

THE COMMON WIND

Afro-American Currents in the
Age of the Haitian Revolution

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Foreword by Marcus Rediker



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1.

"Pandora's Box"

The Masterless Caribbean at the End of the Eighteenth Century

Late in the seventeenth century, the European colonizing nations briefly put aside their differences and began a concerted effort to rid the Caribbean of the buccaneers, pirates, and other fugitives who had taken refuge in the region. This move to dislodge the "masterless" people of the West Indies signaled the transformation of the islands from havens for freebooters and renegades into settler colonies based on plantations and slave labor. The same offensive that had given large planters the upper hand in Barbados in the 1670s had gained irreversible momentum throughout the Caribbean by the middle decades of the eighteenth century. The steady rise in sugar prices on the world market after about 1740 favored the expansion of plantation monoculture into areas where cattle and pigs had grazed, and where hide hunters, logwood cutters, runaway slaves, and other Caribbean dissidents had found shelter.

Barely a half century after an earthquake in 1692 destroyed Port Royal, Jamaica, a longstanding outpost for pirates from all over the region, the Caribbean had already become a vastly different place from what it had been during the heyday of the buccaneers. Not only had their old haunts disappeared; older images of "enchanted" islands liberated from the hierarchies of the Old World were difficult to sustain as plantations hungrily gobbled up what was once frontier land. As planters gained control over the land, so they tightened their control of labor. The trade in African slaves steadily increased as the

century progressed, and the common scene of slave ships unloading their human cargoes turned on its head in the most graphic of ways earlier dreams of a "masterless" existence. By century's end, the fluid pre-plantation economy and society had long since given way to an ominous landscape of imperial soldiers and warships, plantations and sugar mills, masters and slaves.¹

Even during such a period of advance and consolidation, however, planters and merchants encountered pockets of resistance to their drive for absolute authority. In fact, employers on both sides of the Atlantic, though flushed with economic prosperity, still worried about the many ways which individuals and groups found to protect and extend masterless existences. In both the Old World and the New, these concerns centered upon the persistent problem of the "seething mobility" of substantial sectors of the laboring classes. In eighteenth-century England, according to E. P. Thompson, masters of labor complained about bothersome aspects of the developing "free" labor market—about "the indiscipline of working people, their lack of economic dependency and their social insubordination"—which resulted from labor's mobility.² Planters echoed similar concerns in the Caribbean region, where buccaneers and pirates, the old scourges of the planters and traders, had been effectively suppressed, but where a colorful assortment of saucy and insubordinate characters continued to move about and resist authority. Masters and employers in industrializing Old World economies based on "free" labor felt only mildly threatened by such mobility. In the plantation-based societies of the Caribbean, however, where the unfreedom of the vast majority of the labor force was written into law and sanctioned by force

1 For descriptions of this transformation, see Clarence H. Haring, *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century* (London, 1910), pp. 200–31; Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 14–20; and Christopher Hill, "Radical Pirates?" in Margaret Jacob and James Jacob, eds., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London, Boston, and Sydney, 1984), pp. 20–8. Hill describes vividly the role of "masterless men" in England in the mid-seventeenth century in *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1972), pp. 32–45.

2 E. P. Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7 (Summer 1974), p. 383.

and where "free" workers were the anomaly rather than the rule, the persistence of labor mobility called forth an anguished response from the ruling class. For the same reasons, the prospect of a masterless, mobile existence outside the plantation orbit held an especially seductive appeal for disenchanting people casting about for new options. In England, masters begrudged a certain amount of uncontrolled movement among their workers. In the Caribbean, masters resorted to a profusion of local laws and international treaties to keep this mobility within the narrowest of possible limits.

Though the planters' efforts to curtail freedom over the course of the eighteenth century placed severe restrictions on mobility, these measures never succeeded completely in keeping people from pursuing alternatives to life under the plantation system. At the close of the eighteenth century, as at its beginning, people of many descriptions defied the odds and attempted to escape their masters. Slaves deserted plantations in large numbers; urban workers ducked their owners; seamen jumped ship to avoid floggings and the press gang; militiamen and regular troops grumbled, ignored orders, and deserted their watch; "higglers" left workplaces to peddle their wares in the black market; and smugglers and shady foreigners moved about on mysterious missions from island to island. Furthermore, the very commercial growth which planters and merchants welcomed opened new avenues of mobility. Cities grew and matured, attracting runaway slaves and sheltering a teeming underground with surprising regional connections. Expanding commercial links sanctioned the comings and goings of ships of all sizes and nations. Island ports required pilot boats with experienced navigators to guide the incoming merchantmen to safe anchorages, and they needed a network of coastal vessels and skilled sailors to support their busy markets. This web of commerce brought the region's islands into closer and closer contact as the century progressed, providing channels of communication as well as tempting routes of escape.

On the eve of Caribbean revolution, most English, French, and Spanish planters and traders in the region rode the crest of a long wave of prosperity. Nevertheless, they continued to grope, much as they had at the end of the last century, for common solutions to the problem of

controlling runaways, deserters, and vagabonds in the region. As long as masterless men and women found ways to move about and evade the authorities, they reasoned, these people embodied submerged traditions of popular resistance which could burst into the open at any time. Examining the rich world which these mobile fugitives inhabited—the complex (and largely invisible) underground which the “mariners, renegades, and castaways” of the Caribbean created to protect themselves in the face of planter consolidation—is crucial to understanding how news, ideas, and social excitement traveled in the electric political environment of the late eighteenth century.³

All of the West Indies felt the effects of the sugar boom of the mid-eighteenth century, particularly the Greater Antilles—Jamaica, Cuba, and Hispaniola, the larger islands of the northwestern Caribbean. In the century after 1670, though at different speeds and by different historical processes, the expansion of sugar cultivation transformed these three islands from sparsely populated frontier outposts to plantation societies based on captive African labor.

British growth centered in Jamaica. After 1740 the planter class had managed to contain the intense factionalism and black rebelliousness of the previous decade enough to attract white settlers, drawn in large part from the stagnating islands to the east. They began to clear and cultivate new lands in the north and west of the island, and to purchase hundreds of thousands of Africans to work the new plantations. By 1766, Jamaica had bolted well past the other British possessions in the West Indies in its importance both as a commercial entrepôt and as a staple-producing economy. Some 200,000 people, half the population of Britain's sugar colonies, resided there, and its busy ports controlled half the British trade in the region. Despite setbacks encountered during the period of the American Revolution, the rapid extension of sugar monoculture in Jamaica continued through the 1780s.⁴

³ The phrase is borrowed from C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (New York, 1951).

⁴ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623–1775* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 216–23; Frances Armytage, *The Free Port System in the British West Indies: A Study in Commercial Policy, 1766–1822*

As sugar came to dominate the economy of Jamaica, the demographic balance between black and white Jamaicans shifted decisively in favor of the African population. Slave imports into the island rose steadily throughout the eighteenth century, surpassing 120,000 for the twenty-year period between 1741 and 1760, totaling nearly 150,000 in the subsequent two decades, and increasing at an even faster rate after 1781. As early as 1730, nine of every ten Jamaicans were black slaves, and by the eve of the American Revolution almost ninety-four percent of the population of the island was of African ancestry.⁵

Cuba's move toward massive investment in the sugar industry, as well as its demographic absorption into Afro-America, occurred both later and more abruptly than in Jamaica. Crucial to the expansion of sugar in this Spanish colony was the British occupation of Havana in 1762. Over a period of eleven months, the British introduced some 10,000 slaves into the island, breathing life into the sugar industry which Cuban planters sustained after the British departure. The Cuban share in the African slave trade, while still miniscule relative to its more thoroughly developed neighbors, increased markedly after 1763. Almost 31,000 Africans were imported between 1763 and 1789, and by 1792 data from the island's second official census revealed that the white population of Cuba had slipped below the numbers of non-whites for the first time in the history of the island.⁶

(London, New York, and Toronto, 1953), p. 4; George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729–1783* (London, 1965), pp. 33–197; Robert V. Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data* (Princeton, 1975), p. 196.

⁵ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), p. 155; Wells, *Population of the British Colonies*, p. 196.

⁶ Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba 1760–1860*, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York and London, 1976), pp. 15–30; Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean: An Economic History of Cuban Agriculture* (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 44–50; Hubert H. S. Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511 to 1868* (New York and London, 1907), p. 269; Nicolas Sánchez-Albornoz, *The Population of Latin America: A History*, trans. W. A. S. Richardson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1974), pp. 139–40.

But nowhere was society transformed more quickly or completely than in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. The progress of sugar in Jamaica and Cuba paled next to the economic explosion in this mountainous strip of land comprising the western third of the island of Hispaniola. Even as French fortunes waxed and finally waned in the intense imperial competition leading up to the Seven Years' War, the sudden emergence of Saint-Domingue was astonishing. Still a buccaneering outpost upon its cession to France in 1697, by 1739 Saint-Domingue was the world's richest and most profitable slave colony. Already the number of sugar mills had reached 450, up from just thirty-five at the turn of the century, and there were more enslaved Africans—over 117,000—working in Saint-Domingue than in Jamaica or in any other Caribbean island. Three years later Saint-Domingue produced more sugar than all the British sugar islands combined. During the American Revolution, French planters took advantage of famine and economic dislocation in the British territories to carve out an even bigger slice of the world sugar market. The increased volume of the slave trade to Saint-Domingue reflects the new boom of the 1770s. In 1771, traders brought slightly more than 10,000 new Africans to Saint-Domingue; five years later, the number had more than doubled. The expansion of the French colony continued through the 1780s. In the ten years preceding the French Revolution, Saint-Domingue's booming economy was primarily responsible for tripling the volume of the French slave trade over the previous decade, and official figures showed annual African imports to rival consistently the size of the colony's entire white population year after year, reaching a dizzying total of 30,000 at least as early as 1785. By 1789, Saint-Domingue was the world's largest producer of sugar and coffee; its plantations produced twice as much as all other French colonies combined; and French ships entering and leaving its ports accounted for more than a third of the metropole's foreign trade.⁷

7 For economic expansion, see Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire before the American Revolution*, 15 vols. (New York, 1966–70), II, 252n.; Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, 2 vols. (London, 1949–50), I, pp. 239–240; and C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York, 1963), pp. 45–6. For figures on population and the slave

While the decisive economic expansion after 1700 sounded the death knell, both in image and reality, of the masterless Caribbean of an earlier time, it also produced new strata of disaffected individuals who continued to strive to place themselves outside the plantation orbit and survive. In addition, forms of resistance already endemic to the region continued to thrive and spread. The practice of Africans fleeing their enslavers, for example, was already a tradition of long standing at the turn of the eighteenth century. As sugar production expanded and regional demography tilted dramatically in favor of Africans, the problem of controlling runaway slaves became one of the paramount concerns of Caribbean planters, colonial officials, and other whites. Workers fleeing plantations and attempting to set up communities of their own provided both concrete alternatives to the plantation regime and a powerful metaphor informing other forms of mobility and resistance in the region.

Africans in Jamaica achieved notable success in their efforts to become independent. The rugged "cockpit country" in the northwest of the island and the Blue Mountains in the east harbored refugees from slavery from the earliest years of Spanish control; these groups of outlying runaway slaves constituted the region's first "maroons." As slave imports soared after 1700, Africans followed the well-worn paths of their forebears, leaving plantations for expanding maroon communities in the parishes of Trelawny, St. James, St. Elizabeth, and St. George. As these communities grew, so did their contacts with the plantations, for maroons and slaves carried on a clandestine trade in ammunition and provisions, and maroons staged periodic raids. During the 1730s, a period of slave unrest throughout the Caribbean, the related problems of slave desertion and the hostile activities of communities

trade, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London, 1969), pp. 78–9; Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'Ancien régime: l'évolution du régime de l'Exclusif de 1763 à 1789*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1972), II, pp. 759–60; Charles Bréard, *Notes sur Saint-Domingue, tirées des papiers d'un armateur du Havre. 1780–1802* (Rouen, 1893), p. 4; Perry Viles, "The Slaving Interest in the Atlantic Ports, 1763–1792," *French Historical Studies* 7 (Fall 1972), p. 530; *Mémoire envoyé le 18 juin 1790, au Comité des Rapports de l'Assemblée Nationale, par M. de la Luzerne* (Paris, 1790), p. 70, in the collection entitled *Révolutions de Saint-Domingue*, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University (hereinafter RSD).

of runaways became particularly acute, driving the planter class into open warfare with the maroons. A decade of conflict finally forced the government to recognize by treaty the semi-independent status of several maroon towns in 1739. By these treaties, the British government agreed to allow these maroon towns to exist under limited self-government, but at the same time enlisted their aid in policing the island. In return for official recognition, the maroons promised to discourage, apprehend, and return future runaways. Designed to drive a wedge between the maroon towns and nearby plantations, laws passed in the aftermath of the rebellion threatened maroons guilty of "inveigling slaves" from plantations or "harbouring runaways" with banishment from the island.⁸

Not surprisingly, conflict and ambiguity complicated the history of this arrangement between the planter class and the maroons in the half century after 1740. On occasion, residents of the maroon towns faithfully outfitted parties to track down runaways in their areas, and the accounts brought back to the estates by recaptured runaways produced a marked animosity in the slave huts.⁹ Such examples of loyalty led Governor Adam Williamson to assert hopefully in 1793 that "the Maroons are well affected, and would exert themselves either in the defence of the Island or quelling internal Insurrections."¹⁰ The planters themselves, however, apprehended danger in the care-free mobility of ostensible black allies, and their concerns surfaced time and again. They observed that the laws restricting the movements of the maroons were indifferently enforced, and they watched

8 R. C. Dallas, *The History of the Maroons, from their Origin to the Establishment of their Chief Tribe at Sierra Leone*, 2 vols. (London, 1803), I, pp. 22-97; Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700-1763* (New Haven, 1917), pp. 113-18. For a general treatment of rebelliousness in the British Caribbean in this period, see David Barry Gaspar, "A Dangerous Spirit of Liberty: Slave Rebellion in the West Indies during the 1730s," *Cimarrons* 1 (1981), pp. 79-91.

9 See, for example, the harsh treatment suffered by one recaptured runaway described in Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development, and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (Rutherford, Madison, and Teaneck, N.J., 1967), p. 263.

10 Adam Williamson to Henry Dundas, 9 March 1793, Colonial Office Records, Public Record Office, London, class 137/ volume 91 (hereinafter C.O. class/vol., PRO).

as the maroons wandered about with ease in the towns and through the countryside, where they had extensive contact with plantation slaves. The men of Trelawny Town, the largest of the maroon settlements, fathered "numerous Children by Female Slaves, residing on the Low Plantations" of the surrounding parishes, and, concluded a 1795 report, "the Nature of their Connections was alarming." When the Trelawny maroons took up arms against the government that same year, officials moved quickly to isolate the rebels by cutting off such communication, fully expecting their "Search for concealed Arms in all the Negroe Huts over the Island" to uncover and foil their networks.¹¹

Finally, critics of the government's treaties pointed out, the agreement with the maroons hardly deterred groups of new runaways from seeking even greater independence and taking to the woods and mountains to establish towns of their own. Well known from estate to estate, the daring exploits of leaders of runaway groups sparked excited conversation among Jamaican slaves and constantly reminded them of both the hazards and the promise of such activity. Market days, dances, horse races, and other public occasions attracting large gatherings of slaves allowed news of these developments to circulate. When Mingo, a fisherman and former driver on a large Trelawny estate, "made a Ball ... after the Conclusion of Crop" in the fall of 1791, slaves from neighboring estates who attended were astonished to see Brutus present. An incorrigible runaway serving a life term in the parish workhouse at Martha Brae for his role in organizing unauthorized maroon towns in the 1780s, Brutus had recently escaped and had already set about his old ways. At the ball, Brutus scoffed at his owner's attempts to recapture him and affirmed rumors spread by recently returned runaways that he, together "with about eighteen other Negroes men slaves and three women of different Countries and owners" from Trelawny, Runaway Bay, and Clarendon, had established an impregnable new town in the backwoods of the parish. Many of those attending Mingo's ball must have already known of

11 Lord Balcarres to Duke of Portland, 11 August, 25 August 1795, C.O. 137/95, PRO.

Brutus Town; its residents had planted provisions and through "correspondence" with trusted plantation slaves kept the settlement stocked with "Rum, Sugar, Salt and other necessaries." Months after Brutus's dramatic appearance, slaves in St. Ann and Trelawny testified before local officials "that all the Negroes know of this Town" and "that if this Town is not destroyed [the painters] shall not be able to keep a single negroe from going there as they are all trying to get there." In fact, Brutus Town was only one of several similar runaway settlements inspiring the imaginations if not the active participation of slaves all over "cockpit country."¹²

The excitement of the fall and winter of 1791-92, magnified by the black revolution in neighboring Saint-Domingue, energized slave communication networks in Jamaica, and mobile runaway slaves like Brutus may have played a key if hidden role in spreading news from plantation to plantation. Two episodes from Jamaica's north coast during this period illustrate both that slaves paid close attention to developments around them and that they devised clandestine ways to transmit information quickly and effectively. In November 1791, John Whittaker, proprietor of an outlying plantation, discovered that his slaves learned of recent developments on the coast before he did. After one of his workers informed him of a recent development in Montego Bay the night before word of the incident arrived by a messenger on horseback, Whittaker reflected with amazement and alarm that there must be "some unknown mode of conveying intelligence amongst Negroes." In this instance, the grapevine of the slaves overcame several significant obstacles. Whittaker's estate lay in "a retired situation no publick Road leading through or near it," and Whittaker had his slaves under constant supervision and was certain that "no Negro of mine could have been absent from their employment during the day." Finally, the distance to Montego Bay, some thirty miles, "was too great to go and return in the night. Yet," Whittaker related, his slaves "were particularly informed of every circumstance there in less

¹² See the examination of Luckey, "Examinations of sundry Slaves in the Parish of St. Ann Jamaica respecting an intention to revolt," 31 December 1791, 11 January 1792, and the examinations of Duke and Glamorgan, "Examinations of sundry Slaves in the Parish of Trelawny Jamaica," 5 January 1792, C.O. 137/90, PRO.

than 24 hours after these Circumstances had taken place." Around the same time, Montego Bay upholsterer Robert Parker caught an accidental glimpse of nocturnal communication when he left his bedroom one sleepless night. In front of his establishment he saw "four Negroes ... very earnest in discourse," evidently waiting for a scheduled meeting with "two more Negroes that were on the other side of the Bridge." As they waited, their conversation concerned the number of "Guns and Soldiers" of the whites. Parker received a further surprise when, after the arrival of their friends, the four original companions abandoned English and began to converse in what Parker identified as "Coramantee."¹³

The activities of runaway slave communities in Jamaica did not go unnoticed in nearby Cuba, underscoring the fact that the histories of maroon societies in the two islands in the eighteenth century were closely intertwined. First, maroons in the two islands virtually shared a common space. One of the centers of maroon activity in the Spanish colony, the steep and densely wooded Sierra Maestra ranging along the east-west coastline at Cuba's southeastern tip, was a short sail from the edge of Jamaica's "cockpit country," and from points high in the sierra the peaks of the British island's Blue Mountains were actually visible.¹⁴ The short distance between the two islands concerned Spanish officials, who feared that communities of runaway slaves in the Sierra Maestra might make common cause with hostile British forces in Jamaica.¹⁵

One chapter of the common history of maroons in Jamaica and Cuba was written in the 1730s, when the timing of the First Maroon War in Jamaica coincided exactly with a similar uprising among slaves working near the east coast of Cuba. In 1731, at precisely the time when

¹³ John Whittaker to J. L. Winn, 11 January 1792 and report of Robert Parker, n.d., enclosed with "Minutes of the proceedings of the Committee of Secrecy and Safety in the Parish of St. James's, Jamaica," C.O. 137/90, PRO.

¹⁴ For descriptions, see Robert T. Hill, *Cuba and Porto Rico, with the other Islands of the West Indies* (New York, 1898), pp. 39-40, and Alexander von Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, trans. J. S. Thrasher (New York, 1856), 129n.

¹⁵ Juan Nepomuceno de Quintana to Eugenio Llaguno, Cuba, 31 December 1796, Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, Spain, Sección de Gobierno, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, leg. 1264 (hereinafter AGI, Santo Domingo).

the rebels in Jamaica were beginning their armed struggle for independence, slaves in the state-run copper mines near Santiago de Cuba revolted *en masse* and took to the mountains east of the city, near the present-day site of El Cobre. Like their counterparts in Jamaica, these so-called *cobrerros* managed to resist repeated attempts to dislodge them and caused considerable concern for the planters in the valley below. By the 1780s, descendants of the original rebels, now numbering more than a thousand, had fanned out from El Cobre into smaller settlements scattered throughout the surrounding sierra.¹⁶ Again during the 1790s, the cycle of unrest and official anxiety over maroon activity affected Cuba as much as Jamaica. Governors of Santiago de Cuba, now heavily involved in Cuba's full-fledged and growing investment in African slave labor, reported that their best efforts to bring the *cobrerros* under control had failed. In fact, by the middle of the decade, El Cobre welcomed all kinds of fugitives from slavery, "*cobrerros* as well as other slaves," and was home for several infamous characters who had been on the run for years.¹⁷ Apprehensive that the Jamaican Maroon War of 1795–96 would spread to the Cuban mountains, as it apparently had in the 1730s, Cuban officials did not hesitate to show solidarity with their British neighbors; when the Jamaica Assembly requested that the Cubans send a number of their fierce tracking dogs and *chasseurs* to bring the rebels under control, they complied with uncharacteristic dispatch.¹⁸

During this uncertain and active period, mobile *cobrerros* built a network of news and rumor which stretched even across the Atlantic. In the 1780s, Spanish authorities could not control rumors that the

16 See the section from Francisco Pérez de la Riva, *La habitación rural en Cuba* (La Habana, 1952), translated and reprinted in Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore, 1979), esp. pp. 54–5.

17 Quintana to Llaguno, Cuba, 31 December 1796, AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1264.

18 Luis de las Casas to Príncipe de la Paz, La Habana, 14 November 1795, AGI, Papeles procedentes de la isla de Cuba, leg. 1489 (hereinafter AGI, Cuba); Lord Balcarras to Duke of Portland, 29 December 1795, C.O. 137/96, PRO. Pleased with the results, the Jamaicans turned to this solution some weeks later in an attempt to control runaways in areas of Saint-Domingue under British control. See Quintana to Las Casas, Cuba, 25 February 1796, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1435.

king had finally granted freedom and land to the *cobrerros* only to have his wishes thwarted by the resistance of local officials. Convinced that slaves should have independent sources of transatlantic information, a small group of *cobrerros* delegated Gregorio Cosme Osorio to travel to Spain in order to represent the interests of the descendants of El Cobre's runaway slaves at court. Osorio's reports helped to keep the spirit of resistance alive into the mid-1790s. By 1795, Juan Baptista Vaillant, the governor of Santiago de Cuba, reported that a new wave of liberation rumors was sweeping the east coast of Cuba and that slaves were deserting plantations in disturbing numbers. Governor Vaillant blamed the wide circulation of several recent letters from Osorio for these developments.¹⁹

The geography of Saint-Domingue, with its rugged and majestic mountain ranges rimming the colony's long and jagged eastern border, also presented mobile slaves ample opportunity for escape. After 1700, maroon activity grew and expanded as rapidly as plantation slavery itself. Early in the century, bands of maroons inhabited the region surrounding the rich northern plain. By mid-century, the center of maroon activity had shifted southward along the rim of mountains overlooking the new boom areas of Mirebalais, Cul-de-Sac, and Anse-à-Pitre. Though marronage was a significant factor affecting the character of the slave system throughout Saint-Domingue, the east-central region between the Cul-de-Sac and the Spanish border would continue into the era of the Revolution to be the locus of the most stable maroon societies as well as the scene of continuous warfare between maroons and government-sponsored expeditions. As the rule of the slavocracy entered its final days in the 1780s, maroon groups of various sizes and descriptions stretched in a broken line from the northernmost reaches of Saint-Domingue all the way to its southern tip. The role of these Haitian maroons in advancing the coming revolution remains a topic of intense debate.²⁰

19 José Luciano Franco, *Las minas de Santiago del Prado y la rebelión de los cobrerros, 1530–1800* (La Habana, 1975), pp. 58–63; Juan Baptista Vaillant to Las Casas, Cuba, 14 September 1795, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1435.

20 Gabriel Debien, "Le marronage aux Antilles françaises au XVIIIe siècle," *Caribbean Studies* 6 (October 1966), pp. 3–41. The work of Haitian historian Jean

The activities of Saint-Domingue's maroon societies focused greater planter concern, but the tradition of short-term individual desertion was arguably of more consequence in the day-to-day functioning of plantations and among the slaves themselves. Whether visiting relatives, escaping an impending punishment, or engaging in trade and other proscribed activities, slaves who left for absences of short duration and distance bedeviled managers on every plantation. Proprietors and overseers became so accommodated to short-term absences from their plantations and so powerless to control them that they often did not even bother to delete the names of absent slaves, especially those of habitual leave-takers, from current plantation lists.²¹ In addition, overseers frequently reported finding runaways from other area plantations hiding out in the quarters of their slaves. In 1790 the overseer of one plantation in the Cap Français district arrested twenty-seven fugitive slaves in his vicinity within a short time, "as many in the slave huts as in the hills."²² Already, however, the relaxed attitude of the days before the arrival of the news of the French Revolution had begun to give way to new fears about what this news might mean to plantation slaves. By 1790, whites recognized the possibility that rebellion might spread easily to the countryside, and that they could ill afford to ignore even these short-term migrants any longer.²³

While the mountains and backwoods with their maroon

Fouchard emphasizes the crucial role played by maroons in Saint-Domingue in the long struggle for Haitian independence and black freedom. See Jean Fouchard, *Les marrons du syllabaire* (Port-au-Prince, 1953), and *Les marrons de la liberté* (Paris, 1972), in addition to Edner Brutus, *Révolution dans Saint-Domingue*, 2 tomes ([Belgium], n.d.), and Leslie Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St-Domingue-Haiti," in Vera Rubin and Arthur Tuden, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantation Societies* (New York, 1977), pp. 420-38. For a view strongly critical of the "Haitian school," see David P. Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint-Domingue* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 27, 411, 457-8.

21 Debien, "Marronage aux Antilles françaises," pp. 3, 7-9.

22 Séguy de Villevalaix to Comte de Polastron, 31 September 1790, reprinted in Gabriel Debien, *Études antillaises (XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris, 1956), p. 170.

23 See, for example, Debien, *Études antillaises*, p. 164, and Pierre Léon, *Marchands et spéculateurs dans le monde antillais du XVIIIe siècle: les Dolle et les Raby* (Paris, 1963), p. 141.

communities provided hope in the popular imagination regarding individual escape and collective resistance throughout the eighteenth century, the growing coastal cities nurtured the most complex patterns of mobility and presented the most vexing problems of control for all the colonial powers. Caribbean cities were more than centers of commercial exchange, population, and government; they were in a real sense centers of education. Towns provided anonymity and shelter for a wide variety of masterless men and women, including but by no means restricted to runaway slaves, and they offered unique opportunities for these people to rub shoulders, share experiences, and add to their knowledge of the Caribbean world and beyond. By the 1790s, larger cities like Kingston, Cap Français, and Havana could properly be termed capitals of Afro-America, and dissidents in dozens of smaller coastal centers were engaging in the kinds of transactions which would play a crucial role in spreading the excitement of the Age of Revolution in the Caribbean.

At the start of the eighteenth century, however, these cities presented a very different picture. In 1700, Havana, with its impressive stone cathedrals and fortifications, had few rivals in the region. The future urban centers of the British and French Caribbean were fledgling settlements more closely resembling the "overgrown villages" of the eastern seaboard of British North America than the established capitals of the Spanish and Portuguese. Only about two thousand people inhabited Kingston, the city founded to replace Port Royal in 1692, at the turn of the eighteenth century. Similarly, Cap Français, destined to become Saint-Domingue's most important city and later the revolutionary capital of the Caribbean, had only recently inherited its role as a locus of settlement from buccaneering La Tortue across the channel. At the time of the founding of Kingston, "le Cap" was home for only 160 white men, sixty-three white women, and thirty-four black slaves, and twenty years later the town still contained barely a thousand residents.²⁴

24 Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change, 1692-1962* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1975), pp. 6, 141. Clarke estimates Kingston's population in 1700 at 5,000. For the "overgrown villages" of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, see Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change,*

The progress of cash crop agriculture in the region between 1700 and 1790 transformed these settlements in both size and function. Surviving periodic natural disasters and incessant warfare, these and other coastal centers had grown significantly by the era of the Haitian Revolution. A generation of intense economic activity and reform after 1763 found Havana by 1791 a teeming entrepôt whose population, including the web of surrounding suburbs, ranged somewhere between 44,000 and 50,000. The city continued to expand during the years of the revolution in Saint-Domingue, doubling in size between 1791 and 1810. Other Spanish-American cities, most notably Caracas, whose population almost doubled between 1772 and 1812, and Buenos Aires, experienced similar rapid development as population and trading centers.²⁵ By 1790, Kingston was the hub of overlapping networks of regional and transatlantic trade in the British orbit; of all the cities in English-speaking America, only New York and Philadelphia had more people.²⁶ Official figures issued in 1788 listed the population of Cap Français at 12,151 in the city proper, a statistic which did not include the tens of thousands of people living on plantations in the immediate highlands whose lives were intimately connected to the city.²⁷

In addition to the maturation and growth of the region's largest cities, several smaller coastal centers also elbowed their way to a kind of urban status by the late eighteenth century. Whereas the largest cities dominated transatlantic trade, their aggressive competitors provided outlets for the produce of local plantations through a thriving coastal and short-distance regional trade of small locally built vessels. Unlike Havana and the surrounding cities of the western coast of Cuba,

Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge and London, 1979), pp. 3–4. M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, nouvelle édition, 3 tomes (Paris, 1958), I, p. 479 has figures for Cap Français.

²⁵ Alexander von Humboldt, *Ensayo político sobre la isla de Cuba* (La Habana, 1960), p. 108; Sánchez-Albornoz, *Population of Latin America*, p. 127.

²⁶ Clarke, *Kingston*, p. 141, estimates the city's population at 23,500 in 1790. According to the first Census of the United States conducted that same year, New York had 49,401 residents, Philadelphia 28,522, and Boston 18,320.

²⁷ Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description*, I, p. 479.

which dominated the Straits of Florida and faced outward toward the Atlantic, the arc of towns encircling the island's eastern region, from Trinidad and Puerto Príncipe on the south coast to Holguin on the opposite side, focused inward toward the Caribbean. Older even than Havana and the site of the island's first colonial capital because of its proximity to the coast of Hispaniola, Santiago de Cuba was only slightly smaller than Kingston in 1791, with a total population of 19,703 residents.²⁸

From its well-protected harbor, Santiago de Cuba looked out upon a system of smaller port cities in Jamaica and Saint-Domingue, linked by trade and geographical proximity. Barely twelve hours' sail to the southwest lay the excellent harbors of the north coast of Jamaica. As Jamaica's "North side" developed in the eighteenth century, they served as outlets to the sea for the northern tier of sugar-producing parishes—Hanover, St. James, Trelawny, St. Ann, St. Mary, and Portland. At the same time, these cities, situated close to foreign colonies and surrounded by "numerous creeks and bays, where small-decked vessels may run in at any time," provided staging areas for Jamaica-based smugglers and ports of call for their counterparts from Cuba, Saint-Domingue, and elsewhere.²⁹ By 1758, two of the busiest of these ports, Montego Bay and Port Antonio, had achieved sufficient stature to be named, along with Kingston and Savanna-la-Mar, official ports of entry and outfitted with proper courts and customs apparatus. The other northern towns—St. Ann's Bay, Falmouth, Martha Brae, and Lucea—became centers of commercial importance before

²⁸ Juan Baptista Vaillant to Las Casas, 18 June 1791, "Resumen general de los moradores que comprehende la Ciudad de Cuba, y su respectivo territorio formado en el año de 1791," 18 June 1791, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1434; Antonio J. Valdés, *Historia de la isla de Cuba y en especial de la Habana*, rep. of 1813 edition (La Habana, 1964), pp. 63–4. See also the observations of Ramon de la Sagra, *Histoire physique et politique de l'isle de Cuba*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1844), I, pp. 34–5, regarding "the large number of anchorages for coasting vessels" along Cuba's east coast.

²⁹ Jamaica Assembly, *Proceedings of the Honourable House of Assembly of Jamaica, on the Sugar and Slave-Trade* (London, 1793), p. 13. For Jamaica's pivotal role in regional contraband trade, see Allan Christelow, "Contraband Trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main and the Free Port Act of 1766," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 22 (May 1942), pp. 309–43.

they attracted large numbers of permanent residents. One observer described the adjacent settlements of Falmouth and Martha Brae in 1794 as comprising between them "from 700 to 800 White Inhabitants, besides the People of Colour, who are pretty numerous," but so rapidly had the plantations of their hinterland expanded that officials predicted "in due course there will be more Sugar & Rum shipped there, than at any other Port." Martha Brae's application for free port status therefore received very serious consideration despite the town's diminutive size.³⁰ But when officials in Kingston and Port Royal spoke about the north coast of the island, they stressed the region's vulnerability as much as its commercial progress. Defenseless against "the frequent Depredations made by the Spanish Boats from Cuba," residents of the northern ports also lived under the long shadow of "cockpit country" and the maroon towns. For all these reasons, reported Governor Williamson in 1792, "the Spirit of discontent has usually first shewn itself" among the slaves of the north coast.³¹

Just fourteen leagues, or about forty-two miles, southeast of Spanish Cuba lay Môle Saint-Nicolas on the coast of Saint-Domingue, the strategic key to the vital Windward Passage, and only one among a dozen equally vibrant coastal towns of varying sizes dotting the jagged coast of the rich French colony.³² Sandwiched in a strip of land between the mountains and the coast, the colony of Saint-Domingue showed an even stronger orientation toward its cities and the sea than either Cuba or Jamaica. Like Santiago de Cuba, Montego Bay, and their smaller satellites, the cities of Saint-Domingue's western and southern provinces owed their development and outlook as much to intra-Caribbean factors as to metropolitan intervention. Isolation from Cap Français because of the rugged mountains of the interior often left the cities of western and southern Saint-Domingue to their

30 Sir Alan Burns, *History of the British West Indies* (London, 1954), p. 495; Stephen Fuller to Duke of Portland, 18 February 1794, C.O. 137/93, PRO; Fuller to Henry Dundas, 18 February 1794, Letterpress Books, Stephen Fuller Papers, Duke University Library (hereinafter FLB).

31 Philip Affleck to Philip Stephens, 7 June 1790, Admiralty Records, PRO, class 1/ volume 244 (hereinafter ADM class/vol., PRO); Adam Williamson to Henry Dundas, 5 August 1792, C.O. 137/90, PRO.

32 Sagra, *Historia*, I, p. 19.

own devices; residents of Gonaïves, Saint-Marc, and Port-au-Prince in the west, and Jérémie, Cayes, and Jacmel in the south might easily have felt closer, both geographically and otherwise, to Cuba, Jamaica, and the northern coast of the South American mainland than to the Cap or to France. Largely ignored by vessels from France and accustomed to looking to foreign colonies for supplies in lean times, merchants and planters in these cities would raise the loudest cries for commercial and political independence in the early years of the French Revolution.

Even before revolutions in North America, France, Saint-Domingue, and Spanish America drew these cities into struggles for independent home rule, Caribbean port cities were natural magnets for all types of people seeking personal independence. Colonial authorities were ever mindful of the many invitations to masterlessness which the cities held out but also of the difficulties attached to regulating life in the towns. By comparison, life in the country, even with the many problems associated with controlling slave labor, was idyllic, ordered, and properly regimented. Whereas country life revolved around the predictable and steady regimen of the plantation, cities turned these work values on their heads in ways most inimical to the slave system. An 1801 visit to busy Kingston moved one British traveler to remark that "the desire of acquiring wealth without adequate exertion is a most vituperative and pernicious passion. Hence in all depots of trade we find a greater proportion than elsewhere of gamblers, swindlers, thieves, beggars, mountabanks and 33 pedlars."³³ White observers already familiar with this diverse panorama worried that the masterless tenor of life in the towns posed ever-present dangers of sedition. The governor's description of the same city a year earlier accurately reflected the agonies and fears of planters all over Afro-America. "Every kind of Vice that can be found in Commercial Towns," wrote Lord Balcarres in 1800,

33 Robert H. Fisher, "Narrative of a voyage to the West Indies, for the purpose of attempting the establishment of an Ice Market in the Island of Jamaica," (*West Indian Travel Journal*, 1800-1801), University of Virginia Library, pp. 26-7.

is pre-eminent in Kingston: here the imagination of Pandora's Box is fully exemplified. Turbulent people of all Nations engaged in illicit Trade; a most abandoned class of Negroes, up to every scene of mischief, and a general levelling spirit throughout, is the character of the lower orders in Kingston ... Should there be at any time an Insurrection among the Slaves

he projected, "here is not only a place of refuge in the first instance, but in a moment the Town might be laid in ashes."³⁴

As Balcarres knew very well, cities had furnished places of refuge for plantation dissidents for generations. By mid-century, the larger towns attracted many runaway slaves from the surrounding countryside. In 1744, police authorities in Kingston attacked this problem by restricting the huts in outlying areas of the city, inhabited by free Negroes and the runaways they protected, to only one door, and compounds of more than four huts to one common entrance.³⁵ The earliest runaway notices for Saint-Domingue, printed in the newly founded *Gazette de Saint Domingue* in 1764, show that runaway slaves in the northern parishes of the French colony sensed a greater prospect of making a successful escape in Cap Français and its environs than either in the mountains or near the beckoning border of the neighboring Spanish colony.³⁶

As the Caribbean's port towns grew in size, their attraction for runaway slaves increased apace. In the 1790s reports from the Spanish colonies confirm the active presence of bands of runaways in and around the coastal cities. In Caracas, such groups inhabited the vast plains, or *llanos*, which fanned out from the capital city. A conservative estimate placed the number of runaway slaves living and operating in the Caracas vicinity at around three hundred in 1791, and the number climbed rapidly over the next decade. The make-up of these groups probably included both fugitives from plantations and

34 Lord Balcarres to Commander-in-Chief, 31 July 1800, C.O. 137/104, PRO.

35 Pitman, *British West Indies*, 40n.

36 Gabriel Debien, "Les marrons de Saint-Domingue en 1764," *Jamaican Historical Review* 6 (1966), p. 15.

cattle farms and others who worked in the city itself.³⁷ Similar contingents centered around the Havana district in Cuba, where runaways were as active as they were in the mountains of the Santiago de Cuba region at the other end of the island. In June of 1791, problems in the "rounding up of fugitive blacks, so necessary to their owners, in the capturing of deserters, who fill up the countryside, and finally, in containing the disorders carried out all over by the malefactors sheltered in the mountains" severely stretched the capacities of municipal officials in Havana to deal with them.³⁸ Less than a year later, the *alcalde* of Jaruco, a sparsely populated satellite of Havana on Cuba's east coast, requested government aid in suppressing the recurrent "robberies and other scandals" perpetrated by fugitive slaves in the area.³⁹ By 1798, new regulations drawn up for controlling runaways from Cuba's rapidly expanding slave economy recognized both the problem of slaves running to cities as well as that of keeping the urban slaves themselves from absconding, as "most of the runaway slaves belong to residents of the city of Havana."⁴⁰

Runaway slaves were also active in and around the cities of the French and British colonies in the 1790s. Between October 1790 and August 1791, French authorities apprehended 500 runaways in the vicinity of Cap Français alone. Figures recording the numbers of recaptured slaves and the place of their arrest seem to indicate that fugitives who found their way to the city proper eluded the authorities more successfully than those who roamed outlying districts.⁴¹ In

37 See the *resumen* of "Expediente relativo al recurso de los Ganaderos y Hacendados de la Provincia de Caracas ... Años de 1790 a 92," AGI, Sección de Gobierno, Audiencia de Caracas, leg. 15 (hereinafter AGI, Caracas).

38 Manuel Ventura Montero y Uriza to Las Casas, La Habana, 3 June 1791, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1465.

39 Las Casas to Marques de Cárdenas, La Habana, 10 February 1792, Marques de Cárdenas to Las Casas, La Habana, 14 February 1792, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1460.

40 "Suplemento al reglamento sobre esclavos cimarrones, mandado publicar por el Exmo. Sr. Gobernador y Capitán General," La Habana, 1 June 1798, Conde de Santa Clara to "Alcaldes de Hermandad de esta Ciudad y Pueblos de su Jurisdicn.," La Habana, 20 July 1798, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1508-A.

41 Jean Fouchard et Gabriel Debien, "Aspects de l'esclavage aux Antilles françaises: le petit marronage à Saint-Domingue autour du Cap (1790-1791),"

Jamaica, runaways crowded into busy Port Royal in the 1790s. Citing "the number of runaway negroes with which [the town] is infested," white inhabitants petitioned the Assembly in 1801 for funds to erect "a place of confinement" to control this population and to discourage others from coming.⁴²

In addition to providing some unique opportunities for runaway slaves, Caribbean cities also held special attraction for free blacks and browns, the most marginal of the various groups comprising the masterless Caribbean. Whether plying trades, seeking work, or living by their wits, free nonwhites tended to settle in the towns, and the number of urban free people of color increased steadily during the period of the French Revolution. Always feared for their abilities to move about and disrupt the smooth functioning of the plantation economy, urban communities of free coloreds and free blacks imbibed the egalitarian spirit of the times and rapidly assumed a political voice which emerged and matured during the 1790s.

Free people of color were most numerous in the Spanish Caribbean, where they occupied a prominent demographic niche in urban areas. Free coloreds comprised twenty-two percent of the population of Havana and its suburbs in 1791. The populations of the towns along the Caribbean-oriented east coast contained even higher percentages of free black and brown residents. In Santiago de Cuba, figures from 1791 listed 6,698, or thirty-four percent, of the city's 19,703 residents as either free "Negroes" or free "mulattoes." A census taken the following year showed a similar pattern for Bayamo, where half the black population was free, and free nonwhites accounted for more than thirty-seven percent of the city's population of 22,417.⁴³ During the revolutionary period after 1791, the urban concentration of this

Cahiers des Amériques Latines: série "Sciences de l'homme" 3 (janvier-juin 1969), pp. 31-67.

⁴² Jamaica Assembly, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, 14 vols. (Jamaica, 1811-29), X, p. 491.

⁴³ Vaillant to Las Casas, Cuba, 18 June 1791, "Resumen general de los moradores que comprehende la Ciudad de Cuba," 18 June 1791, Vaillant to Las Casas with enclosed *estados*, Cuba, 22 June 1792, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1434; Kenneth F. Kiple, *Blacks in Colonial Cuba, 1774-1899* (Gainesville, 1976), p. 85; Humboldt, *Island of Cuba*, pp. 112-14.

population expanded significantly. Alexander von Humboldt, visiting Cuba in the early years of Haitian independence, commented at great length upon the recent increase in the size of the free Negro population in urban Cuba. Because "Spanish legislation ... favors in an extraordinary degree" their aspirations for freedom, he remarked, "many blacks (*negros*) acquire their freedom in the towns." Humboldt also cited an 1811 population study conducted by the *ayuntamiento* and *consulado* of Havana which found the black population, both free and enslaved, more thoroughly urbanized than ever. In the Havana district, where the number of free Negroes equaled the number of slaves, blacks and browns in the countryside outnumbered those in the towns by a slim ratio of three to two. On the east coast, fully half of all blacks and browns lived in the towns, and free people of color dominated some of the more sizable settlements. "The partido (district) of Bayamo," recorded Humboldt, "is notable for the large number of free colored (forty-four percent), which increases yearly, as also in Holguin and Baracoa." Indeed, he concluded, with a note of warning to Caribbean slavocracies, "since Haiti became emancipated, there are already in the Antilles more free negroes and mulattoes than slaves."⁴⁴

Even before the watchwords of the French Revolution reached their ears, urban free coloreds in Spanish territories tested the limits of their masterless status and pressed for certain types of equality. This spirit surfaced most visibly within the ranks of the military. Since incorporation of free men of color into separate but ostensibly equal militia battalions began in the 1760s, the assertive behavior of these armed troops had drawn steady complaint from civil authorities. When officers of *pardo* and *moreno* militia units in Caracas demanded the same funeral observances and ceremonial garb as white officers early in 1789, Spanish officials worried that such attacks against the structure of inequality in the military would lead inevitably toward more general attacks on the structure of colonial society. This latest episode, feared the captain-general, represented the dangerous thin edge of an egalitarian wedge—or perhaps the sharp blade of a two-edged sword. "As much as I am aware of the grave difficulties which

⁴⁴ Humboldt, *Island of Cuba*, pp. 187, 190-1, 212-13, 242.

every day of this so-called equality will bring," he wrote in April, "I also fear other evil consequences if their pretensions are denied. In the first case there is the risk of more haughtiness and audacity on the part of the officers; in the second ... disloyalty, the spirit of vengeance, and sedition."⁴⁵ Crown policy took a hard line against all evidence of such restiveness. In Cuba, just days before the first plantations were burned in neighboring Saint-Domingue, Luis de las Casas, governor and captain-general, received instructions from the Crown to silence the "old complaints" against white officers levelled by officers of the *pardo* and *moreno* units at Havana.⁴⁶

In the British and French colonies, free people of color were considerably fewer in number than in Cuba and the other Spanish possessions, a fact which ironically underscored even more strongly their visibility as a masterless urban presence. Though rarely counted as carefully in population censuses, free blacks and browns seemed to cause much greater day-to-day concern among government officials and white residents in both Jamaica and Saint-Domingue than in the Spanish colonies. Jamaica's free people of color migrated to the area around Kingston. Almost sixty percent of the 3,408 "black and coloured" persons taking out certificates of freedom under a 1761 legislative act calling for the registration of all free persons in the island resided in Kingston and Spanish Town, the nearby capital city. In 1788, more than one-third of all the island's free colored people lived in Kingston alone, compared to twenty-two percent of all whites and seven percent of all slaves.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Juan Guillelmi to Antonio Valdés, Caracas, 14 February, 30 April 1789, AGI, Caracas, leg. 113; Allan J. Kuethe, "The Status of the Free *Pardo* in the Disciplined Militia of New Granada," *Journal of Negro History* 56 (April 1971), p. 109. Though such racial terminology is never without its ambiguities, in general the Spanish used the term "*pardo*" to describe free blacks, and "*moreno*" to refer to the people whom the English called "mulattoes." See Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston, 1967), p. 44.

⁴⁶ Las Casas to Conde del Campo de Alange, La Habana, 16 August 1791, AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1255.

⁴⁷ "Return of the number of White Inhabitants, Free People of Colour and Slaves in the Island of Jamaica—Spanish Town, Nov. 1788," C.O. 137/87, PRO; George W. Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica* (Cambridge, 1957), pp. 38–9; W. J.

By 1788, white Jamaicans were sufficiently troubled about both the growth of this population and its mobility to bring such persons under more careful scrutiny. Concerned that the line between slavery and freedom should remain clearly demarcated to foil the efforts of slaves sliding imperceptibly into the free colored caste, the Assembly called upon "justices and vestry" from all parishes to

cause diligent inquiry to be made within their respective parishes, as to the number of negroes, mulattoes, or Indians of free condition, and cause them to attend at their next meeting, and give an account in what manner they obtained their freedom, that their names and manner of obtaining their freedom may be registered in the vestry books of such parishes.⁴⁸

But even this effort to weed out the slaves from the ranks of the masterless did little to check the tremendous growth of the free nonwhite population during the ensuing decade. As in Cuba, these numbers swelled during the period of the Haitian Revolution, as large numbers of free coloreds, many of them immigrants from Saint-Domingue, crowded into Kingston. When parish officials in Kingston petitioned for incorporation in 1801, they referred pointedly to the fact that "the population has of late greatly increased, and particularly as to foreigners and free persons of color," and called for more stringent law enforcement and "an efficient and strict police" to minimize the dangers posed by these masterless immigrants.⁴⁹

In Saint-Domingue, free blacks and browns of the cities actively identified with the ideas of the French Revolution in an effort to improve their status, and in doing so unwittingly opened the door for the slave revolt of 1791. The presence of mulattoes and free blacks in

Gardner, *A History of Jamaica, from its Discovery by Christopher Columbus to the Year 1872*, reprint, new ed. (London, 1971), p. 173; Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 4th ed., 3 vols. (London, 1807), I, pp. 260–1; Clarke, *Kingston*, p. 141.

⁴⁸ *The New Act of Assembly of the Island of Jamaica ... Commonly Called. The New Consolidated Act ... Being the Present Code Noir of that Island* (London, 1789), article LXIX.

⁴⁹ *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, X, p. 507.

the cities was causing increased concern and comment as early as the 1770s. In addition to the brown artisans who were familiar fixtures, wrote one observer in 1775, "there are now in the Cities Mulattoes and Negroes, calling themselves free, who have no known means of subsistence." Questions concerning the loyalty of this class complicated the earliest efforts to regiment free colored men into police units to keep them off the streets. Opponents of such a measure reasoned that since "public tranquillity is assured, why give arms to the only men who might disrupt it?"⁵⁰ Such confidence in uninterrupted "public tranquillity" eroded quickly in the years leading up to the arrival of the French Revolution. By the 1780s, white observers saw free nonwhites in cities as sources of sedition to be carefully watched and controlled, and government functionaries took extra care to count the numbers of urban *affranchis* in their occasional censuses. For example, official figures noted only 195 free colored residents in 1775 in Cap Français, but in 1780, in what was apparently a more careful count, almost 1,400 people appeared in this category, ample testimony both to an expanding presence and to a mounting concern.⁵¹ By the time the drama of the early French Revolution gripped Saint-Domingue's coastal cities, planters all over the island were expressing fears that agitation in the towns might spread to plantation areas through the agency of the blacks and mulattoes in nearby cities. "The idle negroes of the cities are the most dangerous," wrote a typical sugar planter from the western parish of Arcahay in 1790. Moves were already under way "to expel from the towns all the vagrants, people who had nothing to lose," and who were at the center of all the agitation.⁵²

Such concerns were not misplaced. Throughout the eighteenth century, planters found the links between city and country both vexing and essential. Acutely aware that cities with their free populations loomed as ever-present enticements to desertion for dissident slaves, they also recognized that the survival of their plantations

50 Michel René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1776), II, pp. 85-6.

51 Figures taken from Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description*, I, pp. 479-80.

52 Joseph Laurent to Antoine Dolle l'Américain, Bordeaux, 4 August 1790, quoted in Léon, *Marchands et spéculateurs*, pp. 140-1.

depended upon the access to markets and the sea which port cities provided. Therefore, they actively worked to assure the free flow of goods between the interior and the coast, even though its potential costs to their social regime were obvious.

The growth of internal marketing systems in Caribbean societies, an eighteenth-century phenomenon closely tied to the growth of cities, presented further opportunities for individual mobility even as it brought the worlds of town and country closer together. In both Jamaica and Saint-Domingue, masterless people of all descriptions controlled in large measure the movement of foodstuffs and cheap consumer goods between cities and outlying areas. In the British colony, the practice of slaves raising their own fruits and vegetables on garden plots set aside for that purpose was well established throughout the island by mid-century. As the free population of the cities expanded, slaves found ready markets for their produce, which they exchanged for money or other items.⁵³

From its inception, the Jamaican marketing system involved slave women and their free black and brown counterparts as the key agents. The Jamaican "higgler," a social type prominent in the society to the present day, became the broker in the lively commerce between country and city. Attracted by the profits to be gleaned as a go-between and by the measure of freedom and mobility which the life of the higgler promised, many women fled plantations to pursue higgling on a full-time basis. Phebe, a seamstress who left her Kingston plantation in 1787, was still at large and "passing" for free five years later. She was "said to be living either at Old-Harbour, Old-Harbour market, or in their vicinity, and to be a higgler."⁵⁴ Planters and town merchants tried hard to control these "wandering higglers," who "forestal so many of the necessaries of life that are sold in our markets," and who brought news from the city to slaves on the plantations.⁵⁵

53 See the seminal article by Sidney W. Mintz and Douglas Hall, "The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Marketing System," *Yale University Publications in Anthropology* (no. 57, 1960), esp. pp. 12-13, 15, 20.

54 Kingston *Royal Gazette*, 20 October 1792, file in National Library of Jamaica, Kingston (hereinafter NLJ).

55 Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a Residence among the Negroes in the*

For both economic and security reasons, therefore, higgler and other itinerant traders and peddlers found their chosen professions severely circumscribed by law, especially in times of tension like the early revolutionary era in the Caribbean. "No character is so dangerous in this Country as that of a Pedlar," reported a group of north coast planters in 1792, "and perhaps there was never a rebellion among the Slaves in the West India Islands which was not either entirely, or in part carried on through this Class of People."⁵⁶

In Saint-Domingue, internal marketing played the same role in linking the plantations with the cities. The opportunities within the domestic economy of the French colony attracted all types of people: poor urban whites out of work, free blacks and mulattoes, and privileged slaves, all dealing in produce and small European manufactures. In the cities themselves, free black and brown women took the central roles; many of them owned commercial "houses" and slaves of their own. And like the higgler of Jamaica, country women rose early to travel from plantation to plantation and buy produce from slaves to sell in city markets. Planter concern with the mobility of all these wandering buyers and sellers involved not only their pesky ability to control a large share of internal markets, but extended to their larger social role as well. The legendary maroon leader called Mackandal, who led a campaign to poison all the whites of the northern province in the 1760s, made brilliant use of a network of itinerant traders to predict and control events at long distances, thereby enhancing his status as a powerful religious mystic among his slave followers.⁵⁷ These intermediaries would play a pivotal role in bringing from the cities to the plantations news of the excitement brewing after 1789.⁵⁸

West Indies (London, 1845), p. 41; *Royal Gazette*, 2 March 1793. For a description of the working life of a modern higgler which emphasizes her role in communication between her community and "former neighbours now living in town," see Margaret Fisher Katzin, "The Jamaican Country Higgler," *Social and Economic Studies* 8 (December 1959), pp. 421-35.

⁵⁶ "Minutes of the proceedings of the Committee of Secrecy and Safety in the Parish of St. James's, Jamaica," [1792], C.O. 137/90, PRO.

⁵⁷ "Minutes of the proceedings of the Committee of Secrecy and Safety," C.O. 137/90, PRO.

⁵⁸ See Hénock Trouillot, "Les sans-travail, les pacotilleurs et les marchands à

A wide variety of masterless types joined the slaves, runaways, and free blacks in Caribbean towns. Colonial governments experienced as much difficulty controlling many of the European immigrants as they did managing slaves. From early in the eighteenth century, for example, white immigrants in search of fortune or imported for the purpose of moderating the widening black/white population imbalance proved troublesome to the authorities in the British and French Caribbean. A 1717 experiment of the British Parliament that shipped convict laborers to the colonies as indentured servants soon backfired. Just months after the arrival of the first wave of bonded immigrants, Jamaica's governor reported that

so farr from altering their Evil Courses and way of living and becoming an Advantage to Us, ... the greatest part of them are gone and have Induced others to go with them a Pyrating and have Inveigled and Encouraged Severall Negroes to desert from their Masters ... The few that remains proves a wicked Lazy and Indolent people, so that I could heartily wish this Country might be troubled with no more of them.

Just as displeasing to government officials were the results of the so-called Deficiency Laws, annual acts dating from 1718 which stipulated that plantation owners maintain fixed ratios of whites to blacks and livestock or pay fines. Governor Robert Hunter complained in 1731 that the whites introduced under this plan, many of them Irish Catholics, were liabilities to the community, "a lazy useless sort of people" whose loyalties were always suspect.⁵⁹ By the 1780s, however, the planter class had swallowed at least some of its distaste for whites of lower station, though the price for this precarious white solidarity seemed a bit high for some. Planter-historian Bryan Edwards described the white commoner who "approaches his employer with an extended hand, and a freedom, which, in the countries of Europe, is seldom displayed by men in the lower orders of life towards their

Saint-Domingue," *Revue de la société haïtienne d'histoire* 29 (1956), pp. 47-66.

⁵⁹ Nicolas Lawes to Board of Trade, 1 September 1718, C.O. 137/13, PRO, Robert Hunter to Board of Trade, 13 November 1731, C.O. 137/19, PRO, both quoted in Pitman, *British West Indies*, pp. 54, 55-6.

superiors;" Edwards found these pretensions to equality almost as disturbing as he later would find those of the free coloreds.⁶⁰

French officials in Saint-Domingue echoed the same sentiments in the 1770s and 1780s, when the fabled "prosperity" of the colony attracted large numbers of European immigrants seeking to carve out a share of the profits for themselves. According to one observer, the new arrivals consisted largely of sturdy artisans, including "carpenters, joiners, masons, coopers, locksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers, coach-builders, watchmakers, goldsmiths, jewelers, and barbers," seeking to escape tough economic conditions at home.⁶¹ But a Cap Français police report of 1780 speaks anxiously of the "people arriving daily from Europe, who, for the most part, have crossed the ocean to flee their families and their country, and have come to America in order to escape the reprisals of relatives and of the law."⁶² Distinctly multinational in character, the wave of immigration of these ambitious and often desperate people, mostly young men, brought to Saint-Domingue's cities a new and restless population of "*petits blancs*" of boundless mobility and suspect loyalties. When British forces invaded Saint-Domingue in 1793, remembered a colonel involved in that effort, they encountered considerable resistance from urban whites whom he could only describe as "adventurers from every part of Europe" who had come to the Caribbean "in quest of fortune."⁶³

Like the free Negroes, mulattoes, and runaway slaves with whom they came into contact upon their arrival, unruly European immigrants soon found themselves unwelcome guests in a society where the power of masters depended to such a degree on the maintenance of social order. Hilliard d'Auberteuil reflected the prevailing sentiment of Saint-Domingue's establishment when he referred contemptuously

60 Edwards, *History, Civil and Commercial*, II, pp. 7-8.

61 S. J. Ducoeurjoly, *Manuel des habitans de Saint-Domingue*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1802), II, p. 63.

62 "Mémoire sur la police du Cap" (1780), reprinted in Pierre de Vassière, *Saint-Domingue: la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime (1629-1789)* (Paris, 1909), pp. 337-8.

63 Colonel Chalmers, *Remarks on the Late War in St. Domingo, with Observations on the Relative Situation of Jamaica, and Other Interesting Subjects* (London, 1803), pp. 8-9.

to this vicious "mob of vagabonds and adventurers hurling themselves upon these shores ... without trade or property ... No citizen or inhabitant dares to trust them."⁶⁴ They shared equally with the free people of color in the blame for a rise in urban crime, and authorities at the Cap accused them of bringing with them all the vices of the European urban proletariat, among them "robberies, brawls, gambling, libertinism, mutinies, even sedition."⁶⁵ The governor of Martinique, another French Caribbean colony, even breathed a sigh of relief when large numbers of restless urban whites departed his island for Saint-Domingue, "where they may give themselves up to hunting and disorder, and where licentious liberty is complete."⁶⁶ A lieutenant in the French navy who saw service in the Caribbean in 1790 and 1791, presciently predicted that the urban *petits blancs*, this "refuse of all nations," would become "one of the best elements of propaganda for revolutionary agitation."⁶⁷

The lower orders of whites in the cities consisted of more than just poor adventurers. A substantial number of them were deserters from the military, masterless men by choice whom colonial authorities mentioned in the same breath with runaway slaves. All over the Caribbean, commanders of colonial regiments complained both about the quality of the men sent out from home and of the willingness of their charges to shirk their prescribed duties in favor of the chance for independence. The British governor of St. Vincent expressed this frustration in 1777, calling the latest crop of recruits "the very scum of the Earth. The Streets of London must have been swept of their refuse, the Gaols emptied ... I should say the very Gibbets had been robbed to furnish such Recruits, literally most of them fit only ... to fill a pit with."⁶⁸ The unenviable reputation of European servicemen

64 Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, II, pp. 55-6.

65 "Mémoire sur la police du Cap."

66 Quoted in T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston and New York, 1914), p. 4.

67 Chevalier Camille de Valous, *Avec les "rouges" aux Iles du Vent: souvenirs du Chevalier de Valous (1790-1793)* (Paris, 1930), p. 5.

68 Quoted in Lowell Joseph Ragatz, *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833* (New York and London, 1928), pp. 31-2.

posted to the West Indies as "undisciplined men" of "irregular habits" stalks them in the recent literature as relentlessly as it did in the eighteenth century.⁶⁹

Rates of desertion climbed when war and rumors of war drove soldiers away from the barracks and sailors off the ships, but, like all the other forms of popular resistance present in the Caribbean, desertion was a time-honored tradition in both war and peace by the close of the eighteenth century. Invitations to desert were not lacking. Discipline in colonial regiments was rigid and uncompromising; frequent epidemics ravaged the ranks of newly arrived troops, confined as they often were in close and unsanitary quarters; and many opportunities to participate in local cultures beckoned. Deserters from Spanish regiments enjoyed the unique option of taking refuge in churches, where law and custom protected them from apprehension. But others of all nationalities eagerly shipped themselves aboard small merchant or contrabanding vessels, lost themselves in cities, or wandered from place to place as vagrants.

In the early 1790s, the political currents then swirling about the Atlantic basin also led soldiers and sailors to desertion and other more direct forms of resistance to military authority. Advertisements for deserters in Jamaica regiments suggest such political avenues of explanation. For example, many reports describe deserters of Irish background. James Regan, whose heavy brogue branded him as distinctive, deserted the Kingston barrack in 1792, taking with him the clothes, money, and even the commission of his English captain. He then hired a horse and a young black guide, traveled across the island to "one of the Northside ports," and tried unsuccessfully to pass himself off as his captain in an effort to gain passage off the island.⁷⁰ A group of five deserters from the 62nd Regiment which absconded around the same time included only one Englishman and three Irishmen.⁷¹ Henry Hamilton, another native of Ireland and a weaver by trade, left the barrack at Stony Hill with an older Scottish comrade,

69 See Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven and London, 1979), pp. 3, 166n.

70 *Royal Gazette*, 4 August, 1 September 1792.

71 *Royal Gazette*, 20 October 1792.

also a weaver, in August, 1793.⁷² The apparent unrest among Irish soldiers and seamen in royal service in the early 1790s coincides closely with the emergence of nationalist republicanism in Ireland, a new and vital stage in the developing opposition to British rule. If deserters from British regiments in the West Indies included Irish dissidents, such activity provides some background to the role which the United Irishmen would play in the naval mutinies of 1797 at Spithead and the Nore. In the Caribbean itself, such a radical stream might sometimes find an immediate outlet in local struggles against the British. Just after the black rebels of Saint-Domingue captured Cap Français in the late spring of 1793, the commander of a British armed cutter serving off the coast of the rebellious colony identified a notorious "Irishman of prodigious size" and thick brogue as "a deserter from his cutter, on board of which he had acted as boatswain." The deserter had recently been spotted as one of the motley crew of a large "rowboat, armed with fifty or sixty men of all colors" which preyed on British and American shipping and had apparently made common cause with the black rebels on land.⁷³

The wide-ranging efforts of colonial governments to discourage such behavior echo parallel efforts to control runaway slaves. In Jamaica, advertisements for military deserters appeared in newspapers on the same pages as notices for slave deserters, and apprehended deserters could expect the kind of swift and severe punishment routinely meted out to rebellious slaves. Early in 1791, military authorities sentenced "a marine and a seaman" guilty of deserting one of the king's warships in Port Royal to receive 500 lashes each, though later "the Admiral humanely remitted half the punishment."⁷⁴ Governors,

72 *Royal Gazette*, 17 August 1793.

73 Samuel G. Perkins, *Reminiscences of the Insurrection in St. Domingo* (Cambridge, 1886), pp. 72-3. See Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven and London, 1982), pp. 17-34, for a general discussion of the early development of Irish republicanism and its relationship to the French Revolution.

74 *Kingston Daily Advertiser*, 6 January 1791, file in American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts (hereinafter AAS). See also the case of the deserted sailor apprehended and brought to trial in Port Royal in June 1792. The court sentenced him "to be flogged from ship to ship" as an example to the other

officers, the Assembly, and private citizens also offered bounties for aid in the recovery of deserters, in much the same fashion as they did for absent slaves. Often the lines between different forms of desertion became blurry indeed. For example, when authorities apprehended mulatto Josef Isidro Puncel at two in the morning near the gates of the central plaza in Havana, they jailed him as a runaway slave, only to find upon closer investigation that he was actually a free deserter from the armada.⁷⁵ On the other hand, since the security of planters, merchants, colonial officials, and their families depended in large measure upon the strength, loyalty, and readiness of military forces, they enjoyed some leeway which runaway slaves did not possess. Early in 1789 and again four years later, as the prospect of war loomed on the horizon, the Spanish Crown attempted to bring deserters back into the fold by issuing an amnesty covering all those found guilty of desertion and contrabanding, both at large and in prison.⁷⁶

One particular incident of desertion involving a group of British regimental musicians provides a rare glimpse into Governor Balcarres's "Pandora's Box"—the complex urban underground protecting fugitives from the discipline of Caribbean slave society. Too often ignored by military historians, musicians were integral to British army regiments in the West Indies and elsewhere, and their role as well as their numbers appear to have expanded between the middle of the eighteenth century and the era of the Napoleonic wars.⁷⁷ As military bands in Europe broadened both in size and instrumentation during this period, black musicians became increasingly prominent and by the 1780s could be found playing beside whites in all parts

sailors in the fleet entertaining similar ideas. The punishment added up to a painful total of eighty-four lashes. *Royal Gazette*, 23 June 1792.

75 Juan Manuel García Chicano to Las Casas, La Habana, 12 July 1794, AGI, Cuba, leg. 1465.

76 Juan Guillelmi to Valdés, Caracas, 30 April 1789, AGI, Caracas, leg. 113; Pedro Carbonell to Campo de Alange, Caracas, 31 July 1793, AGI, Caracas, leg. 94; Las Casas to Campo de Alange, La Habana, 11 June 1793, AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1261.

77 H. C. B. Rogers, *The British Army of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1977), pp. 43–4.

of the continent. Crashing cymbals and beating kettledrums, tambourines, bass drums, triangles, and so-called "Jingling Johnnies," blacks in British bands brought with them new sounds which the bands eagerly incorporated as part of the ongoing process of cultural borrowing which had always characterized British military music.⁷⁸ More extensive borrowing occurred in the West Indies. In the islands, blacks appeared in European military bands very early in the century; black drummers performed in French regiments at least as early as the 1720s. By the end of the century, British regimental bands also drew readily upon black talent. The presence of local black musicians in these bands not only affected their music, but also provided disaffected British musicians routes of access to the vibrant musical culture of the islands and ultimately to the underground which nourished it.

In the 1790s in Jamaica, musicians from British regiments appear especially prone to desertion. This was certainly the case in the 10th Regiment of Foot stationed near Kingston. In April of 1793, the commanding officer of the 10th Regiment circulated in local newspapers notices for musicians who had absconded at different times that month. One of these deserters was Samuel Reed, an Irish "labourer" of about twenty-five who had played the clarinet and other instruments. Just days after Reed's disappearance, Joseph Lees, a drummer, left the barracks to join him.⁷⁹

Perhaps Reed and Lees were attempting to join two fellow musicians who had been absent for more than a year. In dramatic fashion late in February 1792, ten musicians—no doubt most of the band—had deserted from the 10th Regiment and headed for Kingston. Apparently the escape was well planned. The deserters first found shelter at the home of an old friend, a brown man called Jacob Hyam, who had himself recently served as a fifer to an artillery company in the same regiment. Closely following their trail, military authorities apprehended three of the musicians at Hyam's home; the rest escaped. Several days later, three more of the deserters were caught, this time hiding out at the home of "an old white woman named Mary Ellis"

78 Henry George Farmer, *Military Music* (London, 1950), pp. 35–7.

79 *Royal Gazette*, 4 May 1793.

who lived in a dark and seamy section of Kingston popularly known as "Damnation-alley." Here those tracking the four who remained at large discovered that only a day or two before, "finding themselves warmly pursued," the alert musicians "parted company, and took different routes." Two of the remaining four were soon taken up shortly before they boarded a vessel at Savanna-la-Mar.⁸⁰

By late March, then, only two of the original ten had managed to elude the authorities, George Theodorus Eskirkin (a native of Ireland known to friends simply as "Dorus") and Quebec native John Sims. Both Eskirkin and Sims were accomplished musicians whose talents and interests included but ranged beyond mastery of the staple instruments issued to military musicians—the flute, hautboy, fife, and clarinet. Eskirkin, in the words of his commander, could "beat the drum," and Sims enjoyed the "violin, violin-cello, harpsichord ... bassoon, and guitar." Although the musical backgrounds of these two men differed in fundamental ways from those of the local musicians, their interests in the types of percussive and stringed instruments popular among black musicians in Jamaica may have enabled them to find kindred spirits in the underground who continued to help them evade the clutches of their pursuers. After leaving Jacob Hyam (now confined in the parish jail for having harbored the fugitives) and Mary Ellis, Sims and Eskirkin remained a step ahead of the law and moved to nearby Spanish Town, where they were often seen in the company of another notorious musician, "a black man named Jack Nailor," like Sims "a Fiddler" who made his home somewhere "in the Jew market." Either under Nailor's tutelage or on their own, the two deserters began taking up disguises in order to lose themselves amid the comings and goings of the capital. Sometimes they appeared as British seamen, dressed in long black stockings and tarred baggy trousers; at other times they became Spanish, effecting accents and walking about with "coloured handkerchiefs tied about their heads, and striped linen jackets and trousers." By mid-summer, exasperated authorities had all but given up on trying to apprehend Eskirkin and Sims, whom they

⁸⁰ The saga of these deserters may be followed in the *Royal Gazette*, 24, 31 March, 5 May, 22 June 1792.

now described as literally indistinguishable from their darker-skinned companions in Kingston and Spanish Town. Said to be "fishing and shooting" along the southern coast, the two musicians had come to "look as brown as some people of colour." There is no record of either having been taken up and returned to military duty.

For Dorus and John, music proved to be the thread of common experience linking their adventure to the struggles of masterless men and women in Kingston's urban underground attempting to fashion a life outside the scrutiny of Caribbean officialdom. Their success reflects the difficulties these officials faced in disentangling the networks which permitted people of all types and descriptions to resist authority and assert a mobile existence. Such popular resistance and mobility would become key factors allowing for the transmission of the excitement of social revolution in the Caribbean. It is essential to recognize, however, that these networks were not confined discretely to single islands or areas but stretched to encompass entire regions. It is to this vital inter-island mobility—the world of ships and sailors—that we now turn our attention.