runaway notices, and, to an extent, contemporary imagery to better understand how enslaved people and their masters coordinated dress.

Many have used the figures in Agostino Brunias’s paintings in this way to better understand dressing patterns in the colonial Caribbean. The market scenes are particularly useful in this regard, as Brunias depicts a wide range of social classes, occupations, and dress styles, unlike in other paintings where either all figures are of the same class or there are too few figures to show a range in style. The underlying assumption is that Brunias participates in efforts to categorize the islanders ethnographically, a point art historian Beth Fowkes Tobin contends in her chapter on Brunias’s paintings.\textsuperscript{116} Tobin argues that Brunias paints only “types of Caribbean

\textsuperscript{114} Mary Louise Pratt introduced the concept of the “contact zone” in her article “Arts of the Contact Zone.” She described it here as the “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.” I use the term here to signal the multiplicity of agency, while foregrounding access to power, in the plantocratic West Indian colonies. While enslaved Africans obviously held disproportionately less power than colonial agents, they did assert themselves in a number of physical, cultural, and symbolic ways.; Mary Louise Pratt, “Art of the Contact Zone” Profession (1991): 33-40.


\textsuperscript{116} Tobin, “Taxonomy and Agency in Brunias’s West Indian Paintings,” 1999.
people”¹¹⁷ and uses clothing to signify their differences. Ethnographic and encyclopedic projects to catalogue all people of the world were common during this period. French diplomat and engraver, Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur (1757-1810), for example, completed two illustrated texts of such works, *Costumes civils de tous les peuples connus* (1784) and *Encyclopédie des voyages* (1795-1796). Grasset de Saint-Sauveur himself borrows figures from Brunias’s work when representing the West Indies. In his replication of Brunias’s *The Barbadoes Mulatto Girl* (figures 23 and 24), Grasset de Saint-Sauveur rids the image of the two-storied building situated on the hill in the right background, thus effacing any identifying structures from the island of Barbados. He also removes the woman seated on the ground, thus removing the reason for the women’s gathering on this path. Instead, Grasset de Saint-Sauveur frames the Barbadoes mulatto girl, renamed the *mulâtresse* of Martinique and the woman beside her, now her slave, with ruby blossoms along a tree trunk and a picket fence that recalls a picturesqueness usually applied to European peasantry. Grasset de Saint-Sauveur even nudges the enslaved woman into profile so that we can better view her breasts. Decontextualized, the exoticized images masquerade as ethnography in their encyclopedic setting of *Encyclopédie des voyages.*¹¹⁸

We can see how Brunias’s original figures provide key visual evidence desirable for encyclopedic ethnography. Their differences in clothing illustrate and augment the cultural depth of Martinican pigmentocracy, so much so that all other activity is unnecessary to communicate their cultural essence. That is, cloth is so powerful that it can communicate someone’s entire culture. But, a consideration of Grasset de Saint-Sauveur’s replica shows that Agostino Brunias did not need to represent textile markets in order to serve an ethnographic aim;

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 139.
indeed, he could very well have shown off the same costumes on individuals shopping for poultry as they do textiles, or, not selling anything at all. And yet, Brunias emphasizes the sale of cloth through the seemingly endless assortment of fabrics painted meticulously in unique patterns in *The Linen Market, Santo Domingo* (figure 1), *A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2), *Market Day, Roseau, Dominica* (figure 3), and *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4).

Perhaps most surprising is the lack of evidence that textiles were commonly sold at Sunday markets at all. Although historians consistently use Brunias’s market scenes as evidence for a developed textile trade amongst Africans and their descendants in the West Indies, Brunias’s four paintings are an anomaly amongst extant sources describing the Caribbean at this time. In both image and text, artists and authors describe Sunday markets as places where fresh produce is sold and where happy slaves commune in drink, song, dance, and playful fight. Take for example the painting by Le Masurier of Martinique (figure 27) and engraving by W.E.

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119 Because Brunias did not name all of his paintings and titles likely changed as they entered new hands and contexts, it is difficult to know whether or not these four paintings originally held their current names, or any names at all. We do know that Brunias exhibited a painting in 1777 at the Royal Academy of Art entitled *A Sunday Negroes’ Market in the Island of Dominica*, and so I would argue that it is fair to view the scenes in question as Sunday markets. It is less clear, however, how a “Sunday Negroes’ Market” turned into a “Linen Market” in the modern day.

120 Though there is no evidence for the sale of cloth at Sunday markets, it is certainly true that free women of color often peddled or had stores dedicated to selling cloth as indicated in a number of images, such as Guadeloupean Joseph Savart’s pastel, *Quatre femmes créoles* (figure 25) and Pierre Jacques Benoit’s lithograph of market women in Paramaribo, Suriname (figure 26); indeed, they were known for this industry as A.C. Carmichael writes that one could usually count on “the superior classes of coloured females” to sell “[r]ibbons, silks, laces, and gauzes”. That said, I can find no written instance of a free or enslaved woman selling textiles at Sunday markets. While one must also consider the possibility that Brunias’s textile markets are anomalous because no other colonial agent dared represent a facet of colonial life that contradicted the imperial imaginary, because of strict regulations prohibiting the sale of cloth from all non-authorized vendors of European and African descent, I find it more likely that Brunias is not, in fact, illustrating a reality of enslaved life in the West Indies.; A.C. Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841), 78-79; John Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 74; Sophie White “‘Wearing three or four handkerchiefs around his neck, and elsewhere about him’: Sartorial constructions of masculinity and ethnicity among slaves in French colonial New Orleans” *Gender & History* 15, no. 3 (2003): 528-549.; Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the 18th Century*, 226.
Beastall of Antigua (figure 28). These images are representative of artistic conventions depicting Sunday markets. On Martinique, scattered groupings of visitors to Le Masurier’s Sunday market promenade on the shores of the harbor (figure 27). In the left and middle foregrounds, vendors show off colorful vegetables and the gleaming bodies of silver fish. But no one sells fabric. W.E. Beastall, some years later in the early 19th century, composed a similar scene of African and European descendants crowded into frame and connected through the sale of various small objects, fowl, or game in Antigua (figure 28). Again, though Beastall pays close attention to the shapes and patterns of dress, all of it is drawn on bodies and not on tables. In textual sources, such as narratives written by Lady Nugent in Jamaica, A.C. Carmichael in St. Vincent and Trinidad, and Janet Schaw in Antigua, white writers put special emphasis on the often luxurious and colorful dress of marketers, but even they describe a scene in which people of various social rank have come to sell or purchase surplus food, with no writer mentioning the sale of textiles.

Brunias therefore conflates textile markets and Sunday markets in a way that was both unnecessary for the aims of ethnography and taxonomy and was historically inaccurate. In this chapter, I argue that this conflation references emerging notions of liberalism in the period between the Seven Years’ War and the Haitian Revolution. I claim that this interest in representing liberalism springs from his location on the island of Dominica specifically. By liberalism, I mean the economic and social values placed on emancipation from institutional...

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121 For more examples, see Pierre Jacques Benoit’s engraving, *Vue du Grand Marché* (figure 29) and the lithograph of Adolphe Duperly’s daguerreotype, *Market Falmouth* (figure 30).
122 Lady Nugent, who lived in Jamaica from 1801-1805, described the marketers in Falmouth as selling “yams, cocoa-nuts, plantains, &c. and salt fish”; Lady Nugent, *Lady Nugent’s Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* Philip Wright (ed.) (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 84; A.C. Carmichael, writing in the 1820s, who regarded the wares as only surplus-produce.; Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, 4.; Janet Schaw in the 1770s described milk, lamb, turkey, pigs, baskets filled with fruit, pineapples, grapes, oranges, Shaddacks, water lemons, pomegranates, and granadillas at the markets she visited.; Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, 108.
limitations, resulting in free-trade reforms, deregulation, and the heightened importance of the liberties of man.\textsuperscript{123} Although legislators did not officially discontinue mercantilist policies until the 1840s with the repeal of the Corn Laws (1815-1846) and the Navigation Acts (1651-1849),\textsuperscript{124} I suggest that the opening up of free ports in Dominica and Jamaica under the Free Port Act of 1766 represents early British experimentation in a shift from mercantile to liberal economic policy that was intimately bound with the global textile trade. I therefore consider the local and international textile trades, as well as the surrounding development of economic and social liberalism in an attempt to answer how British society justified imperialism as it changed between the late 18th century and mid-19th century.\textsuperscript{125} In doing so, I stake the claim that Brunias’s representations of textile markets participate in an emerging liberal imperial imagery as an ideal manifestation of humanity, self-governance, and free-trade. As in Janet Schaw’s passage that opened this chapter, colonial agents attempted to soothe the contested relationship between imperialism, liberalism, and slavery in ways that reconciled European profit with ideology. The colony comes to stand in for the metropole and perform the tensions of empire in a way that is both near and apart from polite society.

\textsuperscript{125} Uday Singh Mehta notes in a similar footnote in \textit{Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought} that though the terms “imperialism” and “colonialism” have been used interchangeably at least since the mid-19th century, the ideology of the “colony” calls for an extermination of indigenous populations, in a way that “empire” more broadly does not. Though I discuss colonies in the West Indies where European powers attempted (and in many places succeeded) in exterminating indigenous populations, I continue to use theories of liberalism as they relate to empire broadly; Uday Singh Mehta, \textit{Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3.
A New Liberal Order

In the years between 1763 and 1791, European thinkers grappling with and contesting new visions of empire began to think outside of mercantilism to consider alternative systems of social and economic organization. From the Navigation Acts described in the preceding chapter, to the widespread mercantilism that grew out of this legislation, the focus prior to the Seven Years’ War was on outsourcing labor and agriculture to support primary industry and innovation in the metropole. The increase in industry would allow the nation to maximize exports over imports, thereby increasing the accumulation of bullion, or, gold and silver. European national products could then enter into Indian Ocean trade in exchange for sought-after valuables. Colonies were a necessary development in this system, as European powers produced little of desire in the Indian Ocean.

However, mercantilism had not quite fulfilled its promise of great wealth. Instead, it inspired antagonism between nations and contributed to a number of anxieties stemming from international trade. In a mercantilist system where wealth is conceived of as a finite resource, every increase in one nation’s wealth necessarily means a decrease in someone else’s; that is, it is a hostile zero-sum game. Furthermore, because the currency of the Indian Ocean differed from that in Europe, merchants circulated resources or objects in the Indian Ocean trade in exchange for materials with more value, for example, textiles from Persia or India in exchange for spices in Thailand. Usually, the most desired resource from Europe was gold and silver, or, the very conception of European wealth. For the British, this essentially meant giving away wealth for commodities.

127 The adoption of mercantilist policies, of course, was not limited to Europe. My discussion of mercantilism throughout this section though describes European mercantilism where wealth is conceived in bullion, rather than say, textiles.
The failings of mercantilism became most apparent after Britain’s victory in the Seven Years’ War. Britain now had a lot to lose with its massive increase in British territory and the relative ruin of France’s economy and expansionist aspirations.\textsuperscript{128} While mercantilism could protect these interests \textit{during} wartime, it could never expand the nation’s interest, nor provide any defense against economic ruin if another war began. With the slowing of the British economy in the wake of the war, merchants with interests in the West Indies saw the need for assured trading partners to whom they could export surplus, in addition to colonies from where they could import surplus. Liberalism, it would seem, would exert a critical influence over Brunias’s stay in the West Indies.

Britain’s victory in the Seven Years’ War initiated ideological shifts in Britain regarding how the nation understood and sought out its wealth in the global economy. Pretending that the British Empire was only a peaceful trading presence became even harder following the American Revolution and expansion of the British Empire in India.\textsuperscript{129} By the late 18th century, intellectuals such as Adam Smith, Denis Diderot, Edmund Burke, and Jeremy Bentham critiqued European conquest in relation to their visions for moral and equal liberty across the globe. In fact, political scientist Jennifer Pitts writes that such criticism was shared widely amongst thinkers until the mid-19th century.\textsuperscript{130} Adam Smith’s \textit{Wealth of Nations}, published in March of 1776, declares the importance of national self-determination to the production of wealth for all. Although he criticized empire, Smith discusses the benefits of colonies in the penultimate section of \textit{Wealth of Nations}, “On Colonies”. He wrote that surplus goods brought into the European

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
continent produce wealth for imperial powers, but also the enlarged market improves the economies for non-imperial powers, such as Hungary and Poland. Furthermore,

"It is the object of that system [mercantilism] to enrich a great nation rather by trade and manufactures than by the improvement and cultivation of land, rather by the industry of the towns than by that of the country. But, in consequence of those discoveries, the commercial towns of Europe, instead of being the manufacturers and carriers for but a very small part of the world (that part of Europe which is washed by the Atlantic ocean, and the countries which lie round the Baltic and Mediterranean seas), have now become the manufacturers for the numerous and thriving cultivators of America, and the carriers, and in some respects the manufacturers too, for almost all the different nations of Asia, Africa, and America."

Smith describes here an expanding interconnectedness due to the economic order of mercantilism. However, his point is to illustrate how mercantilism has opened up the possibilities for an enlarged market of ideas and commerce. Ideas around humanitarianism, internationalism, and liberalism thus began to take root in the place of protectionist policies, in addition to conceptions around power and wealth. The best way to ensure a nation’s wealth was to recognize that mercantilism relies on a constant market with fluctuating demand, whereas free-trade calls for fluctuating markets with constant demand, that is, a surplus of industrial products to be gotten rid of through international trade.

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Diderot, writing in Raynal’s *Histoire des Deux Indes*, argues that the rational colonized person will enter freely into a biologically and culturally mixed union with the colonizer, a concept the historian Sunil Agnani dubs “consensual colonialism”. Consensual colonialism allows for the rational colonized person to maintain self-determination while at the same time allows the metropole to expand its trade; that is, merging populations takes in land and holds ideals of liberty intact. Stressed importance upon population as opposed to land entails that trade becomes more important than nationalist production. Diderot’s reformation of the colonial relationship highlights the contradictions inherent within imperial liberalism, which Pitts shrewdly points out. She writes that liberalism comes into conflict with imperialism because of its insistence upon human equality and self-government, at the same time that it provides the legal and economic basis for expansion. Rather than address only one contradiction, historian Sudipta Sen taking cues from political scientist Uday Singh Mehta writes that the dual emergences of empire and liberal thought “reveal many intriguing and circuitous links.” The newfound belief that wealth could be increased absolutely instead of in a zero-sum game set liberal policies in conversation with humanitarianism. In this light, colonies were mere burdens to govern if the wealth could simply be extracted through trade.

Michel Foucault explains how freedom only exists through the curtailment of some freedoms, often accomplished through surveillance of the state. Jeremy Bentham’s (1748–1832) philosophical and architectural plan of the Panopticon exemplifies the ways in which

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134 The philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville echoes this sentiment when he pens that “Negroes and Whites must either blend entirely or separate” to resolve the dissonance between race and democracy. Ultimately, however, he believes mixing to be impossible, and calls for African descendants to return to Africa.; Achille Mbembe, “Difference and Self-Determination” *E-Flux* 80, March 2017
Enlightenment theory came into being through the surveillance of certain people. The Panopticon was an architectural plan that could be applied to any institutional structure, though most associated with a prison, where the prisoners must circumambulate around the authority in the center, thus encouraging self-regulation under the threat of constant surveillance. This threat would encourage constant productivity, and by extension, profitability. It is not a coincidence, I believe, that almost everyone in Brunias’s market scenes watches another person. Men look longingly at women, vendors look at patrons, servants look at vendors, patrons gaze into space—the endless deferral of gazes force community surveillance. Through collective surveillance, the community enforces productive labor and strips others of their bodily autonomy, thus participating in mass dehumanization.

Achille Mbembe expands upon Foucault’s explanation of liberalism as the “productive / destructive relationship [with] freedom” by pointing out that it was precisely enslaved Africans who lost their freedom at the expense of liberty in Europe. Mbembe writes,

“The modern idea of democracy, like liberalism itself, was inseparable from the project of commercial globalization. The plantation and the colony were nodal chains holding the project together. From their beginnings, as we well know, the plantation and the colony were racial dispositions whose calculus revolved around an exchange relationship based on property and profit. Part of liberalism, and racism, is therefore based on naturalism.”

He goes on to write that the black slave as a symbol of fear marks the impetus for surveillance. That is, slavery is a system based on terror and dehumanization, which is achieved through constant surveillance; “From the beginning, racial danger has been one of the pillars of

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the culture of fear intrinsic to racial democracy.”

Mbembe writes that “[m]odern ideas of liberty, equality, and democracy are… historically inseparable from the reality of slavery.”

Indeed, it is not incoherent within a liberal system that the freedom of Europeans to accrue a maximum profit through slavery comes at the expense of the liberty and self-determination of enslaved Africans. Further, free-trade and laissez faire policies intensified slavery due to “overproduction, increased competition, and the quest for economies of scale.”

Liberalism tries to justify slavery by arguing that these people only have freedom within the empire. If left to their own devices, they would succumb to despotism. Writing on Anne-Louis Girodet’s 1797 Portrait of Citizen Belley, Ex-Representative of the Colonies (figure 31), art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby says in another way that, “[i]t [slavery] was at once the condition to be overcome in the attainment of liberty and the condition required to sustain Revolutionary France’s economy.”

She continues on that for black men to claim liberty for themselves, they needed to speak and represent themselves individually as a way to separate themselves from the anonymity of slavery. White men, on the other hand, needed to generalize and speak abstractly to moor them to the collective call for freedom. In the image at hand, Girodet puts emphasis on Belley’s individual identity and rank, distinguished from his paintings of white, nude generalizable bodies.

By the mid-19th century, classically liberal thinkers like J.S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville had apparently reconciled the tensions between empire and liberalism enough so that they could speak on the possibilities for dignity for reformed “barbarians” within an imperial system and ushered in a second wave of empire after the loss of the American colonies and for

138 Ibid.
140 Michael Craton, Testing the Chains, 162.
the French, Saint-Domingue. In fact, Raynal claimed in his very next text after *Histoire des Deux Indies, Essai sur l’administration de St.-Domingue*, that slaves were better off living under slavery in a liberal civilization rather than freely in a despotic one. Mbembe writes, “[t]his [a duty to help and protect the Black Man] made the colonial enterprise a fundamentally ‘civilizing’ and ‘humanitarian’ enterprise. The violence that was its corollary could only ever be moral.”

In part, one of the tenets of liberalism, that is, necessary collective enrichment, makes way for a unified imperialist movement where “the whole world is summoned around Europe to exchange its own and Europe’s products in the European markets.” Brunias’s market scenes are situated right in the middle of this shift in economic and social thought. Understanding Brunias asks us to think about the seismic social, political, economic changes during this period.

The shift from mercantilism to liberalism began as part of an increasing internationalism originating in the 18th century, and that preceded the pronounced development of the nation-state in the 19th century. Across the Caribbean in particular, merchants, planters, and other go-betweens were developing a free-trade system out of mercantilism that tied the colonies together. In that, Enlightenment thinking not only came out of expansionism, but also had its first experiment in the colonies. Scholar Mary Louise Pratt contends in her seminal text, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* that Romanticism in Europe owes its genesis to contact with indigenous people across the globe. That is, a seemingly exclusive European product in fact results from interactions in the contact zone. I make a similar claim here, by arguing that it was the colonial environment itself that made it uniquely viable for experiments

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143 “Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end.” J.S. Mill, quoted in Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 1.
144 Garraway, *The Libertine Colony*, 5.
146 Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 55.
with economic and social liberalism. As a collection of islands, all connected to a variety of crowns, with inhabitants of mixed allegiances, races, and ethnicities, that focused production on a handful of goods, West Indians needed to work with their neighbors to survive. The expression of liberalism in the form of free ports illustrates this point.

Tracing the Textile Trade in Dominica’s Free Ports

The first free ports in the Caribbean date to the 17th-century Dutch entrepôts, St. Eustatius and Curaçao, centers for French trade in “provisions and manufactured goods including the coarse linen known as Dutch stripes which was the usual clothing for French negroes, and of which Statia sold about £100,000 worth a year, either to French or Spanish customers.”\textsuperscript{148} Free ports are trading centers with few or no taxes on imports and exports, and do not discriminate against merchants based on national allegiance. The Dutch had enjoyed a free port in Willemstad, Curaçao for nearly a century by the time the Danish and the French established free ports in 1763 on Saint Thomas, Saint John, Martinique and Guadeloupe, and in 1767 on Saint Lucia and Saint-Domingue. The British joined these efforts first in 1766 with two ports in Dominica and four in Jamaica, later expanding to more islands in the 1780s due to the Free Port Act. The free ports in Dominica were Roseau and Prince Rupert’s Bay.

Parliament began to consider the prospects of open ports in the British West Indies in the spring of 1766, though merchants like Francis Moore had considered this question at least as early as 1765. According to Moore, French merchants traded sugar, cotton, and cocoa for two-thirds provisions, and one-third Dutch cotton stripes at St. Eustatius.\textsuperscript{149} If Dominica were to open a free port, he contended, Britain could more easily procure raw cotton from the French as

\textsuperscript{148} Armytage, \textit{Free Port System in the British West Indies}, 36-37.
well as sell British manufactured cloth. This particular economy for textiles in the West Indies prompted Moore to contact Lord Rockingham (1730-1782) in 1765 about the possibilities of opening a port on Dominica. Lord Rockingham pushed for the Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica, arguably because of his sympathies for the Scottish. Scottish merchants, such as the slave trader Richard Oswald, supported this act, as it allowed the emerging merchant community to fill a void left by changes during the Seven Years’ War. Colonel Dalrymple (1736-1807) began around this time to lobby for a port specifically on Dominica, due to its location between Guadeloupe and Martinique.150 Rather than turning Dominica into a sugar island, merchants like Moore and West India agents like Dalrymple lobbied Parliament to turn Dominica into an entrepôt for textile sales. As one merchant declared when interviewed by Parliament, “[w]e only want a quantity of cotton, which if Dominica was a free port we should get from Maria Galante as it is the principal product of that island.”151 Parliament intended for Dominica to funnel cheaply gotten French cotton to manufacturers in Britain it seems.152

At Parliament’s initial meeting on the subject during the spring of 1766, merchants from Bristol suggested the free port open on the island of Dominica due to its location; merchants from Lancaster urged Parliament to consider that “the Importation of Cotton, and other foreign Produce, would be a Means of extending and improving the Trade and Navigation of these Kingdoms”153; and merchants from Liverpool echoed this same claim, arguing that “the Importation of Cotton, Wool, and other Goods, of the Growth of America, in foreign as well as British Ships, into some of the British Islands in the West Indies, would be a Means of extending

150 Armytage, Free Port System in the British West Indies, 37.
152 Armytage, Free Port System in the British West Indies, 72.
and improving the Trade of Great Britain”\textsuperscript{154}. The cotton merchant spearheaded this movement, and in fact, those with interests in the sugar trade opposed the opening of a free port, complaining of smuggling and the duties inflicted upon molasses.

For the cloth merchant, access to French raw cotton would keep its factories running, and by extension keep the slave trade moving - a connection not lost on those in Parliament. When interviewed as part of investigations into whether opening a port on Dominica would be feasible, Kendall Mason, a London merchant with interests in Antigua, commented that opening a port would allow Manchester manufacturers to purchase raw cotton more cheaply, thereby being able to undersell East India goods principal in the slave trade; “Great quantity of cotton might be got there [Dominica] and this bought for British manufacture. Manchester checks, negroes and provisions.”\textsuperscript{155} He continued that since the slave trade provided cotton manufacturers with a steady market, and cotton manufacture was necessary for the slave trade, opening a free port in the West Indies for procuring raw cotton most cheaply would be a boon to both the cotton trade and the slave trade. In the words of art historian Liza Oliver, “both circular routes and circular logic came to define the European global trade in Indian textiles by the middle of the eighteenth century.”\textsuperscript{156}

Two ports in Dominica and four in Jamaica ultimately opened in 1766. The announcement in the Free-port Gazette, one of the newspapers in Dominica, read:

“1. An Act for opening and establishing certain Ports in the Islands of JAMAICA & DOMINICA, for the more free Importation and Exportation of certain Goods and Merchandizes; for granting certain Duties to defray the Expences of opening,

maintaining, securing, & improving such Ports; for ascertaining the Duties to be paid upon the importation of Goods from the said Island of DOMINICA into this Kingdom and for securing several the Duties upon Goods imported from the said Island into any other BRITISH colony.

2. An Act for repealing certain Duties in the BRITISH Colonies and Plantations, granted by several Acts of Parliament upon certain EAST-INDIA Goods exported from GREAT-BRITAIN; for granting other Duties instead thereof; and for further encouraging, regulating and securing several Branches of the Trade of this Kingdom, and the BRITISH Dominions in AMERICA.”

Though nominally free, Parliament continued to impose some restrictions. These ports were open only to certain foreign powers and traded in raw goods that were thought to only benefit the British. This influenced the Dominican population, as between 1771 and 1773 the population doubled. Prior to the Free Port Act of 1766, all tropical goods, such as rum, sugar, or cotton, needed to board English ships, with crews of at least three-quarters Englishman, for export to Britain. Goods could be re-exported to non-British colonies or territories, thus stamping out a large portion of legal Caribbean trade. Parliament intended for the Jamaican ports to wipe out the Spanish contraband trade while the ports in Dominica would funnel French raw cotton to England. And in fact, raw cotton imports experienced the most profound transformation due to the Free Port Act, as the total rose from 5 million to 91 million pounds between 1781 and 1811, largely because French cotton “could be purchased for up to 30 percent

157 Free-port Gazette, or the Dominica Advertiser (Roseau, Dominica) Jul. 18, 1767, p.4.
159 Armytage, Free Port System in the British West Indies, 44.
below its price in metropolitan France.”

While manufacturers and traders in Lancashire and Manchester respectively exported their goods to Dominica, merchants in the free-port cities of Roseau and Prince Rupert’s Bay of Dominica imported cotton, likely from the French, and re-exported it to manufacturers in the metropole for a profit. For example, “Dominica imported 217,138 lbs. and exported 228,196 lbs. of cotton to Great Britain, suggesting only 10,000 lbs. of cotton were domestically produced on the island” during the year that the ports opened in Dominica. British merchants, therefore, depended heavily on French cotton (and relations) to support their various enterprises in this “mercantile octagon”.

Due to its successes as a free port, London merchants lobbied Parliament to grant Dominica its own government separate from that of Grenada, who at the time maintained the law in the Ceded Islands. The four Ceded Islands of Dominica, Grenada, Tobago, and St. Vincent quickly became important cotton centers, though Dominica evidently was the preferred hub.

For the first few years, Dominica’s cotton business was booming.

When the Act was renewed in 1787, Parliament extended the invitation to trade exclusively towards European ships and traders, thereby blocking North American traders from participation in British trade networks. French imports into Dominica at this time were also limited to “wool, cotton wool, indigo, cochineal, drugs of all sorts, cocoa, logwood, fustic and all sorts of wood for dyers’ use, hides, skins and tallow, beaver and all sorts of furs, tortoiseshell, 


165 Thales Augusto Zamberlan Pereira, “The Rise of the Cotton Trade in Brazil During the Industrial Revolution” (working paper, School of Economics, Business an Accounting at the University of São Paulo, 2016), 13.
hardwood or mill timber, mahogany and all other woods for cabinet ware, horses, asses, mules and cattle."\textsuperscript{166} Of that list, the British only cultivated cotton.

In theory, the opening up of ports in the West Indies was not a rejection of mercantilism, but rather, an elaboration; foreign goods could only be imported if they did not intrude on British monopolies and raw or manufactured goods were exported only to those foreign powers which Britain wanted to trade with.\textsuperscript{167} Of course, in practice, government forces did not implement the ideal-type of liberalism. The colonial manifestation may be better described as free-trade mercantilism\textsuperscript{168}; that is, participation in an open market angled towards national benefit.\textsuperscript{169} At the same time, the opening of ports encouraged a budding cosmopolitanism and individuality that tempered claims that the colonies were “members of our own body, thus forming one vast Leviathan.”\textsuperscript{170} Open ports lent greater agency to Caribbean trading powers, thereby contributing to inter-Caribbean relations as separate from the metropole. Where previously the lines of trade were strongest between the colony and the metropole, free-trade encouraged the development of a strengthened Caribbean network that would move commodities, people, and ideas throughout the region with less interference from the metropole. With greater, though incomplete, independence from the metropole, colonial agents formed ties across the region where they often passed over regulations that would benefit the mother country in support of benefiting one’s

\textsuperscript{166} Armytage, \textit{Free Port System in the British West Indies}, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{167} Armytage, \textit{Free Port System in the British West Indies}, 2.
\textsuperscript{168} This term comes from Bernard Semmel, \textit{The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism}, 1970.
\textsuperscript{169} Indeed, the very system of liberalism calls for the curtailment of freedom in order to ensure its existence. Michel Foucault expounds upon this contradiction in writing that the “established protectionist tariffs from the start of the nineteenth century [were put in place] in order to save a free trade that would be compromised by English hegemony.”; Foucault, \textit{The Birth of Biopolitics}, 64.
\textsuperscript{170} William Young’s use of the word “Leviathan” recalls the influential text of the same name by philosopher Thomas Hobbes. The Leviathan, Hobbes describes, is the sovereign and authoritarian body that rules over the masses. By referring to Hobbes, Young suggests that colonies not only are part of the larger commonwealth, but also ought to be ruled absolutely by a distant sovereign.; William Young, \textit{Considerations which May Tend to Promote the Settlement of Our New West-India Colonies by Encouraging Individuals to embark in the Undertaking}. (London: James Robson, 1764), 3.
individual profit; in fact, merchants continued to transgress regulations by trading in open waters rather than landing in harbor.\footnote{171}{Hunt, “Contraband, free ports, and British merchants,” 2013.}

Furthermore, free-trade in the West Indies preceded the burst of economic liberalism that has historically gone hand-in-hand with the publication of Adam Smith’s \textit{Wealth of Nations}. In fact, Smith cites the wealth of the linen trade in the Americas in his discussion of colonies.\footnote{172}{Smith, \textit{Wealth of Nations}, 259.} He writes in an illuminating passage that Spain and Portugal retain the profits of freely traded French, Flemish, Dutch, and German linen in their colonies. In effect, Britain too would retain the profits without having to maintain the land or labor force.\footnote{173}{Armytage, \textit{Free Port System in the British West Indies}, 36; Other bodies, such as La Société des Amis des Noirs got around this issue by advocating expansion into Africa where Africans would work for Europeans on their own soil.; Garraway, \textit{The Libertine Colony}, 5.}

Was Dominica the cotton center its free port had intended? As it turned out, no. By the early 1770s, other islands like Grenada had a clear hold of the cotton market. Furthermore, the largest supply of cotton to Britain came from Smyrna or Italian re-exported Levantine cloth.\footnote{174}{Pereira, “The Rise of the Cotton Trade in Brazil during the Industrial Revolution,” 2016.} But, the fact that Dominica was targeted for its trading potential bears further examination. Its original advantage to British forces was its strategic location between Martinique and Guadaloupe. Britain’s two uses of Dominica as a colony during this period reveals the interdependence of trade upon military forces and vice-versa. Going further, if we consider free-trade as the outcome of developing political, economic, and cultural liberal thought, then we can see the central tension between freedom, surveillance, and enslavement. And, as historian Michael Craton writes, “free trade and laisser [sic] faire were luxuries of power; to call them liberal was a gross misnomer.”\footnote{175}{Michael Craton, \textit{Testing the Chains}, 162.}
Dressing New Markets

Just as the market scenes cannot properly be understood as separate from liberalism and free-trade, so too must we consider the histories of the textile trade to parse out why Brunias depicted textile markets where ostensibly none existed. Looking at cloth is also important, as I suggested in the introduction, for how it serves as a site of meaning. For the section that follows, I explore the cultural and economic production of cloth in the context of trade with India, West Africa, and the plantocratic West Indies and its central position in reproducing and influencing the systems of slavery and imperialism, as informed by race, gender, class, and labor.

Britain historically enjoyed a booming wool industry throughout the early modern period. One of their main industries, merchants primarily exported their wares to continental Europe.¹⁷⁶ The newfound popularity of Indian calicoes and other textiles in 17th-century Europe, however, threatened Britain's national textile industry. The so-called “calico craze” swept across Europe as part of a shift in taste and trade.¹⁷⁷ Per art historian Chandra Mukerji, taste in fabrics initiated political and economic quandaries that were not resolved until technology caught up with taste, and reaffirmed the mercantilist spirit.¹⁷⁸ These fine and easily cleaned plain-weave cotton cloths were at first unpopular in England, but over the course of the 17th century, aristocrats and middle-class Britons alike clamored for Indian cloth for dress and furnishings.¹⁷⁹ The sudden rise in popularity may be attributed to the fineness of the fabric, exoticism, or the wide accessibility. Unlike silk, many of the cloths were easily cleaned and came in varying grades of

¹⁷⁹ Though I focus on Britain’s consumption of Indian textiles (as does the majority of scholarship on the topic of Indian textiles), other European powers imported cloth from India, as well. For information on the Franco-Indo trade, see Liza Oliver’s forthcoming book, *Forging French India: Art, Science, and Diplomacy in the Early Modern World* (1664-1761).
weave quality. Cost associated with care and the range in price increased access and contributed to a democratic way of dressing. Where previously the wealthy wore mostly silks and the middle-classes wore wools, now a greater number of people could wear cloth in similar patterns with varying fabric quality.

By the mid-17th century, pieces were often designed and embroidered in India specifically for European audiences by incorporating popular European motifs with the aid of pattern books. In this cotton bedspread, weavers in Gujarat paired a spiraling European vine pattern with Indian animals framed in the alternating diamonds. European designers also imported the fine fabrics and printed, painted, or embroidered them locally. The ground cloth of this cotton bedspread comes from India, transported by the English East India Company in the late 17th century. Intended to take on Indian design, English artisans embroidered golden pineapple-like flowers and vegetal motifs that radiate from the center of the fine bedspread. Later, European weavers and designers would attempt to imitate the full production, from weaving to designing. In this French example from the Oberkampf Manufactory, this block-printed cotton sample imitates a floral design usually reserved for palampores, a type of hand-painted and mordant-dyed cloths. The elaborate assemblage of flowers, insects, and fruits undulate in vibrant colors across the textile, belying its French origin.

As an indication of the successful market for calicoes, merchants of the East India Company first imported approximately 5,000 calico pieces in 1613 and by 1694 the number of calicos imported into Britain reached 1,400,000. The caricaturist James Gillray targets this exponential popularity of Indian fabrics in a popular and satirical print using the iconography of

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182 Bogansky, Interwoven Globe, 283.
the Three Graces. On a stroll through Kensington Gardens, Gillray leaves little to the imagination with regards to three women who have succumbed to the gauzy muslin trend (figure 35). Gillray critiques the women’s style choices and their bodies simultaneously; the women are not only ridiculous, uneasy in impractical clinging cloth, but also the cloth strips them of their privacy and respectability. The implication, of course, is that the women think only of the social capital of the fabric and are blind to the reality of its form. The symbolic exposure of the caricature follows proposed French laws in the early 18th century that called for the stripping of any woman wearing Indian textiles in public or the suggestion that sex workers wear Indian textiles “so as to denude them publicly.”

Love of Indian textiles was not limited to European consumers. West Africans had engaged in trade with India and other Indian Ocean merchants for centuries. In fact, the famous freed slave, Olaudah Equiano (c.1745–1797) wrote in his narrative that men and women in IgboLand typically wore calico or muslin wrappers, usually dyed blue. Textiles held highly prized and politically charged positions in West African kingdoms; like in the Safavid and Ottoman empires in Asia, West African textiles had particular diplomatic value, as the yearly tribute of four hundred cotton cloths and two hundred mixed silk and cotton textiles from the Dagombas to the Ashanti city of Kumasi in the mid-18th century demonstrates.

Companies, like the East India Company, intruded on African-Indian trade by importing Indian cloth into England, and then re-exported it along with shells, spices, and weaponry, to

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183 Liza Oliver, *Forging French India*, 37.
West Africa in exchange for slaves or “Benin cloth” for the gold trade on the Gold Coast.\textsuperscript{187} Historian Peter Adler argues that the establishment of the Ashanti Empire in the 17th century encouraged the development of a highly sophisticated weaving system, and one that required fine thread for weavings.\textsuperscript{188} The exchange between British merchants and West African weavers provided the impetus for weaving empires to grow by importing the necessary materials. To this end, West Africans, like the Ashanti, prized Indian textiles not for their designs, but for the quality of their fabric. Indian silk thread supplemented local cotton as weavers unraveled calicoes and other Indian textiles to reveal brightly colored strands that could be rewoven into culturally preferred designs.\textsuperscript{189} The most common African styles wove numerous strips of differently colored cloth together to create complex check or striped patterns, called strip-weave cloth, with a focus on geometry and vibrancy (figure 36). This woman’s wrapper consists of seventeen hand-sewn panels that enliven the field for the floating hourglass motifs. Red cloth from India was particularly desired, as dyers already had a long history of using indigo for bright blue textiles.\textsuperscript{190} Later, red European silks and wools were more prevalent in West African kingdoms.

The calico craze in Britain and West Africa distressed British textile merchants and manufacturers. On the one hand, textile manufacturers saw the import of Indian textiles as an axe to their market. On the other hand, procuring slave labor for the Caribbean required the trade of these textiles. The dependence upon India for the principal of the slave trade destabilized any kind of mercantilist and nationalist aspirations. Merchants as a result lobbied

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\textsuperscript{187} Kriger, “Guinea Cloth,” 122.; Because enslaved Africans came from a wide swath of West Africa, I do not specify one single kingdom or empire of the many in my discussion.
\textsuperscript{188} Adler and Barnard, African Majesty, 47.
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for various tariffs and restrictions on the importation of Indian textiles into Britain and in 1700, Parliament instated the first of the Calico Acts (1700, 1721). Though these acts curtailed the importation of Indian textiles into Britain for British consumers, they allowed their re-exportation to British colonies and West Africa.\textsuperscript{191} To this end, art historian Amelia Peck points out that those living in the colonies had easier access to high fashion fabrics than those in France and Britain did.\textsuperscript{192}

Although British legislators continued to allow their merchants to ship Indian textiles to West Africa, British manufacturers began experimenting in new linen and cotton weaves that they hoped would rival Indian cloth and dissolve Britain’s dependence on Indian Ocean trade. During the mid-18th century, for example, manufacturers in London requested samples of “Ashantee and Whydah cloth” from the Cape Coast Castle on the Gold Coast so that British weavers could imitate African designs.\textsuperscript{193} British manufacturers introduced new fustian patterns, a type of linen-cotton, in stripes and checks, rather than the more popular floral motifs in Europe as a way to cater to African taste in design to make up for the lower quality of their fabric. Merchants believed that marketing towards cultural preference would circumscribe the need for fine thread. Many West Africans, however, preferred the all-cotton and silk products from India and often rejected Britain’s imitation. As the British cotton industry developed, however, West Africans began to buy more and more British textiles. Innovations such as John Kay’s flying shuttle in 1733, which allowed a single person to weave a broad strip of cloth, and the Thomas

\textsuperscript{192} Amelia Peck, “‘India Chints’ and ‘China Taffaty’: East India Company Textiles for the North American Market,” in \textit{Interwoven Globe}, 105.; Recall, here, that the Free Port Act repealed “certain duties on East-India goods”, likely textiles.
\textsuperscript{193} Kriger, “‘Guinea Cloth,’” 2009.
Highs’s spinning jenny in 1764, which allowed the weaver to spin eight threads at once, assisted in building a powerful British industry.

The transport of so-called “Guinea cloth”, the catch-all phrase for checked or striped cotton-and-linen cloth produced for West African markets, took off during the mid-18th century in Britain. This trade also sought to clothe free and enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.194 Indeed, from 1750 to 1774, forty-eight to eighty-six percent of guinea cloth was exported to West Africa or slave plantations in the Americas.195 British manufacturing caught up enough with Indian cloth exports such that of the twenty-eight most commonly traded commodities in the 1770s, seven were cloth of Indian origin (chelloes, cuttanees, guinea stuffs, pulicats, mixed romauls, silk romauls, and satin stripes) and seven of British origin (plain cotton, chintz, woolen ells and half ells, says, Irish linen, sheets, and silesias).196 Any unsold guinea cloth from the British / West African trade and local textiles from the Bight of Benin were shipped to the West Indies alongside the forced transport of newly enslaved Africans.197 Textile companies, like the Benjamin & John Bower cotton firm, used sample books as a new marketing technique to create and strengthen business interests across the Atlantic.198 The 1771 Bower sample book (figure 37) “circulated five hundred swatches of checked fabrics to sailors, artisans, and enslaved persons across the Atlantic”.199 The five hundred different samples of blue and red woven checks illuminate the variety of styles merchants presented to buyers in the Americas. The market for textiles in the West Indies, either by planters required to provide clothing to slaves or by men and women of African descent freely purchasing cloth, pushed against the argument that

195 Ibid.
199 Ibid.
the colonies would be commercial dead zones without large populations of white people. William and Edward Burke, colonial and aesthetic theorists, wrote that, “the consumption of our commodities there would be in a great measure in proportion to the number of white men.”

On a daily basis, however, enslaved Africans largely wore osnaburgh, a coarse linen weave commonly manufactured in Germany, Scotland, and Ireland. Slave codes throughout the West Indies opened a continuous market for these linens by decreeing that all planters slaves must provide slaves at least two outfits; differentiated by gender, men were promised jackets and pants and women were promised jackets and petticoats. As legislation changed from requiring the number of outfits allotted to each enslaved person to the yardage of fabric, seamstresses in the enslaved community took over the manufacture of clothing. Requiring masters to provide clothing in itself supported the development of linen manufacture in England. The flowing abundance of the linen in these images (both sold and worn) speaks to the instrumentality of the colonies in building up a specifically British textile manufacturing industry. Rather than wear osnaburgh, the women in the market scenes by and large wear checks, stripes, and muslins. To this end, British merchants supplied free and enslaved people of African descent leisurewear. At the same time, striped and check clothing came to be associated with moral and financial depravity. For example, we can see the violent overseers dressed in stripes in Isaac Cruikshank’s 1792 *The Abolition of Slavery* (figure 38) and James Gillray’s 1791 *Barbarities in the West Indies* [sic] (figure 20), discussed briefly in the previous chapter. Similar to how art historian Liza Oliver argues that the shipment of goods from Indian Ocean trade were subsumed into a

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201 Alfred P. Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), 148.; Recall here the quotation from Mary Prince’s narrative that opened this thesis, for how she mentions the osnaburg she was dressed in to be sold.
larger category of exotica, regardless of geographic location, I argue that the choice of guinea cloth to clothe the assailants in the preceding images were the dark twin of exotica.

Though enslaved men and women were subject to what John Styles calls “involuntary consumption”, they ostensibly accessed, created, and continued a great diversity of styles. Textiles were an important marker of wealth and vehicle for self-fashioning. For example, art historian Beth Fowkes Tobin writes in her chapter on Brunias’s paintings that mulâtres used clothing to impersonate masters and undercut their power. And, in a rather stark example of the value attributed to textiles within enslaved communities, historian Sophie White found that 82 percent of criminal investigations and prosecutions of enslaved people in French colonial Louisiana had to do with cloth. To illustrate some of the ways enslaved people “dressed under constraint” I have included a selection of outfits listed in runway notices in the Caribbean. As I wrote earlier, runaway notices are one way to access what enslaved people wore. From a random selection of runaway notices from twelve newspapers from 1767 to 1801, we encounter: a young boy named Chester who wore “blue Everlasting Breeches,” John Hardman who wore “a check shirt, blue jacket, and oznaburg trowsers”, a young woman named Anny who had on “an iron collar round her neck, a Pulicat handkerchief, a white rapper [sic], and a calico petticoat”, a mulâtre named Judique who wore “a black hat, a white linen shirt, and an Osnaburgh petticoat”, two men named John and Sancho who had on “blue jackets and hats,

203 Styles uses this term to refer to poor servants living in Britain, but it is still applicable to enslaved Africans.; John Styles, The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
204 White, “‘Wearing three or four handkerchiefs around his neck, and elsewhere about him,’” 2003.
205 Robert DuPlessis uses this term in The Material Atlantic to highlight the ways enslaved Africans managed the obtainment and styling of cloth under slavery.
206 Barbados Mercury (Bridgetown, Barbados), Sep. 22, 1770, p.3.
207 St. George’s Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette (St. George’s, Grenada), Mar. 9, 1798, p.1.
208 St. George’s Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette (St. George’s, Grenada), Oct. 23, 1801, p.1.
and osnaburg trowsers"\textsuperscript{210}, a woman recently arrived from Africa named Haawa who had on “an Oznaburgh Coat and wrapper”\textsuperscript{211}, a Creole of Barbados, Jenny Esther, who wore “an oznaburg wrapper and pettycoat [sic] with a blue handkerchief about her Head”\textsuperscript{212}, a man recently from the Congo nation, sent to jail as a runaway, who wore “a blue Jacket with a piece of blue cloth, round his middle”\textsuperscript{213}, two boys recently from Senegal, named John and Robin, who wore “striped [sic] cotton shirts and check trowsers [sic]”\textsuperscript{214}, and finally, Sammy, a Creole from Antigua who wore, “a brown thickset frock, blue breeches and black stockings, had a pair of large silver buckles in his shoes, [and] a flapped hat with a white metal button in it”\textsuperscript{215}. As should be evident from these thirteen individuals, enslaved men and women had varying access to cloth and, subsequently, self-fashioning. Some, like Sammy, were able to obtain silver buckled shoes, and others, like the man from the Congo, merged European and African dressing styles in the violent site of the plantation.

And yet, in the small selection of illustrations that accompany these runaway notices (figures 39–42), we can see how the colonial imagery flattens and exoticizes the heterogeneity of enslaved persons and their dressing patterns. The four accompanying illustrations to the notices lend the enslaved body a conniving and stealthy posture through their hunched backs and bent arms and largely marks the body as unclothed and male. The runaways wear feathered skirts and crowns. See, too, how the illustrator disregards gender.

The visitors to the Sunday markets in Brunias's paintings, on the other hand, adhere to a uniform based on class and attendant skin tones. On bodies and on tables, the textiles in Brunias’s market scenes demonstrate an advanced trade network and marketability (at least in

\textsuperscript{210}St. George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette (St. George's, Grenada), Sep. 7, 1798, p.3.
\textsuperscript{211}Antigua Gazette (St. John's Antigua and Barbuda), Dec. 6, 1798, p.1.
\textsuperscript{212}St. George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette (St. George's, Grenada), Jan. 11, 1799, p.4.
\textsuperscript{213}St. George's Chronicle, and Grenada Gazette (St. George's, Grenada), Mar. 8, 1799, p.4.
\textsuperscript{214}Freeport Gazette, or the Dominica Advertiser (Roseau, Dominica), Jul. 18, 1767, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{215}Freeport Gazette, or the Dominica Advertiser (Roseau, Dominica), Jul. 18, 1767, p. 4.
theory) for fine fabrics. Figures overwhelmingly don red and blue check outfits; in *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4), arguably the most refined of the four paintings, every woman with the exception of one in yellow on the right side wears a variety of indigo and crimson check and striped fabrics as skirts, shawls, and tignons. The check patterns are most aligned with British textiles geared towards West African and Caribbean markets. Decked out in British-mediated African designs, the women declare the ability of the British market to defeat India in their command of the market. At the same time, the woman in a dazzling white muslin chemise, to whom Brunias draws attention through a red parasol lifted high above her head, conversely signals her wealth through access to Indian fabric. Resistant to British manufacture, the fine ruffles at the neck and flounce at the bottom of her dress, along with its astounding brightness, demonstrate the pervasiveness of Indian economic control. Blue and red check dresses, tignons in nineteen different styles in *Linen Market, Roseau Dominica* (figure 4), muslin chemises, and varying levels of undress mark the women of the market within a hierarchical but flexible system where race and labor contribute to social mobility.

Littered with countless details evidencing cosmopolitan trade, Brunias constructs an image of a cultivated West Indies, complete with its own social hierarchy and access to the same luxuries in the metropole. Is this, then, just a colony, or a glimmer of a future sovereign nation? Kriz argues that the British fixated upon cloth to supplement notions of refinement in the West Indies, while they simultaneously shied from images of sugar production to negate the rudeness intrinsic to slavery and capitalism. For example, the muslin gown of the central woman upends mercantilism in a strengthening British nationalist mythology. Neither is she a figment of Brunias’s imagination nor is she an exception to free society in the West Indies during the late 18th century. Kriz writes that “Brunias’s *mulâtresse* provoke the fantasy of possessing a body
that both is and is not white, bearing the marks of refined whiteness and the promise of savage sexual pleasure so closely associated with blackness.”

Mia Bagneris’s continues Kriz’s argument to suggest the flimsiness of racial categories at this time; “Brunias posits in paint the witty reply, ‘A white woman often looks like a mulatress... and vice versa,’ pointing at once to the artificiality and arbitrariness of the racial categories that had begun to calcify during his time.”

Whether she is “truly white” or not is not the point. The point is that the uncertainty surrounding her race lends the image liminality indicative of Creole society in the early modern West Indies. Kriz argues that her ambiguously marked body threatens to expose Whiteness as a fantasy constructed to secure European social and political power in a contested world. Bagneris argues that the woman’s racial ambiguity allows her to both represent the potential civility and sexual conquest of the Caribbean, and I suggest that the woman demonstrates the ideological downfall of British expansionism. Her racial ambiguity directly confronts mercantile colonial myths needed to maintain colonial interests. Indeed, either she is a white woman, taking on African styles of dress and supporting industry of people of African descent, as opposed to purchasing directly from European merchants, or, she is a free person of color, as suggested by the red parasol directly above her, threatening the stability of a racial and pigmented social order. Whether white or mulatto, she undermines two necessary myths supporting the management of Caribbean colonies; one, that the colonies will exclusively support national industry, and two, that the middling Britons pushed to emigrate will find wealth and success based on their position in the developing racial order.

216 Kriz “Marketing Mulâtres in Agostino Brunias’s West Indian Scenes,” 55.
218 Ibid., 164.
Richard Newton (1777–1798), a young caricaturist who published under the anti-slavery publisher, William Holland, produced an image of two black men whipping an enslaved man and woman on 2 April 1792, the day of William Wilberforce’s first motion for the abolition of the slave trade (figure 43). Similar to how Bruniass put (immoral) excess onto marketing men and women in the market scenes, Newton defers the cruel moral failings of slavery onto the bodies of the black overseers. The woman is stripped down to her waist and wears a turban; the bloodied man hangs in the posture of Christ and wears only a strip of cloth around his forehead; the white woman wears a ruffled pink and white dress and head wrap and looks on with either horror or glee; and the two overseers, fixing their gaze upon their victims, raise whips high above their red and white striped suits, kerchiefs, wide-brimmed hats, and buckled shoes.

Sociologist Mimi Sheller builds on queer feminist scholar Sara Ahmed in writing that, “the skin can be thought of as a ‘locus of social differentiation’ […] which is ‘touched differently by different others.’” The whip in this case literally marks the man’s body. In Grigsby’s discussion of Citizen Belley and contemporary abolitionist imagery, she describes how slavery was affixed to the black body in the French national imagery. Representation of their liberty necessarily requires that they are dressed, ceaselessly producing the need to prove what the body would deny, what was destabilized at least twice a day by undressing. The whipping person in Newton’s supposedly abolitionist engraving enacts his aggression as a natural release of the tension and violence bottled up in the body due to slavery and colonialism. If we compare this image to Schaw’s gauzy figures that opened this chapter, the muslin is ultimately stripped from

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221 Leading decolonial thinker Frantz Fanon writes in his book Wretched of the Earth that colonialism directly impacts the body, causing aggression to bottle up inside.; Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
the body, exposing black skin encoded with servitude and trauma. Clothes may be representative of free trade, for how they move through many networks to reach this place here in the West Indies, but the body beneath, the liberalism that supports this movement, ultimately is endangered. The image embodies liberalism’s limits in a slavery-fueled empire. On the one hand, these figures, as consumers, “consume” clothes – that is, they repossess them through some kind of exchange. On the other hand, clothes physically consume their wearer—that is, engulf or constrain them in their weaves and threads.

This chapter argued that the market scenes imagine a socially and economically liberal empire by advertising cloth to patrons as it advertises the strength of Dominica’s new free ports to viewers. Rather than being illustrations of Caribbean life, they are a consciously constructed vision of wealth ensured by surveillance. The sections on liberalism, free-trade in Dominica, and textile histories help explain why Brunias imagined, or at least, exaggerated the textile market in Dominica. Brunias’s market scenes take on new meaning when considering the entanglements between textile trades and the slave trade. First and foremost, the history I have outlined heretofore elucidates the significance of Dominica in the textile trade, and by extension, the slave trade; the opening of its free port eased the passage of raw cotton into Britain and began the move towards the liberalism that would mark the modern nation-state. Secondly, Brunias shortened the visual and therefore ideological distance between making textiles, purchasing bodies, and an exploitative economy. Thirdly and finally, Brunias’s links between people of color and textiles highlights the subversion of a radical, self-determining economy. On the surface, the images participate in a genre of exotic happy slaves intended to quell the guilt and fear of the plantocracy, but beneath this veneer, the paintings undo myths of successful imperialism.
Chapter 3: Wrapped up in Women’s Labor: Enacting Citizenship within the Feminized Landscape

Unrest had grown among the slave communities in Dominica since Christmas of 1790. A Martinican free man of color, Jean Louis Polinaire (d. 1791), had circulated revolutionary pamphlets during the free holiday season inciting slaves to rise up in the name of liberté, égalité, and fraternité. Polinaire brought with him rumours that Governor John Orde (1751–1825) had freed the slaves and that the plantation owners were illegally keeping the men and women in bondage. Inspired by Polinaire, enslaved Africans demanded that the planters follow Orde’s orders. They contended that the plantation owners must now pay them for their labor, and most importantly, that all people had the right to work as much or as little as they chose. In fact, per a letter that James Baillie read to the West India Society later that spring, the enslaved Africans,

“mediated a general revolt in which the pretence [sic] of neglect as to food, Clothing &c. – had no share, nor were any of the runaway Negroes concerned, but simply a desire manifested of maintaining what they called their ‘Rights’ by which was understood, an exemption from Work, during four days out of Seven, or an equivalent of two Shillings a day, in case of working on their days.”

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222 Jean Louis Polinaire was also known as Palinurus and Paulinaire.
223 Committee of Correspondence in Dominica, “Extract of a letter from the Committee of Correspondence in Dominica to the agent, W. Knox, Esq.,” (Roseau?, Dominica), Feb. 15, 1791, Eighteenth Century Collections Online.; Richard Gott, Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt (London; New York: Verso, 2011).
Their demands fell on deaf ears in the Assembly Council and on 12 January 1791, the slaves refused to work any longer and lobbied for an increase of three days from the customary day and a half to work for themselves on their private plots. The planters still refused to heed to their demands. In response, the enslaved Africans, led by Jappa and Pharcelle, mounted a coordinated attack at 10pm on 20 January 1791 against all white and free-colored planters who would not aid them in their fight for freedom of labor. The Thirtieth Regiment from Barbados ultimately defeated the uprising, although it was reported that if they had not arrived in time, the rebellion likely would have killed all of the white people on the island with the 500 muskets Pharcelle had hidden in preparation. Polinaire was sentenced to a brutal death, Pharcelle escaped Dominica, and white Creoles tightened their grip on security in the waning years of formal slavery. For example, they began restricting the entry of individuals from the French islands, for fear that they would incite slave rebellion. British planters warned that a “new temper and Ideas” had taken hold of the black population, put into their heads by French runaway slaves trying to muck up trouble for the British.

Between 1789 and 1832, more than twenty rebellions fueled by similar rumours took place in the Caribbean and Latin America. Revolutionary ideas ostensibly from France spread

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227 One wonders if this is the first labor strike of its kind in the Americas. If so, the history of modern revolutions, which includes the French and Haitian Revolutions, ought to incorporate this near overthrow of British rule in Dominica.; New-York Daily Gazette, June 28, 1791.


229 W. von Archenholtz (ed.), “State Papers.: To the Right Honourable Lord Grenville, one of his Majesty’s Principal Secretaries of State; the Memorial of the West-India Planters and Merchants” in The British Mercury, or Annals of History, Politics, Manners, Literature, Arts, etc. of the British Empire vol. 12 (Hamburgh: B.C. Hoffman, 1791), 157.

230 David Patrick Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean” in David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (eds.) A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997). For more on slave revolts in the Caribbean, one should see Michael Craton’s expertly researched Testing the Chains for the most extensive study to date.
quickly throughout the Caribbean, where mid-sized populations of free people of color lived and where free trade had encouraged lines of communication between the islands. The first revolt centered around labor occurred in Martinique in August 1789 when enslaved Africans refused to work and armed themselves with the tools they usually used to cut sugar.\textsuperscript{231} The revolt in Dominica discussed above, known as the New Year’s Day Revolt, coincided with the Port-Salut revolt on 24 January 1791, which was prompted by a Jean-Claude Lateste, a free man of color, and which also spread the rumour that slaves would be given three days to work for themselves.\textsuperscript{232} These rumour-fueled rebellions differed from earlier revolts of similar scales in the Greater Caribbean. Earlier revolts by and large fought for control of land. The New Year’s Day Revolt and those just mentioned contrasted with earlier revolts for how slaves asserted their right to labor within British society.

The New Year’s Day Revolt illustrates the centrality of labor to emancipatory and liberal ideals, a point that I explore in this chapter. Labor constitutes an avenue through which the individual and the state enact influence on one another, and this event in particular signals a shift in conceptions of freedom within the dual context of the abolitionist movement and the French and American Revolutions. This is important for Brunias’s paintings as they, unlike most contemporary paintings of slavery, depict the slaves laboring by what is presumably free enterprise. I argue that labor is the final piece for understanding how Brunias participates in visualizing a liberal empire.


I wrestle in this chapter with four ill-fitting aspects of labor in the context of the late 18th century: (1) slavery is enacted through labor and perpetuated through dehumanization; (2) labor represents a key access point to citizenship and shared nationhood; (3) before the cemented construction of race, labor and dress distinguished people from each other in the popular imaginary; and (4) free labor and wage labor are foundational tenets of liberalism. I seek to understand these incoherencies by looking at Brunias’s market scenes in comparison with other images of enslaved labor. These provide much-needed context in understanding how Brunias’s market scenes are unique and correspond with a shift in thinking about labor that is indicative of the rise in liberal thought.

In this final chapter, I follow sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn’s claim that citizenship and labor have helped create and been informed by race and gender.233 I argue that the parallel projects of biologizing human difference and feminizing landscape in 18th-century thought and visual culture both made room for and denied citizenship for women of color in the Second British Empire (1783–1815). Brunias reflects this shift in empire by using women’s bodies and their labor to channel new liberal world order(s) at the convergence of commercial and sexual interests. Gendered and racialized, Brunias showcases women’s participation in textile commerce as a vital instrument of wealth production for the British Empire as well as for their own accumulation.

Landscapes of Labor

Slave labor on sugar plantations dominates scholarship and the popular imagination of Caribbean slavery. Forced labor, of course, included more than physical labor on sugar, or even

cotton and coffee, plantations. All rural and urban industries in the Caribbean relied on enslaved labor. For example, historian Marisa Fuentes describes how white women and free women of color in Bridgetown, Barbados forced enslaved women of African descent into prostitution and wet nursing.\textsuperscript{234} These employments placed enslaved women within a gendered and racialized system of labor that built oppositional forms of womanhood into respectable white femininity and savage black deviancy.\textsuperscript{235} Per another example, Pierre Jacques Benôt’s engravings of life in Suriname included an illustration of a Jewish tailor selling jewelry to indigenous people while the tailor next door sews and take measurements (figure 44). The cross-legged slaves bent over their work image a form of labor not often seen in the visual culture of the colonial Americas. Further, not only was there great diversity in forced labor, but enslaved Africans were able in some cases to work for themselves, for example, on provision plots and at Sunday markets.

Most supportive images of slavery, however, disguise or warp pictures of labor. For example, art historian John Crowley highlights how artists in the 17th century emphasized the scale and complexity of machines used to produce raw resources in the West Indies. Magnifying the plantation’s technological process rationalized slavery and situated the slave trade squarely in the process of modernization.\textsuperscript{236} We can see this in Sébastien Leclerc’s (1637–1714) engraving of a sugar mill where the enslaved workers appear tiny in comparison to the grandeur of the mill and the flora of the tropics. Leclerc highlights the innovations of the machine by including a key that will explain its complex pieces.

Later in the 18th century, artists like George Robertson painted pictures of luscious forests, fecund plantations, and tiny laboring figures to fold in new land and obscure the enslaved

\textsuperscript{234} Fuentes, Dispossessed Lives, 2016.
men and women who cultivated it. Instead of machinery, landscape took center place. Art historian Tim Barringer writes that painting the violent landscape of Jamaica with the picturesque qualities one would apply to British landscape “den[ied] the truth about slavery,” thereby contributing to a proslavery iconography hesitant to address the system head on. George Robertson’s *Spring Head at Roaring River* (figure 46) illustrates the extent to which proslavery paintings included labor within their lens. Here, a solitary woman’s languid body slouches toward the ground in a fertile forest. Foliage surrounds her, obscuring the atrocities of slavery and centering the land, instead of the labor, in the national imaginary. In this sense, “Slave labour [... was] only thus visible as a ‘picturesque’ vision.” Historian Karen O’Brien suggests that the turn to the picturesque pastoral stems from the inability to reconcile “dignified labor, agricultural didactic, and imperial prospect required by the georgic mode.” The adoption of the pastoral instead of the georgic, O’Brien continues, depicted the colonies as separate from “the metropolitan imagination [because] whatever the depredations of slavery, the real value of the colony was guaranteed by its landscape: the land was both anterior and surplus to forms of labor.”

By the mid-19th century, the iconography of slavery shifted to illustrate well-organized supply chains instead of picturesque exotica. William Clark’s *Ten Views in the Island of Antigua* exemplify this point (figures 47.II–X). In this illustrated book, the industrial machinery and

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240 Ibid, 175-176.
well-organized system dwarfs the men and women undergoing hard labor that we usually associate with sugar cultivation. Though we see them toil in the field and in the factory, the tour through the production process gives the labor a meaningful ending. Clark places the bodies of the enslaved in labor with white people who complete the cycle of labor. In these images of the sugar production chain, labor is embedded within a well-organized hierarchy grounded in the land bringing people of African descent and territory into the nation.

The shifts in images of labor touched upon briefly above have to do with developments in race theory and natural history, which I will discuss in the coming sections. Mary Louise Pratt writes, “natural history set in motion a secular, global labor that, among other things, made contact zones a site of intellectual as well as manual labor, and installed there the distinction between the two.” Pratt points out here how colonial agents reformed the relationship between the enterprise of science and labor in the contact zones of the world. We can see this in an engraving for *Traité general du commerce de l’Amérique* (1783) (figure 49). On the top, enslaved Africans pick, sort, spin, and store cotton in preparation to pack the material on the boats in the harbor. On the bottom, we see a cotton plant at various stages in its life. The intellectual labor on the bottom, paired with the physical labor on the top, produces partnerships to increase wealth.

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241 A counterexample to this narrative is José Campeché’s brilliant portrait of Don Miguel Antonio de Ustariz, governor of Puerto Rico (figure 48). Campeché draws a direct link between the architectural plan of San Juan on the table and the physical slave labor that gives material weight to the lines on paper. To Ustariz’s right, a dark and stormy landscape parallels the shape of the island to his left. If we read this image from left to right, it suggests the apocalyptic downfall of the island. This portrait deserves much more research for how it celebrates the governor’s use of slave labor to build San Juan.

242 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 27.
Race in the 18th century

In each of the market scenes, Brunias pays nearly as much attention to skin tone as he does textiles. Scattered throughout the *Linen Market, Dominica* (figure 4), women of shades ranging from deep browns to peachy whites go about their business in the market. People of lighter skin tend to be grouped in the foreground, but for the most part, people of various skin tones can be seen throughout the painting. *A Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller* (figure 2) showcase slightly less variety in skin tone, favoring people with darker skin, however, Brunias continues to depict a social and racial mixing with the inclusion of mulâtres buying and selling wares, as well as the soldiers on the right. We again see the same mixing in *Market Day, Roseau, Dominica* and *Linen Market, Santo Domingo*.

Scholars often compare Brunias’s attention to skin color to *casta* paintings of the Spanish colonies, particularly Mexico, by suggesting he either depicts a similarly rigid racial structure or that he smudges the boundaries of race.\(^{243}\) Often confused with portraiture, these images represent types of individuals rather than specific individuals.\(^{244}\) *Casta* painting visualizes the creation of sixteen distinct racial or pigmented groups between Africans, Europeans, and Indigenous peoples, privileging the mixing of “pure” over “mixed” blood. Racial difference is something seen, through gradations of skin color, accompanying physiognomy, and dress, as well as something experienced, through labor and temperament. Sixteen panels of highly detailed parent and child groupings move from light skin and “pure” blood, to darker skin and


\(^{244}\) Gates, *Image of the Black in Western Art*, 252.
mixed blood (figure 50). Note, the panels do not refer to white people generally, but the Spanish specifically, and, there is the possibility to “become Spanish again” after mixing. The casta paintings therefore do not intend to construct a larger racial order, but instead, a pigmented hierarchy based on national origin specific to the Spanish context that is represented through the domestic.

Indeed, the production of “race” as it was understood within 18th-century thought was deeply contested and adopted in different places, at different times, using different terminology. Even for contemporary viewers of Brunias’s paintings, Britons in the metropole and those in the colonies would have understood race in very different ways. For example, white British Creoles began to discuss race in hereditary, biological terms because metropolitans believed that the environment of the Torrid Zone could effectively alter one’s race. In that, while “the West Indies was central to the development of ‘scientific’ and popular ideas of race” between 1790–1806, as art historian Kay Dian Kriz argues, white anxieties were a a significant cause of this shift. To revise Pratt, then, not only did the production of natural history in contact zones throw into relief different modes of labor, but also contact zones produced new definitions of racialized human difference that privileged whiteness in emerging scientific disciplines.

Categorization of character, climate, and humor prevailed as determinants for human variety previous to and alongside new definitions of race in the 18th century. Historian Roxann Wheeler argues that culture, described through climatic theory and four-stages theory, were more

See how the third panel, or, “Castizo con Española sale Español” allows for those with indigenous heritage to essentially become Spanish, or, white again. “Castizo” refers to the offspring of a mestizo and a Spaniard.

For a discussion on how whiteness was constituted throughout the different colonies, see Deirdre Coleman, "Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire," Eighteenth-Century Studies 36, no. 2 (2003): 169-93.

important markers of human difference than physiognomy. Climatic theory described the influence of the environment on one’s character, culture, and appearance, and four-stages theory used socioeconomic factors to place people on a scale from “primitive” to “commercial”.

Wheeler points to the decade between 1770 and 1780 as the period in which human difference came to be more associated with skin color and physiognomy rather than character and lifestyle from four-stages theory. Brunias’s painted the market scenes right at this time when human difference moved from flexible definitions of character to fixed and visual embodiments of race.

As art historian David Bindman notes, this was also the decade that began to see successes in the anti-slavery movement. Bindman points out that taxonomic racializing projects and abolition went hand in hand.²⁴⁸ He argues that aesthetics factored heavily into newly forming methodologies devoted to organizing human difference within the sciences, and in fact, that the human form was central to the creation of aesthetics as a body of thought. Notions of beauty in the 18th century could be extended to whole peoples, and thus, “[t]he ability to make aesthetic judgments could in itself be a way of dividing the ‘civilized’ from the ‘savage’.”²⁴⁹ François Bernier’s initial article on racial divisions makes this very connection between race as biological and aesthetics when he writes, “It [beauty] does not result, therefore, only from water, food, land and air, but also from the nature of semen which must vary with specific races and types.”²⁵⁰

The first instance of race as a term to describe human difference comes from an anonymous article submitted to the well-regarded science periodical, Journal des Sçavants in 1684. Later attributed to François Bernier, “The Division of the Earth According to the Different

²⁴⁸ David Bindman, Ape to Apollo (London: Reaktion Books, Limited, 2002).
²⁴⁹ Ibid, 12.
Types or Races of Men who Inhabit it”, poses to readers the possibility of organizing the globe along “four or five Types of Species or Race” instead of by country or region. Bernier groups Western Europe, North Africa, India, areas of the Middle East, and Indigenous peoples of the Americas into one category; all of Africa except for the coastal areas in another; East, Southeast and Central Asia in one; and finally, the Sami belong to their own group. The article was widely read, though not quite picked up as a framework until the first quarter of the 18th century because of prevailing definitions of human variety based on character, climate, and humors. Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus claimed in the 1758 edition of Systema Naturae, one could classify humanity based on the Four Quarters of the Earth and the Temperaments associated with each. As Pratt writes, though these systems differed, they all contributed to a universalizing discourse of classification that came into being during the second half of the 18th century. By the time Immanuel Kant wrote what would become his essay “Of the Different Human Races” in 1775, race as a biological basis for division had gained traction in Enlightenment thought.

Liberalism and Race Theory on the Backdrop of Abolitionism

For scenes loaded with expressions of freedom and joy, from the men engaged in a cudgling match in Market Day, Roseau, Dominica to the toddler playing the drums atop a bassinet in A Linen Market with a Linen-stall and Vegetable Seller, one might wonder why British planters and government officials dependent on the obstruction of freedom might find such images appealing. The enslaved and colored populations of Dominica dwarfed that of the white British population, and, even before Toussaint Louverture’s rebellion in Haiti in 1791,

252 David Bindman, Ape to Apollo, 2000.
there was a marked fear of uprising.\textsuperscript{254} The very fact of the market was well-built into West Indian culture as respite from forced labor; while the white bourgeois plantocratic class attended church on Sundays, enslaved Africans and free persons of color would gather at markets, sometimes five or ten miles from their plantation, to engage in a carnivalesque encounter masked by commerce and material accumulation.

Whether Brunias supported abolition or not cannot be discerned from his paintings; the inclusion of contested themes and icons as well as incorporation of pro-slavery narratives complicate any one reading. While we cannot say definitively what Brunias’s intent was, we can analyze how viewers have interpreted and used his paintings since their creation. One anonymous “friend to the West India colonies and their inhabitants”, believed to be planter James Tobin, writing in 1785 urges the reader of his pro-slavery text to consult Brunias work as evidence that planters took care of West Indian slaves; “Let him compare these plump, active, and merry figures, with the emaciated, squalid, and heart-broken inhabitants of the distant English villages.”\textsuperscript{255} That Brunias made these drawings “himself on the spot” serves to reaffirm the veracity of his viewpoint. Because abolitionists argued that slaves could not be both industrious and property owners under slavery, Brunias’s paintings provided clear evidence of the contrary. The relationship between Brunias’s paintings, Sunday markets, industry, and proslavery thinking, is made all the more clear a few pages later when Tobin claims that, “it would be very natural to conclude, that the generality of planters oblige their slaves to work as regularly on the sabbath, as on the other days of the week.-- The real fact, however, is as follows: Sunday has ever been looked

\textsuperscript{254} Ibid, 166.
\textsuperscript{255} James Tobin (?), \textit{Cursory remarks upon the Reverend Mr. Ramsay’s essay on the treatment and conversion of African slaves in the sugar colonies by a friend to the West India colonies and their inhabitants} (London; Salisbury; Bristol: G. and T. Wilkie; E. Easton; J.B. Becket, 1785), 98.
upon by the negroes, and acknowledged by their masters, to be their own day: this time they, therefore, dispose of entirely as they think proper, and according to their different tempers and inclinations. Some plant, and work for themselves; some labour for their richer comrades; some visit; some go to market; others dance and make merry; and a few, chiefly of the tradesmen, mechanics, or wall-builders, hire themselves to do occasional jobs on neighbouring plantations, where such useful hands are scarce.”

Note how four of the seven examples of activities the anonymous writer lists involve some kind of labor. The application of liberal ideals to slavery may seem incoherent at first glance. And yet, as the quote listed above expresses, apologists quickly yoked ideals of liberty to the institution of slavery. The anonymous writer poses to his readers the question: if slavery is truly so horrible and unfree, then why do planters allow slaves free time instead of constant work? Sundays, and I argue, Sunday markets in particular, become the very linchpin in maintaining racialized slavery within a developing liberal society.

Brunias’s market scenes are exceptional for how they visualize free labor within the context of slavery. Unlike the images of labor I discussed earlier, where the colonial agents obscure the work of enslaved men and women by focusing on technology, land, and nation, Brunias places free labor front and center. Working for oneself was a key component of liberal thought because of the emphasis placed on individual freedoms. In the following quotation, Scottish philosopher John Millar (1735–1801) encapsulates a liberal perspective on abolition when discussing the pitfalls of slavery:

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256 Ibid., 100-101.
257 I use the term free labor to describe the ability to choose where and for how long one works.
“men will commonly exert more activity when they work for their own benefit, than when they are compelled to labour for the benefit merely of another. The introduction of personal liberty has therefore an infallible tendency to render the inhabitants of a country more industrious; and, by producing greater plenty of provisions, must necessarily increase the populousness, as well as the strength and security of a nation.”

Millar here suggests that free labor, not slavery, will augment the wealth of the nation. Note, however, how both Tobin and Millar touch upon the importance of free labor to argue either side. Millar also implicitly subsumes all enslaved or formerly enslaved people of African descent into the nation; indeed, the only thing worse than slavery to the nation’s prosperity would be the loss of these workers all together. I contend that the obsession with marketing in West Indian literature, and, to an extent, its imperial visual culture, was a way of circumventing such inharmonious forms of labor as forced agricultural work with a belief in liberalism. Crucially, eliding images of labor also served to exclude enslaved Africans from the nation. One can gain access to citizenship through working in tandem with a complex web of workers for the imagined community. British artists began depicting sugar plantations as picturesque during the same decade that understandings of human difference were most in flux.

Furthermore, the variation in skin tone, dress, and the inclusion of Black Caribes gathered at these sites of economic freedom and prosperity suggest that Brunias’s vision of empire (or at

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259 Benedict Anderson’s influential *Imagined Communities* coined this term to describe how the development of print resources connected disparate people of the nation to form an image of shared community in their mind’s eye. I use the term here to suggest, as others have before me, that many more objects than print material can connect a people in this way. Manufactured objects, imbued with the labor of disparate people globally and locally, symbolize the nation and attendant citizenships; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1983).

least, one he or his patrons see as profitable) succeeds through and is created by diversity. This, of course, is intimately sexual. Postcolonial scholar Robert Young suggests as much when he writes:

“the debates about theories of race in the nineteenth century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focused explicitly on the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire.”

Young talks about the 19th century, but even in the 18th century, thinkers often spoke in the same breath about racial difference and sexual reproduction. The idea of a human species required that all members could successfully reproduce with one another. Edward Long, the author of the infamously racist *History of Jamaica* describes a polygenist conception of species. Polygenism describes the belief that races constitutes different species, rather than belonging to one single species of human. He writes:

“Some few of them [Mulattos] have intermarried here with those of their own complexion: but such matches have generally been defective and barren. They seem in this respect to be actually of the mule-kind, and not so capable of producing from one another as from a commerce with a distinct White or Black. Monsieur Buffon observes, that it is nothing strange that two individuals should not be able to propagate their species, because nothing more is required than some slight opposition in their temperaments, or some accidental fault in the genital organs of either of these two individuals: nor is it surprising, that two individuals, of if different species, should produce other individuals, which, being unlike either

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of their progenitors bear no resemblance to any thing fixed, and consequently cannot produce any thing resembling themselves.”

Unlike French and Spanish colonies, the British by and large did not criminalize miscegenation. Only one Antiguan law from the 17th to the 18th centuries is recorded on the books; however, it is unclear whether Antigua enforced their anti-miscegenation law. The woman’s barrenness, Long goes on to argue, is evidence for a polygenist viewpoint and also denies her womanhood. However, these were not fixed terms elsewhere in the Empire and in the world, and white Creoles continued to experience great anxiety over the possibility of darkening to another race in the Torrid Zone. White women, for example, used caustic cashew nut products in order to whiten or “flay” their skin, despite the great pain that it caused.

Beyond such obviously sexual imagery as bare breasts and exposed shoulders, Brunias expresses the available sexuality of the women through an explicit exotification. Mimi Sheller quotes Barbadian planter Richard Ligon’s advice to readers in her book Consuming the Caribbean, “[if one] loves the pleasures of Europe, (or particularly of England) and the great varieties of those, let him never come there [to Barbados]; for they are things he shall be sure to miss. But, if he can find in himself a willingness, to change the pleasures which he enjoyed in a Temperate, for such as he shall find in a Torrid Zone, he may light upon some that will give him an exchange, with some advantage.” Sheller writes, “Orienting oneself advantageously in the Tropics is in the first instance a matter of bodily sensation, and Ligon’s thoughts dwell on the sensuous body and its pleasures.”

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264 Coleman, “Janet Schaw and the Complexions of Empire,” 171.
266 Ibid, 113.
the islands, as they feared that the light skin of mulatto women and their sexual deviancy would trick the men into falling prey to their advances. Hassal/Sansay recounts the West Indian white woman’s displeasure with the desirability of the mulâtresse, so extreme as to compel these women to complain to the Superior Council of Le Cap. In an attempt to end “their influence over the men, and the fortunes lavished on them by their infatuated lovers,” or, more fundamentally, to quell the white woman’s anxieties, the council decreed that, “no woman of color was to wear silk, nor to appear in public without a handkerchief on her head.” Legislators in the Caribbean and North America responded to these worries by instating so-called tignon laws, where women of color were required to cover their hair with turbans and handkerchiefs.

Though already well-established within slave society due to its origins in West African aesthetics, its institutionalization brought an air of the exotic to the tignon for white men. Brunias himself depicts nineteen different styles of wearing the tignon in Linen Market, Dominica. In these works, Brunias uses the tignon as a way of making explicit the understanding that these are both colored women and women willing to give into sexual advances. These tignons also could signal those pseudo-Turkish turbans desired in Europe in the 1770s and 1780s, thus oscillating between an othering predicated on presumed primitivity and on presumed respectability and wealth.

Brunias positions the female body as vital instrument in building the manpower behind industrial production. Dotting each canvas, five small children, from an infant to girls about eleven, engage in various activities in the marketplace. In Market Day, Roseau, Dominica, a chubby and naked infant suckles their mother’s breast amidst the clamor of the marketplace. The

267 Ibid.
child’s healthy size and strong muscles as they sit upright in their mother’s lap suggest a continuation of a British empire supported by enslaved labor. Such a sentiment is echoed in the treatment of women who successfully brought newborns to childhood. The continuation of property was crucial to planters and they often gifted textiles to the enslaved women who reproduced the labor force of the plantation. Bryan Edwards notes in *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies,* his part narrative, part ethnography of the West Indies that upon hearing of, “an increase of thirteen children”, he ordered, “five yards of fine printed cotton to every woman who had reared a child.” William Young too notes in his travel narrative that women who had reared children would receive, “five yards of fine cotton… of the gayest pattern, to make a pretty petticoat.” Lady Nugent relays that a certain Mr. C., a planter on Jamaica, “gave two dollars to every woman who produced a healthy child.” These acts precede the pro-natalist Slave Law of 1792 in Jamaica, for example, which promised benefits to estates and enslaved women who showed an increase in slave population.

Enslaved women in the West Indies were also often gifted textiles through forced and unforced sexual favors. Planter Thomas Thistlewood writes in his journal that he exchanged osnaburg, striped holland, and a handkerchief to Phibbah, his well-known enslaved mistress in exchange for sex. As is clear from Thistlewood’s journal, Phibbah had significant control over Thistlewood and his dealings. This practice was well-known enough to make it into a song of the time, “Me Know No Law, Me Know No Sin,” taken down in J.B. Moreton’s *West India Customs and Manners;* “My massa keep me once, for true,/ And gave me clothes, wid busses;”

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270 Of note, Brunias’s engravings were chosen to illustrate this volume.
271 Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies,* 278.
272 Tobin, “Taxonomy and Agency in Brunias’s West Indian Paintings,” 151.
275 I want to be clear that in all cases, these sexual favors represent assault due to power imbalances. However, I also recognize that some women may use their bodies to increase their chances of survival.
fine muslin coats, wid bitty too./ To gain my sweet embraces.”

The song’s narrator goes on to say that when she gives birth to a black child, the master abuses her and “tear[s] the coat from off [her] back,” but when she births a white child, the master’s wife takes the switch to her. The ability to own property, and property that held high economic and symbolic value empowered enslaved women. Therefore, when the Jamaican planter, Reverend G.W. Bridges, sought to abuse Kitty Hylton, a slave on his plantation, he not only beat her, but burned two of her dresses.

Much of the wealth that enslaved persons could accumulate was based on marketplace culture, where those of African descent could sell small fruits and vegetables and textiles. Vending, unlike hard labor, possessed the potential for “freedom and social mobility”. These works, therefore, represent, “slave wealth in the form of expensive clothing and jewelry and the representations of commerce, particularly Africans and African Caribbeans engaged in economic exchange.”

Women in particular were well-positioned to accrue wealth through gifts that they could then sell in the market. Further, if a child was born of these relations and fathered by the master, the women and their children were often granted manumission. The textiles in this works imply both the development of women capital but also possibilities of freedom.

On the one hand, Brunias likely painted women attending the Sunday market because men had difficulty receiving passes to leave the plantation. As such (and as in many communities in West Africa), women managed the sale of surplus produce. On the other hand, representations of women hold particular valence for representing potential for

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276 D’costa, Voices in Exile, 13.
277 Kitty brought Reverend G.W. Bridges to court in 1828; Aljoe, Creole Testimonies, 84.
reproduction. By placing women within the market alongside various commodities, Brunias performs “thingification”, reducing them to instruments of production, which decolonial thinker Aimé Césaire argues is at the center of colonization. Brunias showcases two forms of labor in these images (reproductive and entrepreneurial). The combination of these two forms of labor, partnered with attention to skin tone, suggest two points of entryway into British citizenship. In this space of exclusion from the nation, those of African descent form new cosmopolitan and communal partnerships external to the traditional empire-nation.

Brunias painted the four market scenes during a particularly volatile period in (re)imagining British hegemony and the loci of its influence. I argue that his images both contested and fit within the new imaginings of nation for this reason. Brunias commodifies the women as sexually available, so that each image becomes less of autonomous person engaged in commerce, but instead, a visual feast of sensual bodies and fabrics for consumption. At the same time, Brunias’s paintings of free woman enterprise are significant because they are not about depicting happy throngs of free and enslaved women, content with their position in the colonial plantocracy (though it may seem this way to some white viewers); they are about how the women vendors, arms outstretched offering the finest muslin to their patrons, enact their agency and humanity within the local market through their labor and signal their participation in the international manufacturing industry. In these paintings, the freedom of the Sunday market and the freedom of entrepreneurship are all declarations of citizenship within a liberal order predicated on the very lack of freedom and citizenship extended to enslaved men and women in the British Empire.

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Conclusion

“The tragedy of colonial enlightenment […] is not to be perceived in terms of a flaw to be erased or overcome, but rather in terms of a permanent legacy that has set the conditions in which we make of ourselves what we make and which demands constant renegotiation and readjustment.”

In this thesis, I placed Agostino Brunias’s market scenes in conversation with the development of slavery and its positioning alongside and within mercantile economies and burgeoning liberal thought. I argued that these paintings depict a number of contradictory visions of empire that reflect the complexities of 18th-century British imperial epistemologies of race, gender, and nation. Through a loose focus on textiles, I highlighted the importance of Dominica to the production of these paintings and how textiles may help us unravel some of the challenges of approaching these unique paintings. I finally staked the claim that, though these paintings give form to various images of empire based on one’s positioning, any one reading ultimately defers to another.

These images look very different depending on the viewer. To the absentee planter, the commodification and sexualization of women lend the paintings an air of tempered enterprise within the boundaries of benevolent slavery. For the creole overseer or abolitionist, the paintings resist laws restricting the enterprise of enslaved Africans and support the development of personal property outside the boundaries of slavery. And, as it turns out, to the scholars of yesterday and today, they look like illustrations of the colonial Caribbean.

Throughout my research, I found that almost every book I consulted on the colonial Caribbean either used Brunias’s paintings to illustrate life in the Caribbean or put his images on the cover of their book. I have also even seen his images used in viral videos to visualize slavery

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282 Scott, Conscripts of Modernity, 21.
in the context of Northern colonies. This is similar to their use in Bryan Edwards’s *The history, civil and commercial, of the British colonies in the West Indies* and Moreau de Saint-Méry’s *Recueil de vues des lieux principaux de la colonie françoise de Saint-Domingue* (1791). At the same time, his images, by way of Louverture’s buttons (figure 6) have been used to promote the independence of black nations in the Caribbean. Their ambivalent meanings leave room for autonomy and resistance in the face of British colonialism. By visualizing people of African descent, of various skin tones and classes, Brunias painted some of the first images of an organized Afro-Caribbean society.

As I hope to have shown, these images very much mediate a particular vision of empire depending on the way we look at them. It is important, then, to think about how the way we use these images can replicate the violences and trauma of slavery and colonialism. To quote feminist theorist Donna Haraway quoting anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, “‘it matters what ideas one uses to think other ideas (with)’ [...] It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.”283 That is, the way we conceive of and reproduce history matters. Unless we take great pains to envision and construct new ways of thinking, we will merely replicate past historiographic violence.

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