

“GENERALLY FITT TO BE TRUSTED”: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE MORAL
ECONOMIES OF SUGAR PLANTATIONS IN EARLY ANGLO-JAMAICA

by

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For Mum and Dad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: “FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS”: CAPITAL AND WHITE LABOURERS IN DEVELOPMENT OF BYBROOK PLANTATION, 1669 – 1676....	21
2.1 THE COKER CIRCLE, AN OVERVIEW	24
2.2 FINANCING BYBROOK	25
2.3 BUILDING BYBROOK	30
2.4 RECRUITING WHITE LABOUR FOR BYBROOK	35
2.5 THE JAMAICAN CIRCLE, AN OVERVIEW	39
2.6 WILLIAM WHALEY’S MANAGEMENT OF BYBROOK	44
2.7 CONCLUSION	52
CHAPTER THREE: “THEY MIXT GOOD & BAD ONES TOGETHER”: THE MARKET FOR ENSLAVED LABOUR AND BYBROOK’S SEARCH FOR PROFIT, 1678 – 1687	54
3.1 THE RISE OF AFRICAN SLAVERY IN THE ENGLISH CARIBBEAN.....	57
3.2 THE ROYAL AFRICAN COMPANY IN JAMAICA	59
3.3 THE BRISTOL CIRCLE	68
3.4 THE NEW JAMAICAN CIRCLE	78
3.5 CONCLUSION	86
CHAPTER FOUR: “BEING A WOMAN PAST CHILD”: WHITE WOMEN IN JAMAICA’S ECONOMY	89
4.1 WOMEN IN THE HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	91
4.2 WHITE WOMEN IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY JAMAICA	95

4.3	PRISCILLA’S CASE AND REPUTATION	100
4.4	MOVABLE OR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY?.....	107
4.5	WOMEN AS PROPERTY OWNERS.....	109
4.6	THE MISTRESS’ CASE.....	113
4.7	WOMEN AS WAGE EARNERS.....	115
4.8	CONCLUSION.....	122
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION		124
BIBLIOGRAPHY		138

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Sum of Disembarked African Captives in Barbados and Jamaica, 1674 – 1694	63
Table 3.2	Affiliation of Ships that Voyaged to Jamaica, 1672 – 1694	65
Table 3.3	The Royal African Company’s Embarkation, Disembarkation and Mortality Rates of Jamaican Bound Voyages, 1672 – 1692.....	68
Table 4.1	Female Landowners and Acreage, 1670	110

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1.1 “Novissima et Accuratissima Insulae Jamaicae Descriptio per Johannem Sellerum,” Map, *The John Carter Brown Library* [1672?]. 6
- Figure 1.2 Portion of letter from the Helyar manuscripts. William Whaley and Edward Atcherley to William Helyar, April 30, 1676. 11

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that white residents in seventeenth-century Jamaica circulated within an economy of obligation, or an economic culture in which character, reputation and trust were vital, particularly as it related to financial credit. Much like their contemporaries in England, Anglo-Jamaicans were keenly interested in the integrity of obligations they undertook with individuals in England and in Jamaica. Anglo-Jamaicans also integrated new institutions, like African-based labour systems, into their own understandings of character.

This thesis looks at the social networks, or the social and economic ties between individuals, that ran through Bybrook. Bybrook was an early example of a sugar plantation in Jamaica and was owned by the Helyar family between 1669 and 1713. The research is based on transcriptions of the Helyar manuscripts, a set of private letters, account books and other miscellaneous documents written during their ownership of the plantation.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

In August 1664, Cary Helyar wrote a letter to his elder brother, William Helyar, a resident of East Coker in Somerset, England. In it, he declared his intention to embark on what was to be his final adventure: settle in Jamaica and carve out a place for himself and his family in England's burgeoning Caribbean economies. "Here [the Spanish-controlled island of Tenerife] is a ship bound for Jamaica," he wrote, "upon which I intend God willing to imbarque & there settle ... for I am weary of rouling, I will therefore fix & grow mossy although it bee upon my skull."¹ Brothers Cary and William Helyar purchased 466-acres in St. Katherine's parish 1669 as a joint business venture. Over the course of the next forty-four years, the Helyar family remained the owners of what became Bybrook Plantation and navigated the ups-and-downs of the sugar estate. During their tenure at Bybrook, there were births, deaths, marriages, mistresses, lawsuits, profits, debts, betrayal and even murder by dung fork.² It was an eventful forty-four years as the Helyar family tried to carve their place in Jamaica's emerging sugar industry, to say the least.

¹ The Helyar manuscripts are housed in the Somerset Records Office at Taunton, DD/WHh 1089, 1090, 1151 and Addenda Papers 12. All notes that follow are a reference to these papers unless otherwise stated. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, August 10, 1664.

² Richard Smith attended a dinner party at a friend's plantation in which one of the other guests, Francis Brookes "fell in to... a fitt" and physically confronted several of the other guests, including Smith. He was temporarily calmed down by Doctor Mason, but then tackled the Doctor and took his bayonet. According to Smith, he threatened to kill the doctor and hit him with the bayonet, "which made Some Impression but not verie deepe." Brooked then "fell afowle" of William Ruming and bit off a portion of his nose before running to the stables on the plantation. Mrs. Francis, Samuel French and William Rush followed him to the stables in a bid to calm him down but Francis Brookes then killed William Rush with a dung fork. Brookes was arrested shortly afterwards and was still awaiting trial at the time of the letter. Richard Smith to John Helyar, March 18, 1689/90.

Cary arrived in the first decade of English settlement in Jamaica, which was taken by Oliver Cromwell's government in 1655.³ Though Cromwell's Western Design failed in its intended outcome, which was to take Hispaniola from Spanish control, Jamaica was located in an important strategic location for the English. It was England's closest possession to the Spanish mainland and thus opened up new possibilities for legal and illegal trading opportunities with the Spanish.⁴ In fact, this is likely what first attracted Cary Helyar to Jamaica, as the island was far from settled in its earliest decade of English settlement.⁵ Particularly in this first decade, political instability and piracy was shaped the experience of early Anglo-Jamaican settlers. Following their conquest of the island, commanders of Cromwell's army and navy left the colony as quickly and, by doing so, left the island with little in the way of naval protection.⁶ As one of the few commanding officers on the island, Colonel Edward D'Oyley effectively became the leader of the struggling colony, but Cromwell himself was hesitant to invest money in the island and thus the supply ships that arrived from England did not offer adequate support to the remaining troops and their families on the island.⁷ Moreover, the Western Design had not rid the island entirely of the Spanish or their enslaved laborers' and, as a result, the colonists often fended off their attacks on their settlements, in the south of the island. It

³ For more on the Western Design, see S. A. G. Taylor, *The Western Design: An Account of Cromwell's Expedition to the Caribbean* (London: Solstice Publications, 1969).

⁴ For the trading connections between Jamaica and the Spanish colonists, see Nuala Zahedieh, "The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655 – 1692," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, 4 (Oct. 1986): 570 - 593.

⁵ Previous to living in Jamaica, Cary Helyar had traded illegally with Spain. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, August 22, 1662, December 13, 1662, February 3, 1663, August 10, 1664.

⁶ John A. Coakley, "Agents of Colony and Crown: The Politics of Sea Raiding in English Jamaica, 1655 – 1701" (PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2014): 49 – 50.

⁷ Coakley, "Agents of Colony and Crown," 49. Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655 – 89," *The Economic History Review* 39, 2 (May 1986): 211.

took many years for the English to regain control of the north of the island, where these Spaniards and Maroons lived.⁸

Historians have often described early Anglo-Jamaica as a haven for piracy.⁹ Indeed, men from Cromwell's navy made up a large proportion of the Jamaica's earliest sea-raiding crews – some even continued to wear the red coats of Cromwell's army.¹⁰ Moreover, in a letter written in 1657, D'Oyley invited pirates from Tortuga, an island off the north coast of Hispaniola, to settle in Jamaica. Historians have often categorized this letter as an attempt by D'Oyley's to protect the island from attacks by the Spanish because the island had little naval support from England.¹¹ D'Oyley used the nearby buccaneers to protect Cagway Bay, or as it was later known Port Royal, in lieu of an official naval force. Historian Carla Pestana has recently challenged this assumption, stating that it was not his attempt to protect the island from outside forces, but from internal threats.¹² There were roaming herds of cattle on the island when the English began to settle it and, in the first two years after their settlement, the settlers had killed a large number of them for food, but had wasted much of the meat.¹³ Given that the island did not receive sufficient provisions to support itself from England, this wastage of food likely concerned D'Oyley. Pestana believes that he invited the buccaneers, who also hunted on Tortuga, to the island to control the food supply by regulating the livestock

⁸ Carla Pestana, *The English Atlantic in the Age of Revolution, 1640 – 1661* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2004), 195.

⁹ Zahedieh, "Merchants of Port Royal." And "Trade, Plunder and Economic Development," 215 – 216. Carla Gardina Pestana, "Early English Jamaica Without the Pirates," *William and Mary Quarterly* 71 (July 2014): 321 – 360.

¹⁰ Coakley, "Agents of Colony and Crown," 10. Pestana, *The English Atlantic in the Age of Revolution*, 199.

¹¹ For a recent example, see Jon Latimer, *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How Piracy Forged an Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹² Pestana, "Jamaica Without the Pirates," 323 – 324.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 323.

hunts. In doing so, he would be able to ensure that the island's food supply remained consistent even without provisions from elsewhere in the English Atlantic world.¹⁴

Along with the attacks from within and outside of the group of English settlers on the island, the Spanish also left infrastructure for sugar plantations.¹⁵ This has led some historians to focus solely on the production of the sugar economy and, for the most part, the road to the Anglo-Jamaican sugar economy followed a similar path to that of Barbados. Jamaican planters did not settle firstly on sugar, but planted a variety of exports, including indigo, animal hides and cocoa before they had enough capital, be it social or financial, to invest in the necessary sugar infrastructure.¹⁶ While sugar made up the lion's share of Jamaica's exports by the turn of the eighteenth century, Jamaica remained a relatively diversified economy in the English Caribbean, unlike Barbados, which produced sugar to the exclusion of other crops.

Bybrook Plantation was an early example of a sugar plantation in Anglo-Jamaica and, it seems, Cary Helyar intended it to be such when he purchased his patent for land in St. Katherine's Parish (Figure 1).¹⁷ He purchased the land in partnership with his brother, William, in 1669 and quickly set off to transform the land into a productive and profitable sugar plantation. Cary was likely convinced by his close business associate Sir Thomas Modyford to purchase the land for Bybrook. It was an expensive undertaking for both

¹⁴ Ibid., 323 – 324.

¹⁵ Zahedieh estimates the Spanish left seven sugar works on the island in "Trade, Plunder and Economic Development," 207.

¹⁶ For an overview of the Barbadian context, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth-Century: A New Perspective on the Barbadian "Sugar Revolution,"" in *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450 – 1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 289 – 330.

¹⁷ Richard Dunn included a good narrative overview of Bybrook in Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1714* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 212 – 223.

brothers, but as partners, the brothers agreed to individually assume one-half of the costs associated with the construction of the plantation and split the profits evenly between them.¹⁸ Moreover, the Helyar brothers viewed Bybrook as a long-term investment, which would be inherited by their sons.¹⁹ However, when Cary died in 1672, he did so before he recognized a legitimate heir to his portion of the estate and passed on his share to William Helyar's godson and Cary's assistant on the plantation, William Whaley. Saddled with Cary's substantial debts, Whaley sold his share to William Helyar in 1673 and thus made Helyar the sole owner of the plantation, debts and all.²⁰

¹⁸ Cary mentioned the terms of their partnership in Cary Helyar to William Helyar, April 15, 1671.

¹⁹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

²⁰ William Whaley, August 15, 1671.

despite Cary's efforts.²¹ By the time of Whaley's death in 1676, Bybrook housed a complete sugar works and the largest number of labourers, both bound and unbound, of estates inventoried between 1674 and 1678 in Jamaica.²² Helyar received his first hogshead of sugar from Bybrook in 1677, no doubt a direct result of Whaley's efforts to develop the plantation. Three men briefly managed Bybrook collectively after Whaley's death, but were quickly replaced by Thomas Hillyard in 1678.²³ Hillyard was the longest serving manager of Bybrook while the Helyar's were owners, as he managed Bybrook for nearly a decade. Helyar was initially pleased with Hillyard's management of Bybrook, as he regularly received shipments of Bybrook's produce, including sugar, chocolate and tamarind. By 1683, however, Helyar noted that Hillyard relied too heavily on Helyar to send provisions to Bybrook, an expense that Helyar was not able to offset by the sale of Bybrook's sugar, which was of a distinctly lower quality than other sugar sent from the Caribbean.²⁴ He therefore sent his second eldest son, John, to replace Hillyard as the manager of the plantation. However, Hillyard refused to leave his post when John arrived in Jamaica so the Helyar's turned to legal arbitration in order to regain control of Bybrook.²⁵ By 1687, John was firmly installed as the manager of Bybrook. With John as the head of Bybrook, the Helyar's finally reaped the benefits of their investment in the Jamaican sugar economy. John grew restless in Jamaica, however, as he unwilling to settle down and marry in Jamaica and thus returned to England to begin the next phase of

²¹ Bennett, "Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 76.

²² Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 217.

²³ Edward Atcherley and Joseph Bryan, March 2, 1676/7.

²⁴ John Napper to William Helyar, April 8, 1685.

²⁵ Abraham Wilson to William Helyar, October 15, 1686. John Helyar to William Helyar, December 20, 1686.

his life in 1691.²⁶ Gilbert and Joshua Heathcote replaced John as managers of Bybrook, and sugar production once again fell as the plantation's debts rose accordingly. Though John Austin, the Helyar family's servant, was sent over to replace the Heathcote brothers and reverse Bybrook's downward trend, the plantation remained largely unprofitable for William Helyar.²⁷

William Helyar's death in 1697 marked the beginning of the end for the Helyar's ownership of Bybrook. His two sons, William and John, inherited Bybrook and continued to try to squeeze profits out of the struggling plantation, which required a significant overhaul in order to become profitable. The sugar works on the plantation were now almost twenty years old and required repairs, the enslaved labourers were dying quickly from disease or overwork and their storehouse was an easy target for thieves.²⁸ Indeed, by 1704, Thomas Whitson, a Jamaican merchant who the brothers had contracted in 1698 to send sugar to Bybrook, blocked the brothers from planting anything at Bybrook until they repaid their debts to him.²⁹ In order to do this, William and John sold half of Bybrook to John Halsted, who also took over the management of the plantation.³⁰ While Halsted improved the plantation and regularly shipped sugar to the Helyar's, the Helyar's profits from the plantation were remarkable small – they received a total of £173 between 1710 and 1713 – and the sold they agreed to sell the rest of their share in Bybrook to Halsted's son-in-law, William Gibbons.³¹ The Helyar's tenure as the heads of Bybrook

²⁶ John Helyar to William Helyar (Junior), June 30, 1690. John Helyar to William Helyar, August 10, 1691.

²⁷ Kineth Powell to John Helyar, July 19, 1695.

²⁸ Robert Hall to William and John Helyar, April 16, 1700.

²⁹ William Helyar to John Walters, December 2, 1704.

³⁰ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 221 – 222.

³¹ William Gibbons, to John Austin, to be forwarded by Joseph Way, December 15, 1713.

was therefore over and, for much of their ownership of the land in St. Katherine's Parish, the costs far outweighed the benefits.

For historians, the trials and tribulations of the first few years in Bybrook are largely unremarkable as larger considerations of the rise of sugar in the English Caribbean and the mass importation of captured Africans to the growing plantations take center stage in the historiography.³² Though the development of Bybrook Plantation may seem like the exception to the rule, its study opens new possibilities for reinterpreting the development of early Anglo-Jamaican society. There is relatively little known about the role of interpersonal relationships in the development of the sugar economy in Jamaica and an in-depth study of Bybrook reveals some of the twists and turns early Jamaican planters took on the road to sugar. The history of the early English settlement in Jamaica suffers from few first-hand accounts from planters or plantations. Accordingly, histories of this early period of settlement have tended towards political and economic histories of the island, particularly in recent years.³³ These political and economic histories obscure trends on the ground, including the influence of social networks and character in the development of the Jamaican sugar economy. An in-depth examination of the early years of Bybrook is an antidote to this problem and an investigation of those intimately

³² For the development of Bybrook Plantation specifically, see J. Harry Bennett's articles "Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 53 – 76 and "William Whaley, Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *Agricultural History* 40, 2 (Apr. 1966): 113 – 124. The best studies of the development of the sugar economy in Jamaica remain Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623 – 1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) and Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*. See also the work of Nuala Zahedieh, particularly "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development" and "The Merchants of Port Royal." See also David Eltis, "New Estimates of Exports from Barbados and Jamaica, 1655 – 1701," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, 4 (Oct. 1995): 631 – 648.

³³ See Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development," and "The Merchants of Port Royal." See also Eltis, "New Estimates of Exports." For the development of the Jamaican economy beyond sugar, see Verene A. Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica* (Kingston; Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009). For the most recent examples of this trend, see Pestana, "Early English Jamaica without Pirates," and Coakley, "Agents of Colony and Crown."

involved in the foundation of Bybrook reveals the importance of social networks in its development. The necessary financial capital, skilled labor and other supplies to establish a successful plantation flowed through social networks.

Bybrook Plantation and the Helyar manuscripts have appeared in several histories the seventeenth century (Figure 2). Most notably, the late J. Harry Bennett used the first decade of the manuscripts to write two articles on the development of Bybrook - one centered on the years in which Cary Helyar was at the helm of Bybrook, while the second shifted focus to William Whaley, Cary's successor at Bybrook.³⁴ These articles remain the only scholarly publications to use the Helyar manuscripts as the central primary source for their research. Beyond Bennett's articles, historians have used the Helyar manuscripts as a complement to other primary sources and bolster their findings about early Anglo-Jamaican society. As an early example of a sugar plantation in Jamaica, the Helyar manuscripts have appeared most frequently in narratives of the creation of the sugar industry in Jamaica and the wider English Atlantic.³⁵ More recently, historians have broadened their analysis of the letters and accounts of Bybrook in order to prove their arguments about the effect of early English Caribbean societies on English society and English regionalism in the Caribbean.³⁶

³⁴ Bennett, "Cary Helyar" and "William Whaley."

³⁵ Since Bennet's articles "Cary Helyar," and "William Whaley" they have also been used most notably and most extensively in Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves and Zahedieh*, "Trade, Plunder and Economic Development."

³⁶ For examples of recent publications in which historians used the Helyar manuscripts, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640 – 1700* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2007). See also Matthew Mulcahy, *Hubs of Empire: The Southeastern Lowcountry and British Caribbean* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

M^r William Helyar: Jamaica April the 30th 1676

The Reason of letting Slipp soe many opportunities of writing unto you was occasioned by my Sicknes which I am daily troubled with the fever and Cough as all too m^{ch} I fearely w^o have a hard bout of it being taken Sick in few dayes after hee arrived but is pritty well recovered againe, soe that neither of us were able to write, and had hee not beene taken Sick, I had gone to the Caymanes, in order to the recovering of my health, a place aboute some forty leagues where people praye god for that purpose, and what with the change of the Limont and the Turble which is all the floods there It generally kills or cures, and I think I must make a tripp farther at last, for I cannot by any means gett rid of this fever and Cough, which dooeth mee mightly weake, as for the affairs of the plantation thanke God to God they are in good order and by own

Figure 1.2: Portion of letter from the Helyar manuscripts. William Whaley and Edward Acherley to William Helyar, April 30, 1676.

The research for this thesis centers on the Helyar manuscripts, a set of letters and count books that stretches the length of the Helyar's ownership of Bybrook Plantation. As a source for researchers of seventeenth century Jamaica, they are second to none, as they offer insight into groups and individuals otherwise not preserved in the historical record, including indentured labourers, enslaved Africans and women. Though the letters of the Helyar manuscripts were written for and about one plantation, they are likely representative of the thousands of plantation owners and managers who travelled to Jamaica in the seventeenth century to benefit from the riches of the Caribbean. These individuals also sought the necessary knowledge, financial capital and resources to develop and manage their plantations and likely faced similar successes and challenges in the process. Yet, the Helyar manuscripts are exceptional by their very existence. They are

an exceedingly rare source for the seventeenth-century Caribbean both for their breadth of information – they span over four decades - and the detail they provide of events on Bybrook and beyond. Indeed, the manuscripts detailed events both big and small in the lives of those connected to Bybrook, from major resistance of enslaved Africans to the quantity of provisions imported to Bybrook for their consumption. In fact, the manuscripts describe interactions with a large swath of early Anglo-Jamaican society, from governors to rum-punch women. They are a rich account of life in seventeenth-century Jamaica that offer insight into the political, social and economic structures that defined the development of Anglo-Jamaica. In addition to the manuscripts, state papers, monumental inscriptions and maps were helped place the events in the letters and the transactions in the account books in the larger context of early Anglo-Jamaica and the English Atlantic world.

In order to maximize Bybrook Plantation as a window into the larger culture of seventeenth-century Jamaica, the primary documents have been analyzed through the lens of social networks. In this thesis, social networks are defined as the social and economic ties between individuals. These ties demonstrated that the social networks of Bybrook existed both within a local and a larger Atlantic context, as individuals operated within networks that were centered in Jamaica and in East Coker, Somerset, where the Helyar family was based. The social networks were examined as egocentric networks, in which the ties of the individual were used to connect them to larger social networks and examine the ways in which they used their ties in the development and maintenance of their place within early Anglo-Jamaica.³⁷

³⁷ Charles Wetherell, “Historical Social Network Analysis,” *International Review of Social History* 43 (1998): 127 - 128

There are four main principles that underpin the methodology of social network analysis.³⁸ The first is that the individuals are part of a mutually dependent network and are therefore not independent actors within the social structure around them; they rely on others in their networks to succeed. Secondly, this methodology understands social networks, or groups, formed between individuals as the basis for the transfer of resources that are both tangible, like captured Africans, and intangible, like social support or knowledge. Thirdly, social networks are understood to be both beneficial and harmful to the individuals that operate within them, as they can inhibit and increase the opportunities presented to the individual. Finally, social network analysis considers the social network as the foundation on which larger social structures, like kinship and class, are built. Social institutions then do not define social networks, but were defined by the patterns developed through many different social networks. This final point was summed up nicely by Andrejs Plakans and Charles Wetherell, who explain “the ‘social network’ [as] the amalgamation of ties among actors and the ‘social structure’ [as] the pattern those ties assume.”³⁹

In viewing the letters and account books through the lens of social networks, it is apparent that early Anglo-Jamaicans operated within an economy of obligation. An economy of obligation describes an economic culture in which character, reputation and trust was vital, particularly in the extension of financial credit. Indeed, Craig Muldrew argues that individuals in seventeenth-century England did not recognize credit as modern banks do – as a quantifiable economic unit - but as a descriptor of an individual’s

³⁸ Andrejs Plakans and Charles Wetherell, “Household and Kinship Networks: The Cost and Benefits of Contextualization,” *Continuity and Change* 18 (2003): 56. Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4.

³⁹ Plakans and Wetherell, “Household and Kinship Networks,” 56.

trustworthiness.⁴⁰ Within the economy of obligation, historians have defined two different types of credit relationships: formal and informal.⁴¹ Formal relationships required a legal or written notice between the parties, such as a bill of exchange in credit relationships. Informal relationships were more akin to a favor done for a friend, such as fixing a broken roller in a sugar mill. In both cases, the two parties were bound to each other until the obligation had been satisfactorily met.⁴² In a formal credit relationship, this required the debt to be paid, while, in an informal relationship, the recipient was bound by conventions of reciprocity and this meant they were expected to reciprocate the other party's generosity in the future.⁴³

In both formal and informal credit relationships, credit was extended to individuals based on trust. Their trustworthiness, or character, was determined by the community-at-large and was thus a socially constructed identity. As Muldrew described it, "more than anything, credit was a public means of social communication and circulating judgment about the value of other members of the community."⁴⁴ If one was not able to access credit, they were likely considered by the community to be an

⁴⁰ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 3.

⁴¹ For an overview of the relationship between character and credit in the early modern era see Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740–1914* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Craig Muldrew's excellent study *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). For definitions of formal and informal economies as well as their influence in the lives of early modern individuals, see the work of Daniel Vicker, particularly his more recent work "Errors Expected: The Culture of Credit in Rural New England, 1750 – 1800" *Economic History Review* 63, no. 4 (2010): 1032 – 1057. And "Credit and Misunderstanding on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts (1683 – 1763)" *Quaderni storici* 137, 2 (2011): 415 – 440. For an examination of trust and the economy of obligation beyond the English Atlantic world, see Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks* (Suffolk, U.K.; Rochester N.Y.: Boydell Press, 2010).

⁴² Vickers, "Errors Expected," 1040.

⁴³ For the effect informal relationships on the larger economic culture of the early modern era, see Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

individual of poor character but if one was able to access credit easily, it reflected well on their character. Their trustworthiness could be partially based on the past actions of the individuals. If someone had previously been unable to fulfill their obligation, it not only broke the bond of trust between the lender and the recipient, but it affected their ability to access credit in the future as it affected how they were viewed by the community around them: individuals of poor character did not fulfill their obligations.⁴⁵ Lenders evaluated the trustworthiness of the recipients as the lender had to believe, or trust, that the lender would fulfill the obligation. Someone unable to fulfill formal or informal obligations was thought to be dishonest, as it was judged they misrepresented their character in the initial agreement.⁴⁶ An individual of good character was thought to be an individual of honesty, integrity and an individual able to honour the formal or informal agreements in which they partook.⁴⁷

Because the community determined the trustworthiness of the individual, the economy of obligation worked as a form of social cohesion. This was particularly important in a colony that was still defining its social structure, like Anglo-Jamaica. It required trust between neighbours, who were their partners in both formal and informal credit relationships, and herein lies one of the fundamental principles of the economy of obligation: community. They were not independent economic actors, but dependent on

⁴⁵ On the importance of character and credit in trans-Atlantic credit networks, see Nuala Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90 – 103. See also Nuala Zahedieh, “Credit, Risk and Reputation in Late Seventeenth-Century Colonial Trade,” In *Merchant Organization and Maritime Trade in the North Atlantic, 1660–1815*, eds. Olaf Uwe Janzen, 53–74. (Research in Maritime History. St. John’s, NL: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1998).

⁴⁶ See Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, 66 – 74.

⁴⁷ Zahedieh, *The Capital and the Colonies*, 94 – 96.

their community for economic security and profits.⁴⁸ In fact, the relationship between the borrower and the community is better termed as interdependent, because the default of an individual on their debt had far-reaching consequences for the community.⁴⁹ Individuals within the community understood that if someone defaulted on their debt, it affected the amount of credit available for them to borrow. The community members therefore kept a close eye on each other to keep their credit markets operational. They frowned on individuals who spent too lavishly but were equally uneasy about individuals who lent money too often.⁵⁰ Yet, the community was more forgiving of poor households who defaulted on debts than wealthier households that were unable to pay back debt, as they believed they propped up the lavish lifestyle of the individual and unwittingly paid for their extravagant goods.⁵¹ Moreover, one's place within the social hierarchy was also heavily weighted when judging another's character.⁵² Good character was considered, at least partially, an inherited trait, as gentlemen were instilled with good character by virtue of their noble blood.⁵³ Character then partially helped reinforce social hierarchy as financial credit was most often extended to those of similar social standing, but credit networks touch a variety of levels of the social hierarchy.⁵⁴

Craig Muldrew's work on the economy of obligation of early modern England is amongst the most effective work on the subject and historians across diverse research fields often cite his definitions. He applied the economy of obligation to day-to-day transactions of individuals and argued that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

⁴⁸ Craig Muldrew, "Interpreting the Market: The Ethics of Credit and Community Relations in Early Modern England," *Social History* 18, 2 (May, 1993): 169.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 178 – 179.

⁵¹ Muldrew, *Economy of Obligation*, 4.

⁵² Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, 52 -56.

⁵³ Shapin, *Social History of Truth*, 406 – 407.

⁵⁴ Vickers, "Errors Expected," 1037 – 1038 and Finn, *Character of Credit*, 9.

individuals “were not simply or even primarily concerned with self-interest in the Smithian sense, and did not interpret their behavior in such terms.”⁵⁵ They operated within an economy of obligation, in other words, in which trust and character were the basis for the economy. In the context of the English Atlantic world, debates about the economy of obligation most often appears in the work of historians of New England.⁵⁶ They have found a striking similarity between the economy of obligation that operated in England and New England.

Historical social network analysis is particularly well suited to an investigation of the economy of obligation of seventeenth-century Anglo-Jamaica because both the networks and the economy of obligation at Bybrook crossed geographical, cultural and gender lines. Its connection to other parts of the Atlantic world is not in question, but the extensiveness of these connections is. By looking at Bybrook in the context of an economy of obligation and by looking at their use of financial and material resources, this framework demonstrates that many in early Anglo-Jamaica maintained a strong connection to England and the British Isles. These connections were more than kinship ties and the financial interactions between individuals in early Anglo-Jamaica bore the distinct signs of an economy of obligation. Indeed, the economy of obligation in Anglo-Jamaica undoubtedly began as a replication of England’s and, much as it had done in England, worked as a force of social cohesion amongst the white population of the island. This problematizes traditional notions in the historiography that stress the exceptionalism

⁵⁵ Muldrew, “Interpreting the Market,” 169.

⁵⁶ For examples, see the work of Stephen Innes, ed. *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Richard Lyman Bushman, “Markets and Composite Farms in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 55, 3 (July 1998): 351 – 374. Naomi R. Lamoreaux, “Rethinking the Transition to Capitalism in the Early American Northeast,” *Journal of American History* 90, 2 (Sept. 2003): 437 – 461. Vickers, “Errors Expected” and “Credit and Misunderstanding.”

of early Anglo-Jamaican society and England's other sugar islands within the wider English Atlantic world. In doing this, this thesis expands historians understanding of how individuals functioned within Jamaica's emerging sugar economy and re-frames their decisions within the larger economic culture of the contemporary English Atlantic world. The economic culture of early Anglo-Jamaica should not be seen as a distinct break from England and the values that guided their lending practices, but as a variation on a theme. In this sense, the economic culture in seventeenth-century Jamaica bore a striking resemblance to England's economy of obligation. This was particularly evident in institutions that were transplanted from England, like the importance placed on an individual's reputation when they borrowed financial credit. Their continued reliance on reputation and character to lend money then was the theme but Anglo-Jamaican settlers varied this theme if the institution did not exist in England. In this sense, Anglo-Jamaican variation on the theme of England's economy of obligation stemmed from institutions created in and particular to the emerging sugar economies in the English Caribbean, like the African-based labour system. Much like their contemporaries in England, Anglo-Jamaicans were keenly interested in the integrity of obligations they undertook with other merchants and planters on both sides of the Atlantic, but developed a new moral framework to manage new institutions. This was almost certainly the case in other English colonies as settlers throughout the English Atlantic developed new institutions and integrated these news institutions into their understandings of character and reputation.

For the sugar islands in the English Caribbean, this evolution in the economy of obligation happened in the seventeenth century as the sugar economies developed.

Accordingly, this thesis largely focuses on the last three decades of the seventeenth century as Jamaica developed its own sugar economy. It does not seek to address or contextualize the institutions of the eighteenth-century British Caribbean, but treats the events in the context of the seventeenth century. In doing so, this thesis avoids the teleological tendency of some historians of the seventeenth century Caribbean, who too often explore the seventeenth century to explain the institutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The teleological approach to the seventeenth century has obscured and oversimplified the culture of the first decades of development of the sugar industry in the English Caribbean. In order to truly understand the economic culture of seventeenth-century Jamaica, it must be treated as a standalone century for historical inquiry.

This thesis looks at the social networks that ran through Bybrook to look at the ways in which individuals created and operated within an economy of obligation in early Anglo-Jamaica. Through the Helyar's ownership of Bybrook, individuals used social networks to exploit economic and social opportunities in early Anglo-Jamaica. In chapter two, I will examine how Cary Helyar used his connections in England to recruit labourers and financial credit for the plantation, while he used his connections in Jamaica to learn about sugar planting. Through this, he gained the economic and social mobility to invest in, build and successfully manage a sugar plantation. In the third chapter, I will show how John Helyar used his connections to move towards the margins of economic activity in early Anglo-Jamaica where he illegally purchased African captives. Yet, he also used his connections in Jamaica to purchase captives from the Royal African Company, when it was to his advantage. He therefore used his social connections in order to exploit the flexible nature of seventeenth century Jamaica's economy. Sugar planting was the central

economic activity in early Anglo-Jamaica. The fourth chapter parses the role women played in the economy of early Anglo-Jamaica. Women's role in the early Anglo-Jamaica economy was just as multifaceted as men's involvement in the economy and, much like men, was determined by their race and position in the social hierarchy. The final chapter is therefore divided between elite and labouring white women to define the role both of these groups played within the larger economy. The aim of this research is to examine the ways the moving parts of early Anglo-Jamaica – the planters, free and bound labourers and women – fit together in order to create and maintain the world in which they lived. Through an examination of the Helyar's tenure at Bybrook plantation, it was evident that the economy in seventeenth-century Jamaica was one in which who you were and who you knew determined your access to material and immaterial goods, like financial credit, free and bound labourers, and provisions for the plantation.

CHAPTER TWO

“FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS”: CAPITAL AND WHITE LABOURERS IN DEVELOPMENT OF BYBROOK PLANTATION, 1669 - 1676

In 1669, five years after he sailed across the Atlantic Ocean, Cary Helyar finally fulfilled his ambition in Jamaica: he acquired a plot of land on which to “fix & grow mossy.”⁵⁷ It was here that he built Bybrook Plantation. Though Cary knew very little of planting when he acquired this 466-acre plot in St. Katherine’s Parish, he was certain that he could not build a plantation alone. Therefore, in the first years of the plantation, Cary used his social networks to amass the necessary knowledge, financial capital and labour in order to create a viable plantation. One was centered at his family home in East Coker, his Coker circle, while the other was centered locally, his Jamaican circle. Both were uniquely influential on the settlement of Bybrook. While the Coker circle functioned largely as a means of financial and logistical support for the fledging plantation, his Jamaican circle formed the social and political basis for Cary’s life in Jamaica. In both cases, Cary’s entry and successful manipulation of these networks was predicated on larger social considerations of character. With the emphasis on character in social networks in both England and Jamaica, it was clear that Cary’s success was predicated on his success in the wider economic cultures on both sides of the Atlantic. Cary had to prove himself a man of good character in order to gain entry into these networks and, more importantly, continue to be viewed as such in order to get the necessary support and guidance from them. Upon his death in 1672, William Whaley took Cary’s place in both social networks without any noticeable change in their respective operations, at least initially. However, as time wore on, the good reputation he gained through his association

⁵⁷ The Helyar manuscripts are housed in the Somerset Records Office at Taunton, DD/WHh 1089, 1090, 1151 and Addenda Papers 12. All notes that follow are a reference to these papers unless otherwise stated. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, August 10, 1664.

with Cary Helyar wore off and his place within the Coker circle changed for the worse. Under Whaley's tenure, and particularly as his reputation waned, the further development of Bybrook was altered as he struggled to acquire financial and logistical support for the plantation from William Helyar. His actions were considered within the context of an English economy of obligation, and he failed to convince Helyar that he was trustworthy enough for the large amounts of financial capital necessary for a plantation. Yet, his Jamaican social network appeared to function as normal. Whaley's social network thus became increasingly localized and hinted at an emerging rift between English and Jamaican morals.

In its infancy, Bybrook Plantation struggled to carve out a place in the Jamaican landscape. Learning to negotiate this terrain in order to impose their vision of the Jamaican countryside was a learning curve second to none for Cary Helyar and his successor, William Whaley. Neither had experience in sugar planting nor in living and working in tropical environments. The Jamaican environment was unforgiving and full of unwanted surprises in the first seven years of Bybrook's development. In order to overcome challenges they encountered, Cary and Whaley leveraged their connections in both England and Jamaica to access important financial and human capital, as well as skilled white labourers. Their interactions within these larger social networks were important for the development of the plantation, but also as demonstrations of the role character played in the early years of Jamaica's sugar economy. These larger English-defined considerations of character were intimately entwined with their access to English credit and labour markets, as well as their social relationships in Jamaica. They functioned within an economy of obligation, in other words and their success within the

wider economic culture influenced the resources available to them. These resources were necessary to develop the plantation and the economy of obligation therefore played an important role in the early years of Bybrook Plantation.

For Cary, the relationships that had the most profound impacts on the development of the plantation were either a continuation of relationships formed prior to his arrival in Jamaica, like those individuals who composed his Coker circle - his brother William and their London merchant, Nicholas Warren, for example – or formed because of after his arrival Jamaica, like those with the Modyford family and Sir Hender Molesworth. Regardless of when and where these relationships were formed, they were based on the trustworthiness, or character, of the individuals. In this sense, the earliest years of Bybrook demonstrated not only that planters continued to function within the English economy of obligation in order to access financial credit and labour, but also within the economic culture in Jamaica. The study of these social networks problematizes the simple penchant for debauchery other historians, like Trevor Burnard, use to caricature early Anglo-Jamaican planters and society.⁵⁸ Because they needed resources from the financial and labour markets of England to develop Bybrook, Cary Helyar and William Whaley were still connected to the English economy of obligation. They were expected to maintain their reputation in the eyes of William Helyar and the other contacts in the Coker Circle in order to obtain important resources; they also had to prove their good character to other men in Jamaica in order to access local social networks. Both Cary and Whaley were a part of a social network with men of similar backgrounds and social standings. Their Jamaican circle acted therefore as a form of social cohesion, in

⁵⁸ Trevor Burnard, “‘The Countrie Continues Sicklie’: White Mortality in Jamaica, 1655 – 1780,” *Social History of Medicine* 12, 1 (1999): 47.

which individuals of similar social standing and background intermingled in social, political and business ventures. This circle helped re-create a social hierarchy similar to that of England. Through their successes and failures in accessing financial credit and knowledge as well as attracting and retaining skilled white labourers to the plantation, Cary Helyar and William Whaley demonstrated the persistence of England's economic culture in Jamaica.

2.1 The Coker Circle, An Overview

The foundation of Cary Helyar's first significant social network came courtesy of his family home, Coker Court in near East Coker, Somerset. A substantial amount of financial credit flowed through this network, as did a relatively steady supply of white labourers. Cary's primary contact in this circle was his elder brother, William, who resided at Coker Court with his family. William's influence within the Coker circle was keenly felt by all involved, no doubt due to his role as Cary's equal partner in Bybrook. As his equal partner in both debt and profit, it was in William's best interest to supply his brother's needs in a timely manner. In fact, it is hard to overvalue his impact on the development of the plantation, as William's impact on its earliest years was second to none. As the only permanent resident of England in this story of the divergence of Jamaican values from English ones, he functioned as a sort of litmus test for English values – he was immersed in and typical of the English economy of obligation. His judgment of an individuals' character carried significant weight in the business affairs of Bybrook. William Helyar controlled both Bybrook's purse strings and its English labour

supply, which meant that if he deemed an individual to be of bad character, he simply refused the request for more financial credit or labourers.

Beyond William, this circle also included merchants based in London and Bristol. Nicholas Warren, who worked in London, was the merchant most often mentioned during Cary's tenure at Bybrook. He provided Cary with the necessary supplies to run the plantation and represented the Helyar brother's interests in London when necessary.⁵⁹ He was a constant in the economic life of Bybrook until 1673. The Bristol merchants, Mr. Sparks and Mr. Rock, had a less consistent presence in the letters appeared primarily responsible for shipping indentured labourers to the plantation. Cary's Coker circle also encompassed his extended family in the British Isles, notably nephews he hoped would inherit a profitable plantation and a cousin, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, for whom Cary patented 4000-acres of land to start his own Jamaican plantation.⁶⁰ Though the men in this social network comprised only one-third of the associates Cary mentioned in his letters to his brother, it remained an important supply for some of the necessary financial capital, material goods and white labourers for Bybrook.

2.2 Financing Bybrook

The development of Bybrook Plantation was an expensive undertaking for the Helyar brothers. In fact, the development of sugar plantations was a consistently costly

⁵⁹ Nicholas Warren helped the Helyar brothers track down the young son, who lived in London of Cary's deceased neighbor, Daniel Fitch. They hoped to receive the patent for Fitch's land in St. Katherine's Parish from the son. This is detailed in Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 15, 1670; January 12, 1671; March 7, 1671; May 22, 1671. William Whaley to William Helyar, September 23, 1672. It can also be found in W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1669 – 1674* (H. M. Stationary Office, 1889), 1250 and 1301, no.1.

⁶⁰ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671; Cary Helyar to William Helyar, September 10, 1671.

endeavor throughout the English Caribbean.⁶¹ Nuala Zahedieh has estimated that it required £3,620:10:10 to raise a Jamaican sugar plantation by 1690 and by June 1672, Cary Helyar estimated he and his brother had already invested some £1,800 on the still uncompleted plantation.⁶² Both estimates were significant for any early modern planter or investor. It was considered, however, the key to obtaining financial wealth and was therefore deemed a necessary expense. The development of plantations was time intensive; it took many years for investors to see a return on their investment.⁶³ Moreover, the process of building the requisite structures alone was lengthy in the early modern Caribbean, as it required goods and labour to be sent from throughout the Atlantic world. As Cary explained to his elder brother, probably frustrated that after his significant contributions to the plantation he had yet to yield any returns on his investment, that “planting is like grain which seems to bee cast away & dead untill the spring”.⁶⁴ Spring, he assured William, was soon to come to Bybrook.

The Helyar brothers relied partially on English credit to help finance the growth of the plantation. Traditional narratives of the creation of the sugar economy in the English Caribbean contend that the Dutch provided the financial capital necessary for the English to invest in mills, sugar works and enslaved labourers to transform their small patches of land into large plantations.⁶⁵ While it is undeniable that the Dutch were the most financially innovative European power in the mid-seventeenth century, a narrative

⁶¹ For a look at the expenses incurred by Barbadian planters in setting up integrated sugar plantations, see Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), particularly Chapter Three.

⁶² Nuala Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655 – 89,” *The Economic History Review* 39, 2 (May 1986): 208. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, June 4, 1672.

⁶³ Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development,” 209.

⁶⁴ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, June 4, 1672.

⁶⁵ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1713* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 19.

of Dutch investment overlooks the emerging wealth of English merchants as well as their ambitions to stake their claim in the Caribbean.⁶⁶ Moreover, the Helyar manuscripts suggest that credit also came from further inland than the port cities; it also came from the landed gentry, like William Helyar.

As a partnership between the two brothers, Cary was meant to pay half the expenses for the development of Bybrook. Indeed, while Cary was able to fund his share at least partially from his business in Jamaica, it appeared this did not provide Cary with sufficient capital to cover his half of the plantation. Cary regularly drew bills of exchange from English sources, particularly from London merchants like Nicholas Warren.⁶⁷ While William's trail of credit is harder to judge from the records, there is ample qualitative evidence that he provided an important financial stopgap for his brother. Cary was cautious how he framed requests for money from his brother and even more so when he told him of large investments he made in the plantation on their behalf. For particularly large transactions, he stressed the opportunity that the investment presented for the growth of the plantation and his reliance on the expertise of successful planters.⁶⁸ Cary ended passages like this by underscoring the rarity of the opportunity and it was not soon to be repeated. The credit, he claimed, would "doe the feat" and Cary would not "trouble [William] for any thing more at all in that kinde; but ply the busines to some purpose."⁶⁹ Cary reiterated, in other words, to his brother to trust him; his investment would be returned by the hard work and dedication of his younger brother.

⁶⁶ Russell R. Menard has discussed investment by English merchants in Barbados in his work. See Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2006) for his most comprehensive explanation.

⁶⁷ For examples, see Cary Helyar to William Helyar, November 7, 1670 and June 4, 1672. William Whaley to William Helyar, July 5, 1672.

⁶⁸ See Cary Helyar to William Helyar, April 15, 1671 and November 27, 1671 for examples.

⁶⁹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, October 23, 1671.

In their entirety, passages in which Cary outlined large investment showed how he fashioned himself a man of good character in the eyes of his brother. He showed that his investments, particularly the larger and riskier ones, were considered sound by knowledgeable planters and he therefore maintained an image of financial prudence, an important aspect of a good character.⁷⁰ For example, when asking for copper works necessary for the creation of sugar refining on the plantation, which would cost the brothers just shy of £200, Cary stated the investment in sugar refining infrastructure was certain to return their profit, as it had done for so many others. It was, as he said, “noe new thing, nor any adventure, but a knowne & experienced truth” and continued that he had “as able planters as any in this Island upon [their] land to see it & they all conclude it is Excellent land for canes.”⁷¹ Cary implied that, if William did not trust Cary’s judgment alone, there was ample evidence that the investment was not as risky as it may have appeared to William. Investment in sugar refining infrastructure was a known variable on the road to profit and their exceptional land made their path to riches even more certain.⁷² Cary therefore diminished the stakes of this risky investment and, by doing so, made it easier for William to trust that his investment would be returned. It was no longer a risk as much as profit was an inevitable consequence of the investment.

Cary did not hesitate to expressly point out the times in which he exercised caution in financial matters to his brother. When Nicholas Warren offered Cary “unlimited powers to draw upon him for what Negroes [he] wanted,” Cary told his

⁷⁰ Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 49 – 51.

⁷¹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, April 15, 1671

⁷² For the average rate of return in Jamaica, see Table 3 in Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development,” 222.

brother he only intended to buy ten so as not to expand too quickly.⁷³ In this way, he demonstrated to his brother that he could be trusted with large amounts of financial capital because he spent only so much as to accomplish their agreed upon goals. Through his actions, Cary Helyar hoped to demonstrate to his brother that his trust was well placed, as he was not a gambler so much as a sober judge of the necessary investments to further the success of Bybrook.

While the relationship between the two brothers was the most integral to the foundation and development of the plantation, it also formed the center around which other important social networks orbited, including that of Nicholas Warren. Warren, a London merchant, was the primary contact for both brothers in London and his involvement in the plantation helped provide Bybrook financial and logistical support. While the specifics of how and when Cary met Warren remains elusive, it is evident that their relationship predated his arrival in Jamaica. In fact, it is likely that their relationship stretched back to the 1650s, when Cary illegally traded to and from Bilbao.⁷⁴ What is clear, however, is that by 1664, Cary placed a great deal of trust in Warren. When he declared his intention to move to Jamaica, Cary directed William to send his annuity through Warren.⁷⁵ This annuity was the only source of guaranteed income for Cary as he embarked for Jamaica and Cary deemed Warren “the man most likely to convey it to mee.”⁷⁶ His endorsement, though it seems somewhat tepid, conveyed the trust established between the two men. In an era when the transatlantic shipment of goods was spotty, to

⁷³ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, April 15, 1671

⁷⁴ Records show that both Nicholas Warren and Cary Helyar were in a group involved in contraband trade to Spain. See Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 30, 1669; August 22, 1662; December 13, 1662; February 3, 1663; March 8, 1664 and August 10, 1664 for Cary’s involvement in the trade. For Warren’s involvement see John Paige to William Clerke, August 7, 1655 in *The Letters of John Paige, London Merchant, 1648 – 59* (London: London Record Society, 1984).

⁷⁵ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, August 10, 1664.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

say the least, Cary's confidence that Warren would see his annuity delivered spoke to the high esteem in which Cary held Warren's abilities. Letters and other papers, in particular, were the frequent victims of early modern transatlantic shipping. Through their years working together, Cary understood that Warren would remain vigilant and timely in sending his annuity. This was crucial to the successful maintenance of their relationship as trust was harder to preserve across the ocean. Cary's insistence that Warren send the annuity demonstrated that, through consistency of action, Warren had earned Cary's trust. It was of vital importance that this relationship pre-dated Cary's arrival in Jamaica, as, given the inconsistency in transoceanic communication, any relationship between merchant and planter required a solid foundation. While one planter might recommend another planter to a merchant, and therefore leverage their good character, this required one to have established connections when they arrived in Jamaica. Cary did not appear to have any connections to Jamaica before his arrival and therefore his relationship with Warren was formed through their prior trading relationship and transferred to Jamaica. Cary was unlikely to form a similar bond of trust with a merchant in London once he arrived in Jamaica. The relationship between Cary and Warren was forged in England's economic culture and, because of this, continued to operate within its confines.

2.3 Building Bybrook

Cary Helyar modeled the creation of Bybrook on "the Custom of the Contrey."⁷⁷ This custom called for the slow, but steady, progression of the plantation from profitable but straightforward crops to an integrated sugar plantation. According to Cary, this process began with minimal investment, "2 or 3 negroes and an overseer", who were

⁷⁷ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

tasked with clearing two or three acres for provisions and another acre to plant ginger, tobacco or achiote.⁷⁸ He calculated the ginger alone would “produce in 12 months after planting ... 80 pounds sterling.”⁷⁹ This money, along with the money from the tobacco and achiote, were to be re-invested in the plantation by buying more enslaved labourers, whom the overseer would use to clear more land. As Cary saw it, African labourers were the key to the development and expansion of plantations, as “negroes will begett negroes so one plantation will begett another.”⁸⁰ If one followed this pattern of slowly clearing land, planting it and selling the crops for profit, he calculated “that in 7 years time it will produce a hopefull business.”⁸¹ It also suggested that a planter was able to avoid financial overextension if they were patient. Cary Helyar, however, was not a patient man.

While the development of Bybrook had the general contours of “the Custom of the Contrey”, the plantation experienced much more rapid growth than the process Cary described. By the time of his death, a mere three years after taking out the patent for the land, there were 35-acres of sugarcane planted as well as the beginnings of the infrastructure for an integrated sugar plantation. Moreover, his inventory also recorded nine indentured labourers and fifty enslaved Africans.⁸² Cary accelerated the timeline of the development of the plantation, in other words, in hopes that the debts he accrued would be paid off by the looming profits of sugar. However, the haste with which Cary sought to build Bybrook when combined with the expense of building a sugar plantation meant that he took on financial obligations much more quickly than the profits of the plantation were able to cover. He also struggled to find skilled labourers in Jamaica to

⁷⁸ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 25, 1671.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

build the necessary infrastructure. Cary thus looked beyond the growing fields of Bybrook, and indeed Jamaica, in order to meet his demand.

As Cary Helyar settled on an integrated plantation– or one in which the necessary refining infrastructure was on-site – as the most profitable way to run a sugar plantation, Bybrook required skilled labour. Several times in his correspondence to his elder brother in East Coker, Cary asked him to send over artisans to help in the development of the plantation. This included carpenters, masons, bricklayers and potters, but excluded, as Cary put it, “ugly weavers” or anything that was not of immediate value to a struggling planter.⁸³ Cary regularly asked his brother to send over skilled or semi-skilled labourers and William did his best to supply them. Cary’s continued reliance on English labour supply meant that he continued to be bound by English moral conventions, particularly those defined as ‘good character’, in order to maintain his supply of labourers. His reliance on his brother to supply the labour meant that a significant amount of the men and women sent to the plantation originated in the West Country, lending a distinctly regional dimension to the transactions. The creation of early Jamaican society then should not be seen as a radical break from English customs and values, but inextricably linked to them. Cary Helyar continued to participate in England’s economic culture, even at a distance.

Skilled labour was at a premium in early Anglo-Jamaica. In fact, the English command of Jamaica asked for carpenters and masons as early as 1655 to construct a fort in Cagway Bay.⁸⁴ This request was born of two central problems in the labour supply of early Anglo-Jamaica. The first of these problems was that, despite the number of men

⁸³ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, June 4, 1672.

⁸⁴ *Considerations to move the Councill to Send the Money ordered by his Majesty to build the fort of Cagway in Jamaica*. Records Relating to the English Colonies in the West Indies. British Library.

who resided on the island as a part of Cromwell's expeditionary forces, they lacked the necessary skills to construct the fort. The second, and perhaps more pertinent, problem was that of self-perception. Many of the men, particularly the officers, felt manual labour was inappropriate for someone of their station.⁸⁵ To solve these problems, the English began to import new labour sources, notably indentured and enslaved labour.

The indentured labourers who migrated to Jamaica in the seventeenth century were part and parcel of a larger pattern of migration to the English Caribbean and greater English Atlantic world. In this sense, the indentured servants who arrived in Jamaica tended to conform to larger trends identified by historians.⁸⁶ Those who arrived in Jamaica under indenture were most often those drawn from the lower rungs of the social hierarchy of the British Isles and tended to be young males. Nearly two-thirds of those who crossed the Atlantic before 1680 were destined for the Caribbean, though their numbers steadily dwindled as African labour grew in prominence in the late-1660s and 1670s.⁸⁷ Indeed, by 1673 African labourers outnumbered whites in Jamaica.⁸⁸ Indentured labourers were most often unskilled or semi-skilled labourers, though the scales tipped in favor of semi-skilled labourers as the pool of indentured servants to the Caribbean decreased in the 1670s.⁸⁹ Some crossed the Atlantic in hopes of bettering their social and economic lot through the opportunities of the New World while others were sent forcibly, most notably the Scots and Irish sent by Oliver Cromwell's government.⁹⁰ Indentures

⁸⁵ Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, xxiii.

⁸⁶ William O'Reilly provides a good overview of the historiography of indentured labourers in "Movements of People in the Atlantic World," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World, 1450 – 1850*, eds. Nicholas P. Canny and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 305 – 323.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁸⁸ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 155.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 317.

lasted between three and ten years, though William Whaley tried unsuccessfully to indenture several men for twenty-one years during his tenure at Bybrook.⁹¹

In his letters to his brother, Cary often mentioned the continued development of Bybrook hinged on indentured labourers. While there were a small number of skilled labourers already on the island, Cary noted they were more expensive to hire.⁹² This was no doubt due to their ability to negotiate labour contract and wages as independent labourers, driving up the price of their skills.⁹³ However, Cary did occasionally hire local labourers when he felt he could no longer wait for his brother to find the appropriate individual in England. When he did hire local labourers, often to meet short-term needs of Bybrook, he did in fact pay more for their labour than he would for a labourer freshly arrived from the British Isles. For the Helyar brothers then, it made more economic sense to import skilled labour from the British Isles in order to keep costs as low as possible and, in theory, to maintain a steady and dependable work force. Hiring local labour on short-term agreements led to high turnover amongst labourers and meant little continuity for management and maintenance of the infrastructure for the plantation.

The consistency the Helyar brothers strived for in their white labour force would allow for the labourers to continue to hone their skills over time and therefore improve the efficiency of the plantation, though few appeared to complete their indentures. When wooing potential labourers to Bybrook, Cary reminded his brother that they would receive 30-acres of land as part of the agreement, which they were assumedly able to

⁹¹ J. Harry Bennett, "William Whaley, Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *Agricultural History* 40, 2 (Apr. 1966): 121.

⁹² Cary Helyar told his brother "a man cannot hire the worst sawyers that are under 3 pounds sterling per month" in Jamaica in a letter dated May 22, 1671. He therefore suggested that William Helyar hire one for "20 pounds in the Coutrey" to save them money. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, March 7, 1671.

⁹³ Hillary Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627 – 1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 2.

cultivate upon the completion of their term of indenture.⁹⁴ Records of Jamaican plantations indicate that none of the indentured labourers in the early years of Bybrook's development went on to claim their 30-acres of land.⁹⁵ Moreover, small landowners were in the minority in the early 1670s. Slightly more than one-in-five landowners included in the 1670 Survey of the Island of Jamaica claimed 50-acres of land or less in St. Katherine's parish.⁹⁶ However, on the island as a whole, it appeared that this number was closer to one in three.⁹⁷ It seems then unlikely that many indentured labourers were able to successfully complete their terms of indenture and settle their own piece of land in Jamaica.⁹⁸

2.4 Recruiting White Labourers for Bybrook

Along with his financial input, William Helyar helped organize indentured labourers to be sent from Bristol to Jamaica. For his part, Cary had a clear vision for the roles indentured labourers were to play on Bybrook. As it pertained to their plantation, Cary asked his brother to send labourers who possessed skills that would aid in building the proper infrastructure to refine sugar, particularly men with experience in carpentry, husbandry, pottery and bricklaying, among others.⁹⁹ As he put it, "any trade in timber,

⁹⁴ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 15, 1670.

⁹⁵ Cary Helyar mentioned this several times in the letters to entice labourers to Bybrook. For an example, see Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 15, 1670.

⁹⁶ Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, 270.

⁹⁷ Of the 717 estates recorded in 1670, 242 were less than fifty acres. Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*, 207.

⁹⁸ None of the indentured labourers mentioned in the Helyar manuscripts appeared as owners of plantations on maps made in the 1680s, nor did they appear as landholders in Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers*. 207.

⁹⁹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, 7 March, 1671. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, September 10, 1671. Cary Helyar to William Helyar, June 4, 1672.

stone, Iron, brass or the like is good but for all sorts of cloathing not worth anything.”¹⁰⁰

In fact, he expressly asked his brother on several occasions to avoid sending over indentured labourers unless they were tradesmen, saying they were too “chargeable to keep” if they provided no immediate value to the construction of the plantation.¹⁰¹

To find labourers, William largely drew on local labour sources. Though the letters did not mention the origins of the indentured labourers, the few references made to their backgrounds indicated that at least five of the indentured labourers in the earliest years of Bybrook came from the West Country.¹⁰² While the suggestion of wealth in the Caribbean was an undoubtedly a large factor for many indentured labourers, the Helyar manuscripts demonstrated that the character of the planter could also play a role in their decision to cross the Atlantic. From the Helyar’s perspective, indenturing locals had several advantages, though it was the least common type of indentureship in the seventeenth century.¹⁰³

As a prominent landholder in Somerset, William undoubtedly had an established reputation within the county. He likely drew on this reputation in order to help tempt them to cross the Atlantic and, given his success in recruiting local labourers, his character was respected by the tradesmen in the surrounding area. Conversely, when he drew from the local labour pool, William was also able to inquire about the reputations of the individuals who volunteered to work on Bybrook. By inquiring about the reputation of the individual, William diminished the risk of hiring an incompetent or difficult labourer. In the earliest years of English settlement in the Caribbean, indentured labourers

¹⁰⁰ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, June 4, 1672.

¹⁰¹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, 15 December 1670.

¹⁰² Cary Helyar to William Helyar, May 22, 1671.

¹⁰³ Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 2.

had little idea of what to expect when they arrived though letters from indentured labourers in the Caribbean were read aloud to groups of family, friends or acquaintances in the British Isles.¹⁰⁴ If the indentured labourers understood the planter to be of good character, in this case one who was fair in their dealings with the skilled labour on the plantation, they were more likely to risk their own reputation to lure friends and family into an indenture with the same planter. In order for this to work, it required a degree of trust in the individual already indentured in the Caribbean. They had to be thought of as an honest and sober judge of others in order to tempt others to join them, as dishonesty in their dealings with friends and family was likely to taint their relationship. While it is impossible for historians to gauge how many indentured labourers were enticed by friends or family already in the Caribbean, the Helyar manuscripts showed that one individual, Henry Hodges, put his reputation on the line in order to tempt others in the West Country to join him at Bybrook.

Henry Hodges left Somerset and arrived at Bybrook with his wife and three sons in 1671.¹⁰⁵ Neither Hodges nor his wife were indentured to the Helyar's – they both voyaged as free labourers, Hodges as a carpenter – but two of his sons were indentured until the age of twenty-four.¹⁰⁶ Hodges refused to indenture his third son and fought the Helyar brothers to allow his third son to remain free, despite the bonds that formally tied his two other sons to the Helyar brothers.¹⁰⁷ Henry Hodges and his family were atypical for contemporary indentured labourers in several respects. Firstly, they moved as a familial unit across the Atlantic and they therefore bucked the larger trend of indentured

¹⁰⁴ William O'Reilly, "Movements of People in the Atlantic World," 309.

¹⁰⁵ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, May 22, 1671.

¹⁰⁶ J. Harry Bennett, "Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 19 – 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

labourers as young, unattached men. The upheaval of the entire Hodges family indicated that they intended to continue to live in Jamaica upon the fulfillment of their indentures. Furthermore, the Hodges' sons undertook agreements significantly longer than the average of three to ten years.¹⁰⁸ The length of their indentures however might offer insight into why the family moved. Living on Bybrook was likely an important step in the realization of their personal ambitions on the island. Henry Hodges worked closely with Cary Helyar and with the rest of his family at work throughout the plantation, they would undoubtedly learn enough about the intricacies of planting in Jamaica to start their own plantation with the land offered them as part of their agreement. They hoped to elevate their social rank through hard work and, eventually, planting. Lastly, Henry Hodges, also identified in the letters as Goodman Hodges, was one of only two indentured labourers named by Cary Helyar in the extant correspondences with his elder brother and the only indentured labourer mentioned on more than one occasion. These references to the eldest Hodges offers invaluable insight into how the reputation, of both the planter and the indentured labourer, became increasingly important as a way to lure more skilled labourers to Jamaican plantations.

Henry Hodges wasted little time upon his arrival at Bybrook before encouraging others to follow suit and, in order to encourage them, he exploited larger considerations of reputation. As Cary wrote to William shortly after the Hodges family arrival, "Goodman Hodges tels mee if you meet with the old Crocker of Coker and tell him of his [Hodges] being here that hee will help you to enough tradesmen."¹⁰⁹ Hodges appeared then to leverage his own reputation above all else in order to entice local tradesmen to

¹⁰⁸ Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, May 22, 1671.

Bybrook. In this sense, if other tradesmen travelled to Bybrook under the recommendation of Hodges and found Cary Helyar to be a cruel and unforgiving character, Hodges reputation amongst tradesmen would be questioned. The more his reputation waned, the less likely it was for more tradesmen to risk traveling to Jamaica as other, perhaps more desirable, colonies in the English Atlantic world continued to expand. Hodges therefore risked his own social capital amongst friends and former colleagues in order to help further the development of Bybrook.

2.5 The Jamaican Circle, An Overview

As these indentured labourers crossed the Atlantic, they also crossed from the Coker circle to Cary's Jamaican circle. Cary Helyar's Jamaican social network was distinctly local in focus. It was comprised of local business contacts, colleagues on the Council, neighbors and acquaintances. More often than not, the lines between these distinctions blurred. His business associates were also his friends, as was the case of Major General Thomas Modyford. Indeed, those who appeared to have the most influence over Cary's decisions in Jamaica played more than one role. The multiplicity of roles which some held within Cary's life likely meant he saw them on a more regular basis and grew to trust their judgment. Moreover, once he trusted their judgment, he seemed more likely to seek them out for counsel. This was the case for both Sir Thomas Modyford and Sir Hender Molesworth. For Bybrook, the most marked influence of the Jamaican circle was the knowledge of sugar planting transferred through them as well as the support they offered in times of need. The men in Cary's Jamaican circle were also the elite of Anglo-Jamaica's emerging society and all of similar social background to

Cary. It included two of its earliest governors, Sir Thomas Modyford and Sir Thomas Lynch as well as one future lieutenant governor, Sir Hender Molesworth.¹¹⁰ The backgrounds of the other members of the Jamaican circle were all generally ones of elevated social rank, wealth, power and connection. Because of their similar social standing in England, their social network worked to unify the upper levels of the social hierarchy. Through their connections to each other, these men received knowledge of sugar planting, made lucrative business connections and were even appointed to political positions. These men were also interested in the character of those in the company they kept. Through the cohesion apparent in their social network, their interest in the character and moral reputation of others in the network and their use of such networks to obtain economic advantage, the men of Cary's Jamaican circle demonstrated an economy of obligation at work in Anglo-Jamaica.

If any man rivaled the influence of William Helyar on Cary and Bybrook plantation, it was Sir Thomas Modyford. His fingerprints were all over the creation of Bybrook and the considerable influence that Modyford wielded over the affairs of Cary's plantation was unique. No other individual in Cary's Jamaican circle carried as much weight or appeared as frequently in letters to William Helyar as Sir Thomas Modyford. Though it is hard to pinpoint exactly how these two connected, it appears that their initial connection was relatively innocuous; both men hailed from the same region in England, the West Country.¹¹¹ In the early years of Bybrook, there were several Modyford's orbiting in Cary's social sphere, including Sir Thomas Modyford, the governor of the

¹¹⁰ For a list of Jamaica's governors, see Frank Cundall, *Historic Jamaica* (London: Published for the Institute by the West India Committee, 1915), xiii.

¹¹¹ Richard Dunn speculated that the two were connected through Cary's brother William, who met Sir Thomas Modyford in the army during the English Civil War (1642 – 1651) but he did not provide a source to corroborate his theory. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 217 – 218.

island, Major General Thomas Modyford, his son, and Charles Modyford, the governor's brother. Of these three Modyford's, it was Sir Thomas Modyford who had the most significant impact on Cary's life.

Sir Thomas Modyford was installed as governor of Jamaica in 1664 with the mandate to turn the Jamaican economy away from piracy and towards sugar. He was chosen for this task because he owned a flourishing sugar plantation in Barbados and the English government hoped he would bring his sugar planting expertise to the island.¹¹² Yet, the governor is perhaps better known for his close connection to piracy.¹¹³ In fact, historians have pinpointed his shift in focus towards piracy as a central reason for the delay of Jamaica's own sugar revolution.¹¹⁴ The Helyar manuscripts, however, showed that Modyford continued to advocate for the benefits of sugar plantations amongst his friends until his forced removal from the island in 1670 by the order of King Charles II. Cary told William that "Sir Tho. Modyford is going on upon a huge sugar work having three hundred Negroes, & conveniency of a water work."¹¹⁵ It therefore appeared that one of Modyford's ambitions in Jamaica was to continue to profit from the Caribbean sugar boom.

The relationship between Cary and Sir Thomas Modyford flourished as Bybrook and Cary's ambition grew. It was apparent in his correspondence to his brother that Cary

¹¹² For Modyford's influence in early Jamaican politics and planting, see Stephen Saunders Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1659 – 1681* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 225 – 249.

¹¹³ Modyford is particularly well known for sending Sir Henry Morgan to raid Panama in 1670 after the Treaty of Madrid was signed and England was at peace with the Spanish. Modyford was recalled from his position as governor as a result. For more on the Panama raid, see Coakley, "Agents of Colony and Crown," 97 – 106.

¹¹⁴ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 15 - 46; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 211 - 212; Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, November 7, 1670.

held Modyford's opinion in great esteem and they further revealed that Cary did not question Modyford's advice. Cary trusted Modyford and relied on his expertise to build the plantation. In fact, Cary held Modyford's plantation as the example he intended to model his own plantation after.¹¹⁶ It was more than just his advice that Cary relied on, however, it was also Modyford's mill, a crucial step if Cary hoped to make a profit from his fields of sugarcane. While Cary built his own sugar infrastructure on Bybrook then he relied on Modyford to refine his sugar and, in the process, help Cary begin to profit from his investments in Bybrook. As Cary explained to William, it was "custom here that hee [Modyford] that has a mill will grinde his neighbours sugarcanes & make his sugar at halves."¹¹⁷ Moreover, the close relationship between the two and their plantations, it was most plausible that Cary acquired the requisite knowledge to cultivate sugarcane from Modyford. Planting, harvesting and processing sugarcane required specialized knowledge that Cary likely did not have upon his arrival in Jamaica. Given his close relationship to Modyford and Modyford's extensive experience as a successful sugar planter in Barbados, it seemed most plausible that Cary received the bulk of the information about how to profit from sugarcane from him.

The general contours of the early development of Bybrook also appeared to follow the logic of Modyford. Cary noted that Modyford had "a great quantity of Cacao in the ground & still more planting."¹¹⁸ Modyford also pushed Cary to cultivate cocoa trees before he increasingly turned his attention to sugar on Bybrook.¹¹⁹ Cocoa appeared poised to become a significant export for Jamaica in its early years of English settlement

¹¹⁶ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, April 15, 1671.

¹¹⁷ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, November 7, 1670.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, November 7, 1670.

– there were cocoa walks throughout the island and they required little upkeep but yielded money to invest in sugar infrastructure – but the cocoa trees were significantly diminished by an island-wide blight in 1670.¹²⁰ Bybrook’s fields were also home to other minor crops, like ginger and indigo.¹²¹ This pattern of development – cultivating less labour-intensive crops in order to earn income to invest in sugar infrastructure – followed Barbadian models and, with his history in Barbados, Bybrook’s development was affected by Modyford’s influence.¹²² In fact, Cary insisted his brother see Modyford when he was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1670. As he explained to his brother, Modyford “can geive you a better acc^t of our privat Intrist here in two houres, then I can wright you in two yeares.”¹²³ Cary was evidently reliant on Modyford’s experience, knowledge and vision for Bybrook.

Beyond Modyford’s intimate involvement on the physical development of Bybrook, he connected Cary to other prominent Jamaican planters and merchants. This included another expatriate of the West Country, Sir Hender Molesworth. When vouching for Molesworth’s character to his brother, Cary simply said told him that his “relations live in Cornwall.”¹²⁴ It seems that, as far as Cary was concerned, the simple pronouncement that Molesworth was also a man shaped by the West Country was enough to admit him to his inner circle. Molesworth acted as a witness for him on legal documents, loaned Cary money and acted as one of two executors for Cary’s estate.¹²⁵ In

¹²⁰ For more on the cocoa blight, see Sainsbury, ed. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial, 1669 – 1674*, 241, 885 and 954.

¹²¹ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 25, 1671.

¹²² Russell R. Menard’s *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2006) is the best book on the Barbadian model.

¹²³ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, September 10, 1671.

¹²⁴ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 16, 1670.

¹²⁵ See Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671 and June 4, 1672. Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

fact, the executors for Cary's estate were both connected to the West Country, as the other was Major General Modyford. Of all the connections Cary made in Jamaica, he trusted the two men with a shared regional past to execute his wishes. It is therefore apparent that, while English understandings of character were important in credit networks, regionalism played an equally important role in the creation of new social networks in Jamaica.

2.6 William Whaley's Management of Bybrook

Cary Helyar's death also marked the beginning of William Whaley's tenure as the manager of Bybrook. While he worked alongside Cary, Whaley enjoyed a good reputation amongst the emerging planting elite of the island. Moreover, Cary chose Whaley as his successor, which showed Cary's confidence in Whaley, his character and his ability to continue to successfully negotiate within Cary's established social networks on the island.¹²⁶ It became increasingly apparent, to William Helyar at least, that the good reputation Whaley enjoyed was because of his association with Cary. As time marched on, in other words, Whaley's reputation waned and it affected his ability to continue the development of the plantation. Though he inherited Cary's equal share of Bybrook, he also inherited all the associated debts – including substantial claims against the estate made by Cary Helyar's widow. His tenure as partner in Bybrook was therefore brief as, by August 1673, he relinquished his share of the plantation of William Helyar.¹²⁷ With his “full and peasable possession of all” of Bybrook, debtors therefore turned to Helyar to fulfill financial obligations and Whaley's title was downgraded to manager of the

¹²⁶ Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

¹²⁷ William Whaley, August 15, 1673.

plantation.¹²⁸ Whaley saw this as a change in title only and continued to act as if he was a partner in the plantation.

Where the West Country helped connect Cary to key contacts in Jamaica, Cary played a similar role in Whaley's social networks. Whaley replaced Cary in both the Coker and Jamaican circles after his death, which is to say that many of the connections Whaley had in his first years as the manager of Bybrook were established by his connection to Cary. Eleven of twelve people mentioned by Whaley in the first two years after Cary's death were member of his Jamaican circle, or relationships fostered by Cary in his years in Jamaica. Not coincidentally, these years were the same years in which Priscilla Helyar's – Cary's widow - case made its way through the courts in Jamaica. Cary's Jamaican circle was keen to protect Cary's interests on the island and, as part of this they maintained their connections to Bybrook and Whaley by association. Yet, where Cary's letters demonstrated a strong connection to England – eight of nineteen people mentioned by Cary Helyar lived in England, four of whom were merchants – Whaley's letters suggested his connections to England were considerably weaker than Cary's. Whaley only once mentioned an individual who lived in England permanently, the Helyar's sister who "sent a small box of things." Whaley's business contacts and associates became increasingly localized as the years passed; his only references to English contacts came in the form of merchants, who shipped goods to and from Bybrook. Cary's social networks were composed of approximately 40 percent of contacts that lived in or were based in England, while Whaley's percentage of English contacts dropped to approximately 15 percent. Though this drop can partially be attributed to a growth in Whaley's social networks - Whaley mentioned forty individuals compared to

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Cary's nineteen – Whaley made no new contacts in England during his tenure at Bybrook. During his time at Bybrook, Cary connected his brother to at least four individuals in England who might benefit the plantation while Whaley relied almost solely on local contacts to help him run Bybrook. Whaley was not able to successfully establish his good character in the English economic culture and thus Whaley's social network then became increasingly limited as time wore on.

Whaley broke from his predecessor and the larger custom of the Caribbean and focused solely on the production of sugarcane, instead of preparing the soil with minor crops and reaping their profits. He outlined his intention to “follow our Sugar worke close closer and not be slack in that,” so as to increase the profits of Bybrook.¹²⁹ Given the amount he had invested in the plantation, Helyar was apprehensive that Whaley would spend too much money without the prospect of a quick return. This lavish spending reflected poorly to Whaley's character. His management style was a marked shift from Cary, who was careful to spend only as much as he could explain to his brother. Yet, Whaley was determined to profit from sugar, at any cost, social or financial.

Whaley's management style had two direct consequences that threatened the further development of the plantation. The first was that, in his doggedness to produce sugar, he did not hesitate to draw bills of exchange to fund his accelerated timeline. As William Helyar saw it, this lavish spending did not reflect well on his reputation, particularly as the elder Helyar had yet to see any tangible results from the plantation. This could have serious consequences for Whaley as the more Helyar questioned Whaley's character the less likely he was to receive credit for the plantation. Helyar expected Whaley to adhere to the conventions of the English economy of obligation as

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Cary had. Whaley once complained that instead of receiving “the most usefull things and those we cannot be with out,” he received a copy of a book, *The Gentleman’s Calling* by Richard Allestree.¹³⁰ Published in 1673, this book may have been a veiled criticism from Helyar to his godson as it discussed the ways good, Christian gentlemen were to behave in business, including the importance of a good reputation.¹³¹ According to Allestree, reputation could “inlighten the whole sphere in which [a gentleman] move[d]” and it was a gentleman’s duty to act as example of virtue for the lower classes.¹³² It was unclear if Whaley took this advice to heart, or if he even read the book, but it did appear that Helyar’s concerns about Whaley’s character were not easily assuaged.

By 1676, without any significant financial profit with which to pay back Helyar, Helyar cut Whaley off from drawing bills of exchange on him in the future.¹³³ This was distressing news for Whaley, who tried to defend himself. “I have drawn noe more then what was needfull and necessary,” he wrote, “and therefore it doeth much Trouble mee that I have soe much Incurred your displeasure, and espeacially by acting that which I thought was most proffitable and advantageous for the Plantacon.”¹³⁴ From Whaley’s perspective, the problem was not the amount of money he spent, but that Helyar did not offer Whaley and Bybrook the necessary support to turn Bybrook into a profitable sugar plantation.¹³⁵ Helyar judged Whaley’s character from within the confines of England’s economic culture, however, and he found that Whaley was not trustworthy enough to handle large amounts of financial capital. Whaley therefore did not successfully establish

¹³⁰ William Whaley to William Helyar, August, 1674.

¹³¹ Richard Allestree, *The Gentleman’s Calling* (London: Printed for R. Norton for R. Pawlet, 1673), 30.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 126 - 127.

¹³³ William Whaley to William Helyar, January 18, 1676.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

his trustworthiness within England's economic culture and this affected his ability to run Bybrook. It was unclear whether the matter was resolved by the time of Whaley's death in July 1676, though it was clear that Helyar refused to continue to condone Whaley's behaviour in Jamaica without significant changes.

The second consequence of Whaley's new management style involved the white labourers on the plantation and, much like his inability to access English credit, it affected his access to English labour sources. In 1674, Helyar sent William Dampier, born in East Coker, to Bybrook to help Whaley manage the plantation.¹³⁶ Historian J. Harry Bennett has rightly estimated that Helyar sent Dampier to Jamaica to learn about plantation management from Whaley and take on a meaningful role in its management - Dampier himself referenced "the faire promises" Helyar made him in East Coker that Whaley refused to fulfill.¹³⁷ It also appeared that Dampier was sent to keep an eye on Whaley, though there remain only illusions to this in the letters. The exact arrangement between Helyar and Dampier remains unclear, in other words, but what is clear is that whatever Helyar promised Dampier in England went unfulfilled during his time at Bybrook. Shortly after his arrival, Dampier wrote to William Helyar to detail perceived mistreatment of several white labourers at the hands of William Whaley. It was, for all intents and purposes, a resignation letter.¹³⁸ As Dampier described it, this was not William Helyar's fault but cast Whaley as the central reason for the unfulfilled promises. Whaley did not carry himself as a man of good character ought to in an economy of obligation.

¹³⁶ Bennett, "William Whaley," 116.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ William Dampier to William Helyar, January 13, 1674.

According to Dampier, Whaley preyed on both Dampier's lack of experience and his commitment to Helyar. Dampier claimed that "after [he] had ben Some fewer months in the Island [he] was urged by Mr. Whaley to agree with him by the year," an apparently legal agreement outside of Dampier's agreement with William Helyar.¹³⁹ Under this agreement, he was given twelve pounds per year, less than half what Cary offered tradesmen a few years earlier.¹⁴⁰ As Dampier wrote, this would "scarce buy Clothes in this Country."¹⁴¹ It was indeed a low wage for early Jamaica, particularly for one who bound in Jamaica. Yet, this agreement marked only the beginning of his problems with Whaley. Dampier alleged that "So soone as hee thought he had got mee under his Lash he thought on nothing but how to abuse me."¹⁴² This was the only specific mention Dampier made to the physical toll he experienced working under Whaley, though it was an unquestionably regular occurrence on the plantation amongst both white and African labourers. The extent and method of this violence, however, differed between the different racial groups. Unsurprisingly, Whaley did not document this physical abuse of Dampier in his letters to Helyar, instead he did his best to undermine the allegations, and character, of Dampier.

William Whaley lost little time before presenting Helyar with his own account of the events. He added a postscript to Dampier's letter, which effectively dismissed its entire contents while reminding Helyar of his own trustworthiness. "Sir," he wrote, "I might Easely have intercepted his letter but thought it not worth my trouble ther being no thing in it but a parcell of Story and lyes and any many may se that it saviors more of

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, 15 December, 1670.

¹⁴¹ William Dampier to William Helyar, January 13, 1674.

¹⁴² Ibid.

spight then realety.”¹⁴³ In doing this, Whaley trusted Helyar would side with him in the dispute. In what quickly became a ‘he said, he said’ argument, Whaley wrote a letter to William Helyar in the latter half of January 1674, to share his side of the story. While Dampier’s letter focused largely on the effect of Whaley on two central problems – his health and safety and the reputation of Helyar - Whaley’s letter hinted at a larger problem amongst whites on the plantation. In his letter, he acknowledged Dampier was not the only white to leave the plantation because of Whaley’s treatment of them as the plantation doctor, his assistant and the doctor’s mistress also left with Dampier. Whaley did not see this exodus, however, as a loss. In his opinion, those that left the plantation added nothing to the productivity of the plantation, he claimed never to have seen such a “a Company for wast full people, in [his] life, & ...believe[d] they thought to Cum here to doe nothing.”¹⁴⁴ He reserved his most colorful language for the doctor’s mistress, whom he called a “whore” who was “the nastiest wasting shit as ever came in to a house and one that is fitt to doe nothing at all.”¹⁴⁵ It was therefore not that Whaley was a man of bad character, but, instead, it was that the other whites on the plantation were of bad character.

While he certainly made his feelings about the doctor’s mistress clear in his letter to William Helyar, Whaley also did not attempt to hide his disdain of her in his everyday life. It was this open disdain that led to a physical confrontation with Dampier. Whaley told Dampier he felt manipulated by her sudden arrival on the plantation and saw it as “a durty sly trick” that he “could not well approve of.” Dampier took Whaley’s disapproval of the doctor and his mistress as a slight on the doctor’s reputation and Dampier was

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ William Whaley to William Helyar, January 27, 1674.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

quick to defend the doctor. As Whaley wrote, Dampier openly questioned Whaley's judgment and, by association, his character. With that, Whaley admitted he "gave him 3 or 4 slaps in the face and he (Dampier) returned the like but that was quickly over."¹⁴⁶ Dampier left Bybrook, and wrote the letter to Helyar, shortly after this incident. Though it was only a matter of weeks before he left Jamaica permanently, Dampier alleged he had tried to find work elsewhere in Jamaica but Helyar "began to reproch [Dampier] in all places where he came telling that [he] could neither write nor cast account & hindred [Dampier] of Severall good plased."¹⁴⁷

As the manager of Bybrook, Whaley flouted both Helyar's advice and vision for the plantation. Whaley considered himself the judge of both Dampier's character and his ability to contribute to the plantation, despite what Helyar ordered him to do. He told Helyar that Dampier would "never a bin fitt for [managing Bybrook], for dus not understand any thing of keeping bookes."¹⁴⁸ Whaley further told Helyar that if Dampier "had hee bin any thing ingenious hee might almost bin a good boyler, but he thought it an under vallued to him."¹⁴⁹ His attitude towards Dampier and his position on the plantation showed clear defiance and this was a theme that ran through much of Whaley's tenure at the helm of Bybrook. He turned away from Cary's, and by extension Modyford's, vision of the plantation. As he argued, he had "not as yet Seen any extraordinary things that [Modyford] hath done in matter of planting, but I find that people that come from theis parts of the world perswade people in England to any thing."¹⁵⁰ Moreover, his inability to successfully manoeuvre within the economies of obligation England and Jamaica affected

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ William Dampier to William Helyar, January 13, 1674.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ William Whaley to William Helyar, January 27, 1674.

¹⁵⁰ William Whaley to William Helyar, August 1674.

his management of Bybrook. He grew increasingly distant from English contacts the more his character was questioned and the less likely he was to receive the necessary resources to run the plantation. One's perceived reputation had a significant impact on the development and management of sugar plantations like Bybrook.

2.7 Conclusion

As more African captives were sold and as more plantations switched to sugar, Anglo-Jamaican society became more extreme. Whaley was just the beginning in a long line of violence and excess that marked Anglo-Jamaican society through the beginning of the nineteenth century. This excess was not yet tolerated within the British Isles or its economy of obligation, however, and in order to receive English credit and skilled labourers, Jamaican planters had to appear to play by their rules. Cary Helyar successfully maintained his good character in the eyes of his brother by doing just that. He heeded to the advice of more experienced planters, justified his expenditures to William Helyar and appeared to treat those around him with respect. Cary therefore functioned within two distinct social networks, one in England and one in Jamaica, but within one economy of obligation. Yet, his Jamaican circle demonstrated the ability of the economy of obligation to bind individuals of similar social standing and background together, which helped develop and stabilize Anglo-Jamaica's social hierarchy. Whaley did the opposite of Cary. He spent large amounts of money in his quest to create a profitable sugar plantation and lacked the necessary finesse in his treatment of other whites on Bybrook to be considered of good character. Cary was effective in presenting an image of himself as a man of good character to his brother, while Whaley had

difficulty negotiating the tricky terrain between the extremes of the emergent Anglo-Jamaican society and the expectation of English society. Bybrook was formed in the midst of this and the success and failures of its earliest managers were a testament to the importance of good character in early Anglo-Jamaica. Their success in Jamaica was predicated on their success within the economic culture of the English Atlantic world. Bybrook's and Anglo-Jamaica's roots were firmly planted, in other words, in England's economy of obligation.

CHAPTER THREE
“THEY MIXT GOOD & BAD ONES TOGETHER”: THE MARKET FOR ENSLAVED LABOUR AND BYBROOK’S SEARCH FOR PROFIT, 1678 – 1687.

In March 1686, a group of enslaved African made their way towards the main house of the plantation they lived and worked on. They were armed and in the midst of a violent confrontation against those who oppressed them. On their journey towards Madame Guy’s house, they killed several white servants, “who were gotten drunk & therefore unable to Quell” this violent outburst. Unprotected and undoubtedly afraid, Madame Guy was “forced to leap out of the window” in order to escape and find refuge elsewhere in the island. She was one of two whites on her plantation to survive this uprising, which spread to neighboring plantations in the coming days. These plantations, apparently all relatively small, were alternatively “destroyed” or “plundered” by this group, though it is quite possible their ranks swelled as they made their way from plantation to plantation. The whites of Bybrook braced themselves for the confrontation to reach them and John Helyar threatened to “give them such a reception as the strength of the house will afford” if it did. The enslaved Africans from Madame Guy’s never made it to Bybrook, however, and Helyar’s threat never became action.¹⁵¹

By the 1680s, enslaved Africans arrived in Jamaica with greater regularity than any of the previous decades of English settlement of the island. As of 1672, the Royal African Company (RAC) officially enjoyed a monopoly over the importation of captured Africans to the island, but these captives came to Jamaica through both official and

¹⁵¹ The Helyar manuscripts are housed in the Somerset Records Office at Taunton, DD/WHh 1089, 1090, 1151 and Addenda Papers 12. All notes that follow are a reference to these papers unless otherwise stated. John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686.

unofficial channels of trade.¹⁵² The social networks of the men who managed Bybrook in this time period showed that the plantation relied on both official and unofficial streams of African labour to supply their fields of sugarcane with the necessary labourers. Bybrook's demand for enslaved labourers was typical of contemporary Jamaican sugar plantations, as they needed to constantly resupply the plantation with African captives because of the high mortality rates and low fertility rates amongst the labourers. Their reliance on both the RAC and independent traders showed the flexibility and adaptability of Jamaican planters and merchants in the broader English Atlantic in the face of a changing and unstable market. William Helyar, still in Somerset and his representatives in Jamaica – Thomas Hillyard and William's son, John Helyar – existed within social circles that encouraged them to manipulate legal structures to their advantage, or to ignore them. Their first social network, the Bristol circle, intimately connected Bybrook to the growing contraband trade of enslaved Africans, while the second social network, the new Jamaican circle, encouraged John Helyar to take advantage of the trade of enslaved African labourers to the Spanish Americas. Given their connections to both independent traders and the Spanish trade encouraged by the Royal African Company, Bybrook's narrative was most notable in the 1680s for its entanglement in the structures of the trade of African captives to the English Caribbean. The Helyar's alternately used their social networks to meet Bybrook's own internal demand for enslaved labourers, as well as helping to supply the demand for African captives to Spanish colonists. They circumvented laws for their own benefit in some years, but upheld the RAC's monopoly in others. Whether they purchased captive Africans legally or illegally, or if they

¹⁵² See William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672 – 1752* (Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 2013), particularly Chapter One.

invested in the Spanish trade, reputation still counted for much in the business transactions in the Helyar's social networks.

The social networks were rooted in the trustworthiness of the individual with whom they agreed to do business with. When William Helyar agreed to do business with interlopers in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, he entered a formal credit relationship with them, which was based in Helyar's trust that the obligation would be fulfilled in Jamaica. Moreover, in this relationship, the trustworthiness of the individuals who would deliver the captives to the plantation had to be established during the original agreement as well. William Helyar turned to the interloping trade because he and his managers in Jamaica did not trust the RAC to deliver healthy captives to the island. Yet, they used the RAC when they could not guarantee the delivery of captives from another source or when they considered it to be to their advantage. The economy of obligation in Jamaica also crossed cultural lines, as John Helyar entered into business agreements with the Spanish *asientistas*, whose trustworthiness was judged within the framework of the wider economic culture. John trusted that his money would not only be returned, but it would be returned with interest. He further trusted the advice and reputations of his contacts in Jamaica, who told him and encouraged him to pursue this business venture. Jamaica's physical separation from England therefore did not preclude business relationships that functioned there--whether they originated in England or in Jamaica-- by the same rules that governed England's economy of obligation.

3.1 The Rise of African Labour in the English Caribbean

The importation of enslaved African labour has long captivated the attention of historians of seventeenth-century Jamaica and, indeed, the larger English Atlantic world.¹⁵³ Along with the growing sugar economy of the Caribbean, it is rightly considered a defining characteristic of the emergent English Caribbean societies. The forced migration of captured Africans was unprecedented, with more than 370,000 arriving in the British Caribbean alone between 1651 and 1700.¹⁵⁴ It is further estimated that forced African migrants outnumbered white settlers in Jamaica by as early as 1673.¹⁵⁵

The historiography of the early English Caribbean is home to debates that question when and why enslaved African labour ‘took off’ in the English Caribbean. Traditionally, sugar and slavery were inextricably linked in the secondary literature. Richard S. Dunn, for example, cited African labourers as key to the regional transformation from small farms to large sugar plantations. In this interpretation, enslaved labourers helped prepare the Barbadian countryside for the cultivation of sugar, which, in turn, required more enslaved labourers to operate, given that integrated plantations were an economy of scale.¹⁵⁶ The importation of enslaved African labour then is a particularly vicious cycle, but also one crucial to the continued rise of sugar in the English Caribbean. Yet, traditional narratives like Dunn’s made scant reference to the

¹⁵³ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623 – 1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). And Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1714* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000). And David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁵⁴ David Eltis et al., *Estimates: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?yearFrom=1651&yearTo=1700&disembarkation=305.304.307.306.309.308.311.310.301.302.303>

¹⁵⁵ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1713* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 155.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

African labour that existed on the island in the presugar era, or afford them little significance in their story of sugar's expansion in the English Caribbean. More recent narratives show there was undoubtedly African labour in the English Caribbean prior to the rise of sugar. In fact, the earliest English settlers of Barbados arrived with both African and Indigenous labourers.¹⁵⁷ With this in mind, historians now estimate that African labour predated the rise of sugar, captive Africans were likely used to help cultivate other crops before Barbados switched to a sugar-based economy.¹⁵⁸ As Russell R. Menard explained it, these labourers helped cultivate the fields of indigo, ginger, tobacco and cotton in the presugar era. The cultivation of these minor crops then helped prepare the landscape for sugarcane by clearing it of trees and making it suitable for agriculture.¹⁵⁹

Historians Richard B. Sheridan and David Eltis have both pointed to the economic advantages for planters who switched to enslaved African labour. For Sheridan, it was the combination of the decline in availability of white indentured labour and the cost to feed, cloth and house them; planters saw African labour as a cheaper alternative to indentured labour. As planters understood it, African labourers required less capital investment in housing, clothing and food, particularly as many plantations required enslaved Africans to maintain their own plots of provisions. Planters also spent

¹⁵⁷ Edward B. Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (July 2013), 433.

¹⁵⁸ John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth-Century: A New Perspective on the Barbadian "Sugar Revolution,"" in *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450 – 1680*, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 293.

¹⁵⁹ Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 11 – 28.

less on medical treatments for enslaved Africans.¹⁶⁰ Eltis complicated this view in his examination of the cost to transport captured Africans to the New World. In order to keep the costs of enslaved labour as low as possible when they reached market – transportation accounted for about three-quarters of the price of enslaved Africans - Europeans looked to increase the efficiency of the trans-Atlantic trade. Slave traders increased efficiency by increasing the human cargo on board the ships in what was enslaved Africans first experience in the dehumanizing system of New World slavery in the early modern era. This increased efficiency in transportation in the late seventeenth century, particularly after 1660, was a crucial reason for the increase of captured Africans in Caribbean labour markets.¹⁶¹ The Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, of which Eltis was the principle architect, is an invaluable resource for historians of the early modern Caribbean because it provides the most accurate numbers for the forced migration of captured Africans. More importantly for the argument at hand, the database shows ships with captives Africans arrived with greater consistency in the Caribbean after 1672 and the dawn of the Royal African Company.

3.2 The Royal African Company in Jamaica

In 1672, Charles II granted a monopoly to the newly formed Royal African Company for the importation of captured Africans to the English colonies. The Royal African Company was the successor of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa, who had previously operated in the English colonies with a monopoly on the

¹⁶⁰ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623 – 1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 259.

¹⁶¹ See Chapter 5 in David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially pages 114 – 118.

supply of African labour in the 1660s.¹⁶² Monopolies were the preferred business model for a great number of merchants, their investors and the governments in the seventeenth century.¹⁶³ The Royal African Company found itself amongst a formidable group of other companies who had been granted monopolies by various European crowns in the seventeenth century. The East India Company operated throughout the English colonies with a monopoly on English trade, for example, and was rivaled by their Dutch counterpart, the Dutch East India Company.¹⁶⁴ These companies played a game of zero-sum economics, in which the success of another was the failure of its rival and European governments were therefore keen for their national companies to succeed and strengthen their power at home and abroad. They were, of course, not always successful. The Company of Adventurers proved a good example of a failed monopoly. Moreover, it found itself amongst less illustrious company than the Royal African Company, like the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies who, hopeful of creating their own Scottish Empire, were responsible for the Scottish exploits on the Isthmus of Darien in the closing years of the seventeenth century.¹⁶⁵ In both cases, the companies folded within ten years of their creation, unable to create successful trade networks in the Caribbean. Monopolies then were responsible for some of the greatest failures of the

¹⁶² Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623 – 1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 278.

¹⁶³ The Royal African Company's monopoly was politically constituted. See Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, 16 - 25.

¹⁶⁴ See Wim Klooster, "Other Netherlands Beyond the Sea: Dutch America between Metropolitan Control and Divergence, 1600 – 1795," in *Negotiated Empires: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500 – 1820* eds. Christine Daniels and Micheal V. Kennedy (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 171 – 192. And Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585 - 1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁶⁵ For an overview of the Company of Scotland and the Darien Scheme, see Hiram Bingham, "The Early History of the Scots Darien Company," *The Scottish Historical Review* 3 (Jan 1906): 210 – 217. And Frank Cundall, *The Darien Venture* (New York: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1926). And W. Douglas Jones, "'The Bold Adventurers': A Quantitative Analysis of the Darien Subscriptions Lists (1696)," *Scottish Economic and Social History* 21 (2001): 22 – 43. And Douglas Watt, "The Management of Capital by the Company of Scotland, 1695 – 1707," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25 (Sept 2005): 97 – 118.

century, but were thought by contemporaries to be crucial both to the creation and maintenance of empire.

The Royal African Company played a significant role in the expansion of Jamaica's sugar economy and, by extension, Bybrook. Enslaved labourers cultivated sugarcane on Jamaican sugar plantations and were the principal workforces for planters. They were considered indispensable to a plantation's success. As the Third Anglo-Dutch War approached, for example, Cary informed his brother that he had taken out more bills of exchange to buy 14 more slaves because "wee heare we are likly to fall out with the Dutch if so & having no negroes we should stand with finger in mouth."¹⁶⁶ Cary's prediction turned out to be remarkably prescient, as, at its height in 1672 and 1673, the Third Anglo-Dutch War caused a significant disruption in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In fact, there was no new African labour imported into Jamaica in these two years, at least officially. This drop-off correlated with stagnation within Jamaica's export economy. In this sense, the estimated exports of sugar, cocoa, indigo, hides, cotton and indigo remained constant through the end of the War in 1674, as they appeared to neither increase, nor decrease.¹⁶⁷ However, the increase of new African labourers in 1674 led to a rapid expansion of the economy as sugar exports alone saw a nearly 115 percent increase in the next sugar harvest of 1675 (Table 3.1).¹⁶⁸ The year 1674 also marked the arrival of the first ship of the newly formed Royal African Company in Jamaica.¹⁶⁹ England's Royal African Company had a significant impact on the importation of African labour to

¹⁶⁶ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

¹⁶⁷ See Table 1 in Zahedieh, "Trade and Plunder," 207.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ For an overview of the influence of the Royal African Company, see William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672 – 1752* (Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by the University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

Jamaica in the 1670s, as 21 of the 27 slave ships that sailed into Jamaican ports between 1674 and 1678 sailed on behalf of the Company.¹⁷⁰ Their introduction into the Jamaican labour market meant a more consistent infusion of African labour into the growing sugar industry and undoubtedly helped the sugar exports more than quadruple from 1674 to 1678.¹⁷¹ African labour then provided the lifeblood for expansion and, without it, Bybrook was unlikely to expand as rapidly as both Cary and William Helyar hoped, if at all.

¹⁷⁰ Eltis, et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1674&yearTo=1678&anyowner=Royal+African+Company&mjstimp=35100> and <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1674&yearTo=1678&mjstimp=35100>

¹⁷¹ Zahedieh, "Trade and Plunder," 207.

Table 3.1 – Sum of Disembarked African Captives in Barbados and Jamaica, 1674 – 1694

Year	Barbados	Jamaica	Difference
1674	1959	1009	950
1675	3605	2124	1481
1676	3577	2023	1554
1677	1914	1225	689
1678	4741	1911	2830
1679	2241	847	1394
1680	3424	2128	1296
1681	5888	3294	2594
1682	4610	2460	2150
1683	7926	3763	4163
1684	4115	2757	1358
1685	3646	3956	-310
1686	3333	3950	-617
1687	4756	3358	1398
1688	3099	1310	1789
1689	1963	2323	-360
1690	753	857	-104
1691	2502	3598	-1096
1692	3067	4661	-1594
1693	1829	4427	-2598
1694	2948	3794	-846
	71896	55775	16121

Source: Eltis, et al., : *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*,
<http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?yearFrom=1674&yearTo=1694&flag=3&disembarkation=301.302>

As the Jamaican sugar economy continued to expand, however, the Royal African Company did not satisfy the demand of Jamaican planters. The company showed a clear preference for providing captured Africans to Barbados over their Jamaican counterparts between 1674 and 1684 (Table 3.1). There were two central reasons for this bias in the early years of the Royal African Company. The first was a practical consideration, Barbados was a couple of thousand kilometers closer to the West Coast of Africa than

Jamaica and thus easier to supply.¹⁷² The second reason was that Jamaican planters were unlikely to pay their debts. Jamaican planters were approximately £25,000 in debt by June 1676, although it did not seem to be a problem unique to Jamaica.¹⁷³ Sheridan suggests however that this was a problem throughout the English Caribbean as, by 1680, planters had amassed a debt of £120,000, worth nearly ten thousand captives.¹⁷⁴ The late seventeenth century therefore proved frustrating for both those who supplied and those who demanded enslaved African labourers in the English Caribbean.

On average, there were nearly 1800 more captured Africans delivered to Barbados annually than to Jamaica between these years. This discrepancy peaked in 1683, when the Barbadian market received an estimated 4163 more captured Africans than Jamaica (Table 3.1). The tide did not begin to turn for Jamaican planters until 1685, which coincided with Sir Hender Molesworth's first full year as acting governor of the island. As the Royal African Company's Jamaican factor, Molesworth certainly had incentive to increase the supply of captured African to the island and enforce their monopoly. Indeed, his first governorship appeared to be the closest the Royal African Company came to enforcing their monopoly in the Jamaican market (Table 3.2). Between 1685 and 1695, Jamaica was more likely to receive captured Africans to their markets each year than Barbados, though the annual average difference between the islands was only slightly more than 300 captives.

¹⁷² Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 234.

¹⁷³ Noel W. Sainsbury ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1675 – 1676*, (London H. M. Stationary Office, 1893), 1155.

¹⁷⁴ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 278.

Table 3.2 – Affiliation of Ships that Voyaged to Jamaica, 1672 - 1694

Year	Ships w/ RAC Affiliation	British Ships w/o RAC Affiliation	Other countries	Total
1672	0	0	0	0
1673	0	0	0	0
1674	2	2	1	5
1675	4	0	0	4
1676	5	1	0	6
1677	5	0	1	6
1678	5	1	0	6
1679	3	3	2	8
1680	6	2	0	8
1681	5	6	0	11
1682	6	1	0	7
1683	8	7	0	15
1684	10	2	0	12
1685	11	5	0	16
1686	15	1	0	16
1687	11	1	2	14
1688	4	0	0	4
1689	7	0	0	7
1690	2	0	0	2
1691	4	6	0	10
1692	1	6	0	7
1693	4	2	0	6
1694	5	1	0	6
	123	49	6	178

Source: Eltis, et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1665&yearTo=1695&mjstimp=35100&natinimp=7> and <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1665&yearTo=1695&mjstimp=35100&natinimp=7&anyowner=Royal+African+Company>

Contemporary English politicians, merchants and planters recognized that the trade of captured Africans was vital to the continued growth of the sugar economy in the English Caribbean. Given the importance with which they viewed enslaved labour, these planters, politicians and merchants understood this persistent imbalance in supply and demand of captives as a problem to be solved. To help rectify this, the English crown

informed Sir Thomas Lynch, the governor of Jamaica in 1681, that they had directed the Company to “send 3,000 merchantable Negroes yearly to Jamaica.” They further directed that captives were to be sold in lots at eighteen pounds per head, with the grace period for planters to settle their debts set at six months.¹⁷⁵ The Company argued, however, that their ability to supply the necessary captive Africans to Jamaican planters was hampered by interlopers. They claimed these traders “freely [brought] Negroes to this Island which doth disable ... the said Company from bringing hither that quantity of Negroes it otherwise should.”¹⁷⁶ These illegal traders took advantage of the many small bays along the Jamaican coastline to discretely unload their cargo and sell them to Jamaican planters.¹⁷⁷

In order to both meet the growing demand of Jamaican planters and reassert the RAC’s monopoly in Jamaica, *An Act for the encouragement of the Royall African Company of England to Import Negroes into his Majesties Island of Jamaica* was passed in April of 1684.¹⁷⁸ This served as both an ultimatum to the Company and a warning to planters who continued to purchase enslaved Africans outside of the Company’s monopoly. The act stipulated that the Company was to import five thousand captives to the island by August 1685 and three thousand captives for every year after that. If they failed in this, the Act and its protection for the Company stopped.¹⁷⁹ While the act admitted it was difficult to prove whether enslaved labourers were bought legally or

¹⁷⁵ Leonard Woods Labaree, ed., *Royal Instructions to British Colonial Governors, 1670 – 1776*, vol.2 (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), 934.

¹⁷⁶ W. L. Grant, James Munro and Almeric W. Fitzroy, eds., *Acts of the Privy Council of England: Series, Volume 2, A.D. 1680 – 1720* (Hereford: H. M. Stationary Office, 1910), 146.

¹⁷⁷ For an example of an interloper unloading captives in Morant Bay, see J. W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1685 – 1688* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1899), 193.

¹⁷⁸ Grant, Munro and Fitzroy, eds., *Acts of the Privy Council*, 64 – 66.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

illegally, if planters were found with enslaved labourers who had worked on their plantation for less than three months and were unable to prove they were bought from a representative of the Company, said labourers was removed from the plantation. The planter was further instructed to pay ten pounds to the Jamaican Assembly for every illegally purchased African.¹⁸⁰ More often than not the Company was unable to fulfill their quota. In fact, they only twice disembarked more than 3000 captives in Jamaica between 1672 and 1692 (Table 3.3). Despite an average mortality rate in these years around 23%, their inability to supply Jamaican planters with the promised captives had little to do with mortality rates. The Company consistently embarked less than 3000 captives destined for Jamaica in their West African ports and was thus incapable of fulfilling their mandate.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 65 and 66.

¹⁸¹ There were three years in which the Royal African Company embarked more than 3000 captives in this time period (1684, 1686 and 1687). Of these three years, 1684 was the only year in which the Company disembarked less than 3000 captive Africans in Jamaican ports, which was likely a factor of the mortality rate that year (19.8 percent). Table 3.3

Table 3.3 – The Royal African Company’s Embarkation, Disembarkation and Mortality Rates of Jamaican Bound Voyages, 1672 – 1692

Year	Embarked	Disembarked	No. Mortality	% Mortality
1672	0	0	0	0
1673	0	0	0	0
1674	782	589	193	24.68
1675	1671	1287	384	22.98
1676	1636	1216	420	25.67
1677	1738	1159	579	33.31
1678	1558	1228	330	21.18
1679	935	653	282	30.16
1680	2182	1699	483	22.14
1681	2186	1587	599	27.40
1682	2685	2105	580	21.60
1683	2689	1773	916	34.06
1684	3296	2311	985	29.88
1685	2985	2317	668	22.38
1686	4903	3755	1148	23.41
1687	3693	3032	661	17.90
1688	1490	1162	328	22.01
1689	2804	2190	614	21.90
1690	616	509	107	17.37
1691	1851	1623	228	12.32
1692	635	584	51	8.03
	40335	30779	9556	23.07

Source: Eltis, et al., *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces?yearFrom=1665&yearTo=1695&mjstimp=35100&natinimp=7&anyowner=Royal+African+Company>

3.3 The Bristol Circle

Although William Helyar continued to reside in East Coker, his social network in the 1680s was centered in Bristol. This was largely due to practical considerations. It was the largest port to Helyar and as London merchant Nicholas Warren became a less visible presence in the letters, Helyar shipped goods through Bristol with increasing frequency. Indeed, as Warren’s influence waned, a Bristol merchant, John Napper, took his place.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Warren’s last mention as a merchant was in William Whaley to William Helyar, August 1674/5, John Napper’s first mention in the Helyar letters was in a letter to William Helyar, March 16, 1675/6.

Though the letters made no specific indication as to why Warren was replaced, it was likely a strategic move on the part of Helyar. He preferred to have goods from Bybrook sent to Bristol, but without property in the city, he was charged duty. To avoid these costs, he transferred the English side of Bybrook's operations to a Bristol resident and merchant, Napper.¹⁸³ Napper was then a key contact in Helyar's Bristol circle. The Bristol circle was almost entirely composed of merchants, whose chief responsibility was to ship goods to and from Bybrook. While these goods were as innocuous as the food provisions requested by Thomas Hillyard, the merchants with whom Helyar interacted with through his Bristol circle were also involved in the illegal trade of captive Africans. These merchants, most notably the Swymmer brothers, and in later years the Way brothers and Abraham Birkin, connected William Helyar to an alternative to the Royal African Company.¹⁸⁴ Bybrook was then intimately connected with the contraband trade of captured Africans through its social networks and used it to their advantage on at least one occasion.

In the late 1670s and early 1680s, Thomas Hillyard was the manager of Bybrook. He succeeded Edward Atcherly in 1678 and was tasked with increasing the efficiency of Bybrook, amongst the largest sugar works in Jamaica after the tenure of William Whaley.¹⁸⁵ As incentive, Hillyard and Helyar agreed he was to receive one-third of the annual net profits yielded by the plantation, with the remaining two-thirds set aside for Helyar.¹⁸⁶ Although Hillyard represented Helyar's interest in Jamaica, the center of the social network rested in Somerset as Helyar maintained ultimate control of the plantation.

¹⁸³ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 218.

¹⁸⁴ See Appendices 2 and 3 in Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*.

¹⁸⁵ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 216 – 217.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

He remained a significant investor, as he paid for and sent food provisions and labourers to the plantation. Hillyard undoubtedly maintained his own, independent social network in Jamaica but given that the letters written during his tenure at Bybrook were business correspondences, Hillyard's own network was not clearly defined. Moreover, Helyar had a higher stake in the success of the plantation and thus his orders for the plantation were treated with increased importance, at least on paper. Hillyard's own social network was therefore little more than a subsidiary of Helyar's circle.

In early 1684, William Helyar entered an agreement with Bristol merchants William Hayman and William Swymmer "to deliver... ten Negroes slaves to say five men and five women to the Island of Jamaica at Seventeen Pounds Sterling p head."¹⁸⁷ Though the Helyar manuscripts are littered with instances in which African captives were bought and sold, this transaction was notable for several reasons. The first, and most important, was because this transaction explicitly linked Bybrook to the illicit trade of captive Africans. William Hayman and William Swymmer, along with Swymmer's brother Captain Anthony Swymmer, operated outside of the Royal African Company's monopoly and the Swymmer brothers were also vocal opponents of it.¹⁸⁸ Though the agreement was with both Hayman and Swymmer, Helyar only maintained contact with Swymmer and Captain Swymmer, a resident of Jamaica, after the initial agreement. The Swymmer brothers were then of primary importance in the Bristol circle, as Helyar's contact in both England and Hillyard's contact in Jamaica. It is unclear exactly when the brothers entered the trade of enslaved African, though it may have been as early as March 1669, when William Swymmer took out a lease from the Corporation of Bristol a

¹⁸⁷ William Hayman and William Swymmer to William Helyar, December 12, 1684.

¹⁸⁸ Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, 236.

property near the River Frome and the River Avon in Bristol.¹⁸⁹ Their first contact recorded in the Helyar manuscripts was in 1684 however but what was clear from this interaction was that the Swymmer brothers had a well developed a system to sell captive Africans outside of the Royal African Company's monopoly.

The system developed by the Swymmer brothers was relatively straightforward. It began in Bristol. William Helyar arranged for William Swymmer, the Bristol branch of the operations, to supply captive Africans to Bybrook. During this transaction, Helyar was able to specify both the gender and the number of captives he wanted to purchase. William Swymmer then arranged for transport of the captives to Jamaica, where they disembarked and met the Swymmer's factor, Robert Legg. They likely disembarked near Anthony Swymmer's plantation in Morant Bay, a location well known to interlopers.¹⁹⁰ Captain Swymmer, and to a lesser extent Robert Legg, represented the Jamaican branch of the operations. Legg was charged with delivering them to the correct plantation and Captain Swymmer collected the money, which he sent back to his brother in Bristol.

Though the system was well thought out, it was easily marred by human error. This first documented transaction with the Swymmer brothers was a failure, as Bybrook did not receive the promised captives. Instead, Legg "sold them for selfe monys" in Jamaica and William Helyar was given the option to cancel their agreement, as he had not paid for them yet.¹⁹¹ This was more likely a mutual recognition of the volatility of the trans-Atlantic slave trade rather than a signal that William Helyar did not trust the Swymmer brothers. William Helyar did not immediately abandon his agreement with

¹⁸⁹ Ancient lease: Corporation of Bristol to William Swymmer, March 15, 1669, MS 1322/2, Ancient Leases, Bristol Records Office, U.K.

¹⁹⁰ "A New Map of the Island of Jamaica... With the Names of the Present Proprietors According to the Late Survey," Map, *The John Carter Brown Library*, 1685.

¹⁹¹ William Hayman and William Swymmer to William Helyar, December 12, 1684.

William Swymmer, instead, they entered a sort of limbo while they decided how to resolve Swymmer's unfulfilled obligation, or indeed if they should be absolved of it entirely. During this state of limbo, William Helyar and William Swymmer were engaged in discussions of character and plantation management. Both the issues of character and plantation management had particular resonance in seventeenth-century Jamaica, though their discussion of plantation management took on an interesting new dimension through its connection to the illegal trade of captive Africans. Swymmer implied that healthy African captives were becoming increasingly rare and, as such, were of higher value. He stressed the importance of buying healthy captives for the plantation, as unhealthy ones put the other labourers on the plantation at risk. William Swymmer predicted that it would get more difficult for them to import enslaved labourers in 1685 and, while ships that were not affiliated with the RAC actually increased from two in 1684 to five in 1685, his services were more attractive and even vital to Helyar and Bybrook (Table 3.2). In fact, he, perhaps counter intuitively, went so far as to tell Helyar the shipment from which he was meant to receive the enslaved labourers "proved very sicke and dyseased."¹⁹² Nearly one-third of the captives died while on board while those who landed in Jamaica "would have been capable but of very little service this yeare if they had lived."¹⁹³ Swymmer therefore reframed Helyar's misfortune as an opportunity. In doing so, he took partial responsibility for the actions of Legg and actively tried to convince Helyar that, although this reflected poorly on his character, he would strive to rectify the mistake. He hoped to demonstrate himself worthy enough to remain in the social network of "soe

¹⁹² William Hayman and William Swymmer to William Helyar, December 12, 1684.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

worthy a Gentleman.”¹⁹⁴ He vowed to supply Helyar with “good negroe slaves” if Helyar allowed him to fulfill their agreement.¹⁹⁵ In the end, William Helyar did indeed continue to do business with the Swymmer brothers to supply Bybrook with the necessary enslaved labourers.

There were undoubtedly advantages for Helyar to purchase captive Africans from William Swymmer. The Royal African Company sold their captives in lots, or groups, in which “they mixt good & bad ones together.”¹⁹⁶ John Helyar, the son of William Helyar who travelled to Jamaica in 1686, claimed this led to high mortality rates as the “ten Negros you Buy in 6 months time half of them Dyes & Sometimes the 2/3.”¹⁹⁷ While Swymmer was not able to guarantee healthy men and women, particularly evident in light of his admission about the state of his captives in 1684, he bore increased accountability for unhealthy captives as a member of Helyar’s social network. If the captured Africans purchased by the Helyar’s from the Swymmer’s were the ‘bad’ ones who did not live past the first few months on the plantation, they were able to directly engage with either Anthony Swymmer, in Jamaica, or William Swymmer, in Bristol, to voice their displeasure. William Swymmer promised William Helyar ‘good’ enslaved labourers, who were able to withstand the harsh work regimen on Bybrook. While high mortality rates amongst enslaved labourers was much more complicated than simply purchasing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ labourers at the outset - enslaved labourers died from diseases contracted during the Middle Passage and upon arrival at the plantation, as well as from the backbreaking labour that characterized sugar plantations –the ability of the enslaved labourer to work

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ John Helyar to William Helyar, December 22, 1686.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

on the plantation over an extended period of time reflected on Swymmer's ability to keep his word to the Helyar's. If too many of the labourers purchased from William Swymmer died shortly after their arrival on the plantation, the Helyar's perceived these enslaved labourers as low quality and thus were likely to hold this against Swymmer's character as Swymmer did not fulfill his commitment to supply the Helyar's with 'good' labourers. In this sense, the more tarnished Swymmer's reputation was in the eyes of William and John Helyar, the less likely they were to continue to purchase captured Africans from him.

When William Helyar agreed to purchase captive Africans from the Swymmer brothers, who were outside of the RAC monopoly, he trusted them to fulfill their agreement. This trust, however, was broken when the Swymmer's when the captives were not delivered to Bybrook as agreed and William Swymmer scrambled to save his reputation in the eyes of William Helyar. The future of the business relationship depended on Swymmer proving his trustworthiness, or good character, to Helyar. Yet, William Helyar and William Swymmer both lived in England and thus their relationship necessarily existed within England's economy of obligation. This part of their relationship is easy to understand, but the wrinkle in their relationship came through the trans-Atlantic nature of their transaction. The trans-Atlantic aspect of their business relationship meant that their agreement also existed in the economic culture of Jamaica. William Swymmer not only had to prove his own trustworthiness, therefore, but the trustworthiness of his contacts in Jamaica – his brother, Anthony, and their future factors. He did this through employing the same language and parameters that defined the English economy of obligation. In this sense, although the sale of the captives took place in Jamaica, Anthony Swymmer, Thomas Hillyard and Robert Legg were all bound by the

same moral conventions as William Swymmer and William Helyar were in England. The sale of the captives in Jamaica, in other words, did not preclude Anthony Swymmer and Robert Legg from fulfilling their obligation, nor did it preclude their inability or unwillingness to deliver the captives to the plantation from negatively affecting their reputation. Their trustworthiness was just as important, if not more, than William Swymmer's and it was judged by the standards of reputation. They therefore existed within England's economic culture, even if they lived thousands of kilometers away.

Purchasing enslaved labourers from William Swymmer also meant William Helyar was able to dictate both the number and the sex of the captives to be sent to Bybrook. On the occasions in which he bought captive Africans through the Swymmer's, he asked for an even distribution of men and women.¹⁹⁸ This was in line with the distribution of enslaved labourers on the plantation as Bybrook generally maintained equilibrium between enslaved male and female labourers.¹⁹⁹ He made no specific references in his dealings with William Swymmer about children and thus it remained unclear as to whether he also purchased children to work on Bybrook from Swymmer. However, given the number of children recorded in 1678 and 1696, which only increased from 24 to 25 in the inventories and mirrored a similar consistency in the number of enslaved men and women inventoried, it was highly plausible both managers and owners of Bybrook purchased captured children to work on the plantation.²⁰⁰ Throughout its time as an English sugar colony, Jamaica was unable to maintain positive reproductive rates amongst the enslaved labourers and there were too few recorded instances of children

¹⁹⁸ William Hayman and William Swymmer to William Helyar, December 12, 1684. William Swymmer to William Helyar, March 20, 1686.

¹⁹⁹ A list of what Negroes ar upon Bybrook Plantation exactly taken this first of June 1678. A List of Negroes Now Living one Bybrook Plantation, July 26, 1696.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

born to enslaved mothers to account for a stable population of enslaved children on the plantation.²⁰¹

The Helyar's relationship with the Swymmer's did not mean that they avoided the enslaved labourers sold by the Royal African Company entirely. The Helyar's showed no clear preference for the legal or illegal marketplace when they purchased enslaved labourers and it was likely a factor of convenience. John Helyar awaited the arrival of Captain Clarke and his ship, *Prosperous*, in 1686, for example, which Clarke sailed on behalf of the RAC. The ship landed in Jamaica with 321 captives, four or five of whom were purchased by Helyar.²⁰² 1686 was the high water mark for the RAC in seventeenth-century Jamaica, with fifteen ships and over 3,750 Africans disembarked (Table 3.2 and Table 3.3). Even if one accounted for the interlopers who were not represented in the historical record, it was undoubtedly easier and more convenient for Jamaican planters to acquire labourers from the RAC than from interlopers. Molesworth's recent crackdown on independent traders also increased the risk for planters who purchased enslaved labourers illegally. It appeared then that Jamaican planters served their own best interests when they purchased enslaved labourers. In many ways, the planters used cost-benefit analysis when they chose between using the legal or illegal marketplace for captives. If the benefits outweighed the risks, they mobilized their social networks in order to purchase enslaved labourers in the quantity and sex they wanted. As the Jamaican government enforced the RAC's monopoly, however, and the marketplace expanded, the

²⁰¹ Richard Smith to John Helyar, March 18, 1689/90.

²⁰² John Helyar recorded owing Captain Clarke £100 in 1687 and the Transatlantic Slave Database recorded captives were sold for about £20:17:9, or £20.88, per head. Helyar noted in his letter to William Helyar on December 22, 1686 that one was able to buy "the freight or Comission negroes" for an extra forty shilling if "one hath money at the comeing of the Ships". Helyar did not specify if he did so with this ship and thus the exact number of enslaved labourers he purchased remains unclear. John Helyar to William Helyar, December 22, 1686. John Helyar to William Helyar, October 3, 1687.

risks outweighed the benefit, which meant planters turned to the legal market to supply their needs.

The Bristol circle was equally well defined by who was absent from it. In this sense, while the merchants who shipped goods to and from Bybrook connected the plantation to the contraband trade of enslaved Africans, the conspicuous absence of Sir Hender Molesworth in the Helyar manuscripts also spoke to the possibility of Helyar's connection to the illegal trade. Though Molesworth's last mention in the manuscripts was in 1676, he maintained an active presence in the larger political culture of Jamaica. In 1677, he became the Jamaican factor of the Royal Africa Company and accordingly became an official representative for the Company on the island. As a factor, Molesworth received a share of the profits and it was thus in his best interests to promote the sale of the captives of the Royal Africa Company.²⁰³ It was not a coincidence that his years as lieutenant governor of the island were the years in which the Royal African Company came closest to enforcing their monopoly as well as supplying the island with the mandated 3000 captives. Molesworth fought against interlopers during his time as the lieutenant governor of the island, launching investigations for their alleged involvement in the contraband trade of enslaved Africans against several prominent Jamaicans, including the soon-to-be governor William Beeston.²⁰⁴ In addition to this, Molesworth correctly intuited that Jamaican planters willingly turned a blind eye to interlopers and were more likely to turn in interlopers "to gratify his private piques" than "for the King's service."²⁰⁵ To rectify this, he appointed "particular persons" to patrol the coasts of

²⁰³ Nuala Zahedieh, "The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655 – 1692," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (Oct 1986): 581.

²⁰⁴ Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, 1685 – 88*, 157, 275, 299 and 330.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

Jamaica for interlopers for though it was “really everybody’s business [it was] commonly thought to be nobody’s.”²⁰⁶ Sir Hender Molesworth was also a vocal proponent for the trade of African captives to Spanish America.

3.4 The New Jamaican Circle

The Royal African Company also extended its reach beyond the bounds of the English Caribbean, particularly into the Spanish Americas. Alex Borucki, David Eltis and David Wheat recently showed that the Spanish Americas were the second largest destination for captured Africans who survived the Middle Passage, overtaken only by Brazil. Some 1,506,000 captured Africans arrived in the Spanish American colonies directly from ports in Africa, while another 566,000 captives were sold to the Spanish American colonists from other plantation societies in the New World, like Jamaica.²⁰⁷ Given the Spanish American demand for captured Africans, the colonies of Spanish America represented a sizable opportunity for profit and this opportunity was recognized early on by English settlers in Jamaica. In the earliest years of English settlement in Jamaica, the Dutch’s Caribbean entrepot, Curaçao, helped fill Spanish America’s demand for African captives.²⁰⁸ Yet, ever ambitious, the English settlers in Jamaica slowly squeezed the Dutch out of the trade with the Spanish Americas.

As England’s closest colonial possession in the Caribbean to the Spanish mainland, Jamaica began to trade enslaved Africans with the Spanish colonies shortly

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Alex Borucki, David Eltis and David Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America,” *American Historical Review* 120 (April 2015): 434.

²⁰⁸ In its earliest years, Bybrook also benefitted from the market for African captives in Curaçao. Cary Helyar bought as many as six African labourers at the “Dutch price” from Sir Thomas Modyford in 1670. Modyford appeared to be illegally importing them into the island see Bennett, “Cary Helyar,” 63.

after they settled the island. Acting deputy governor Charles Lyttelton noted the arrival of Spanish colonists, readied with silver from their mines to trade for African labourers in 1662. This practice had precedence in Jamaica, but it was Lyttelton who found a way to officially circumvent the Navigation Acts of 1660. Although the Navigation Acts barred trade with foreign powers, Lyttelton announced the Spanish would be able to buy captive Africans in Jamaica if they paid for them with products from the New World. If they did this, the English colonists that sold captive Africans to their Spanish counterparts did not contravene any regulations of the Navigation Acts, as goods that were made in English colonies, like sugar, did not leave the colony in a foreign vessel.²⁰⁹ This solution thus killed two birds with one stone: the English in Jamaica gained valuable Spanish silver and they acquired it legally. English politicians endorsed this understanding of the Navigation Acts, particularly as it undercut the Dutch trade of enslaved Africans. Yet, maintaining a meaningful connection to the Spanish silver required more than a close reading of the Navigation Acts, it required the *Asiento*.

The *Asiento* was a contract between the Spanish crown and merchants, throughout Europe and the New World, to annually supply their colonies with a specified number of captive Africans. Spain was a rare example of an Atlantic empire without control of any ports in West Africa with which to supply their colonies with captives and thus relied on others to supply them. The *Asiento* was then crucial to the maintenance and growth of the Spanish empire, particularly as indigenous labour sources dwindled. It was watched over by Grillo and Lomelin, Genoese merchants whom the Spanish crown appointed to hire *asientistas*, or sub-contractors, to supply the Spanish colonies with enslaved African

²⁰⁹ Gregory O'Malley, *Final Passage: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619 – 1807* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 139 – 142.

labour.²¹⁰ The *Asiento* was lucrative for merchants, particularly if they had a connection with an *asientista* to purchase their captives.²¹¹ These merchants were paid with coveted pieces of eight, silver from the mines of central and South America under Spanish control. The financial value of the contract fostered fierce competition for the *Asiento* in the seventeenth-century Caribbean. The Company of African Adventurers briefly enjoyed the responsibility of supplying colonial Spanish America with captives in the 1660s, but was ultimately unable to meet demand and the *Asiento* reverted back to the Dutch.²¹² Yet, by the 1680s, Jamaica was once again the base of the *Asiento* in the Caribbean, thanks in large part to the Royal African Company, who were restructured to avoid the same failure as the Adventurers.

The English crown officially endorsed, and even encouraged, opening the Jamaican and Barbadian market for enslaved labourers to Spanish buyers. As the English crown saw things, it was of “considerable advantage to our subjects, and particularly to the Royal African Company.”²¹³ They were certainly right about the Royal African Company, as the Spanish buyers had ready money with which to buy the enslaved labourers and, as Jamaican planters’ debts to the Company rose in the 1680s, this was a considerable point in favor of the Spanish trade. From the perspective of the English crown and the Jamaican government, there appeared to be no serious discussion of the downsides of this trade in the early 1680s. The Jamaican planters, who competed with the Spanish American silver and goods in the marketplace, felt the downsides most acutely. According to contemporary observers, the healthiest and ‘best’ captives were sold to the

²¹⁰ F. J. Osborne, “James Castillo – Asiento Agent,” *Jamaican Historical Review* 7 (1971): 9.

²¹¹ Zahedieh, *Merchants of Port Royal*, 583 – 584.

²¹² Osborne, *James Castillo*, 9.

²¹³ Labaree, ed., *Instructions to British Colonial Governors*, 935.

Spanish colonists, while the Jamaican planters were left to contend with the rest. Indeed, Molesworth had agreed to supply the Spanish colonists with the healthiest captives and, in turn, received 10,777 pieces of eight for his favorable service to Spanish colonists.²¹⁴ Jamaica planters believed this was against their best interests, as the diseased captives died quickly after they were brought to the plantation.²¹⁵ This created an incentive for Jamaican planters to turn to the illegal trade to supply their enslaved labour needs. To benefit from the Spanish trade, Jamaican planters had to join it. John Helyar hoped to be among these planters that profited from the Spanish trade as well as from the growing sugar economy.

John Helyar arrived in Jamaica in 1686 to take over the management of Bybrook from Thomas Hillyard, whom William Helyar had lost confidence in. John's success in Jamaica depended on both the Jamaican arm of the Bristol circle and a social network that had a more internal focus. Because those connected to the Bristol circle, including Captain Swymmer, had worked with William Helyar in the past, John looked to them to help guide him in the first few months after his arrival. It was also important for John Helyar to gain access to Jamaican social networks instead of relying on the scant contacts who formed the Jamaican arm of the Bristol network. He turned to some familiar faces for the Helyar family on the island shortly after his arrival, including Sir Charles Modyford and Colonel Nedham, "who was a great Crony's of [his] uncle Cary" and the owner of a neighboring plantation to Bybrook.²¹⁶ These men had long established reputations on the island, as longtime residents and as fixtures on the local political landscape, which were an important asset as John established himself on the island. Their

²¹⁴ Osborne, *James Castillo*, 10.

²¹⁵ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 242.

²¹⁶ John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686.

reputations were established within the larger economic culture, in other words. These men were not mentioned directly as members of the Jamaican arm of the Bristol circle, but were known by and part of a separate network to which men like Captain Swymmer also belonged. John Helyar accessed this new social network easily, because of his father's pre-existing relationship with men, like Captain Swymmer, and because of uncle's previous relationships with important men in Jamaica. These men represented an evolved social network - the new Jamaican circle - in the chronicle of Bybrook.

The new Jamaican circle supplied John with valuable information and advice. John was much like his uncle when he arrived in Jamaica: he was young and ambitious but had no experience in sugar cultivation. Also much like his uncle, more experienced sugar planters and merchants took John under their wings in his first years on the island to help him succeed. Nedham, Modyford and Swymmer appeared as important members of the new Jamaican circle early. Indeed, Sir Charles Modyford proved an especially important contact for John on the island. When Modyford died in 1687, John lamented "he was like a father" to him and to whom "in all [his] troubles [he] addressed [him] selfe."²¹⁷ Indeed, though Modyford died only a year and a half into John's stay on the island, it was an eventful time in Bybrook's narrative and John likely drew on him often for advice on how to deal with Thomas Hillyard and his claims on Bybrook.²¹⁸

Though his first few years as manager of Bybrook went by without incident, Thomas Hillyard did not yield his place at the plantation easily. William considered Hillyard's letters too vague by 1683 and feared Hillyard was cheating him.²¹⁹ William, unwilling to turn over control to Bybrook to someone outside of his immediate family,

²¹⁷ John Helyar to William Helyar, October 3, 1687.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 218 – 219.

thus sent his third eldest son, John, to take his place. As his son, William Helyar felt he could trust John Helyar to manage the plantation as he had already established his good character in the eyes of his father. In his own words, John promised to “promote [his father’s] Interest more then any one Else cann doe yours being mine alsoe.”²²⁰ Though both John and William Helyar were unclear exactly how Hillyard was cheating the family, John discovered through his social contacts in Jamaica that Hillyard was paying himself out of the gross profits of the plantation, instead of the net profits. This meant that, instead of paying himself one-third of the profit after he deducted expenses and sending the other two-thirds to Helyar, he paid himself before he settled accounts and expenses.²²¹ The issue was further complicated by the inventory of the plantation, as Hillyard had transferred or purchased much of it under his own name and thus claimed ownership of it.²²² Hillyard had broken William Helyar’s trust in him and Helyar accordingly saw him as a man of poor character who was not to be trusted with the management of Bybrook. William hoped to oust Hillyard with a power of attorney, which was to present to him upon arrival. Hillyard however did not accept the power of attorney letter presented to him and continued to reside on the plantation, in spite of William Helyar’s express wishes. Hillyard refused to give up his stake of the plantation and thus entered a personal and legal battle with the Helyar’s.

Though John Helyar described Hillyard as “mighty civill” in the first three months after his arrival on Bybrook, the tone quickly changed.²²³ While the dispute

²²⁰ John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686.

²²¹ John Helyar to William Helyar, September 30, 1686

²²² Bybrook Plantation appears under Hillyard’s name in 1685 on “A New Map of the Island of Jamaica... With the Names of the Present Proprietors According to the Late Survey.” Also see John Helyar to William Helyar, September 30, 1686.

²²³ John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686.

between Hillyard and John Helyar began with ownership of Bybrook at its center, it quickly took on a personal tone. As John described it, Hillyard became erratic and unpredictable after these first few months. By June of that year, Hillyard threw John off the plantation and refused to allow him to return.²²⁴ It was unclear when exactly their relationship went from a cordial one to a hostile one in this first three months, nor what preceded John's unceremonious exit from the plantation and therefore whether John Helyar foresaw this turn of events. Hillyard's perceived incivility was certainly a surprise to John, who reported to his father that "what things I had on the plantation as my bookes, & other things he has been so trivil as to take them out of my chamber & has throwne them out of doores, so that any body may take them that will."²²⁵ He mentioned an incident in which a neighbor asked Hillyard for his help to light a pipe, to which Hillyard "immediately presented a pistoll out of the window & bidd him begone, otherwise he would fire att him."²²⁶ Hillyard threatened "if he be ruined he would not be ruind alone" and vilified John and his reputation through the island.²²⁷ The two were at an impasse and John Helyar thus turned to legal arbitration to remove Hillyard from the plantation. They entered arbitration overseen by Colonel Beckford, who ruled against the Helyar's. His decision was confirmed by the chief justice of the island in October 1687 and "brought the plantation in debt to Tho: Hillyard £786:05:4½."²²⁸ It was likely that both found this judgment satisfactory as it helped both achieve their goals: John Helyar

²²⁴ John Helyar to William Helyar, November 30, 1686.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ John Helyar to William Helyar, October 3, 1687.

wrested control of Bybrook from Hillyard and Hillard had enough money to buy his own plantation.²²⁹

While he waited to begin his work on Bybrook, John looked beyond the sugar economy to make his first profit. Aware of the amount of money his father had invested in Bybrook with little return, John stated his intention to make a profit by exploiting the opportunities in Jamaica. Indeed, his contacts in Jamaica were crucial to his entry into the Spanish trade. According to Modyford, it was an easy way to earn income. There were “five, or six Spanish ships in a yeare which comes for negroes” from which John was able to make a profit and members of the new Jamaican circle, including Modyford, had already profited.²³⁰ Modyford offered protection to the Spanish ships who came to purchase enslaved labourers in Jamaica, from Port Royal to the “next Spanish port under the protection of our two men of war so that less then a monthes time they have their returnes in a heavy pieces of eight.”²³¹ As John’s business associate, Jonathan Everard informed William Helyar that John stood to make “30 pounds in 2 or 3 months its at least 90 pounds per annum with litle or no riscue” if he entered the Spanish trade.²³² His entry into the Spanish trade, however, appeared to be largely financial; John Helyar was convinced by the new Jamaican circle to participate by “Lending the money to the Assiento or Spanish factory.”²³³ According to this plan, the profit came from the interest charged on the loan, set at “25 percent if not 30 percent” and “repayd in a month or

²²⁹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 219.

²³⁰ John Helyar to William Helyar, July 16, 1686.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Post script from Jonathan Everard in John Helyar to William Helyar, July 16, 1686.

²³³ John Helyar to William Helyar, December 22, 1686.

two.”²³⁴ As described to and by John Helyar, this certainly was an enticing prospect, as he would be able to increase his money with little work.

However, in order to invest the money, John Helyar first had to trust the *asientista* would fulfill their agreement. He appeared to verify the *asientista*'s reputation through his social network in Jamaica. John understood these men who encouraged him to invest in the Spanish trade to be of good character and therefore he trusted their judgment of other's characters'. The economy of obligation therefore extended not only to other planters in Jamaica, but also to the Spanish merchants with whom they did business. It crossed cultural lines, as those who judged the trustworthiness of the *asientista* understood his character within the confines of England's economic culture.

With his trust established in the *asientista*, John Helyar diversified his business interests in Jamaica beyond Bybrook. It also did not require a plantation or its infrastructure to be profitable, and therein lay the greatest strength of his plan: he could do it while he waited for Hillyard to leave Bybrook. This design allowed John to maintain residence in Jamaica and he therefore remained available to attend any arbitration that concerned Hillyard and Bybrook. It also connected him to local social networks from which he could gain more accurate information about Hillyard's management of Bybrook.

3.5 Conclusion

Just as any other contemporary sugar plantation in the English Caribbean, Bybrook was built on the broken backs of enslaved labourers and it relied on others to import African captives to the markets in Jamaica. Yet, the Helyar manuscripts offer

²³⁴ Ibid.

perspective on the different ways in which planters responded to the marketplace and the economic culture of Jamaica. When they felt constrained by its limitations – inadequate supply, sickly labourers and high prices – they turned to other avenues to meet their demand. In Bybrook's case, William Helyar turned to the illegal market to supply the plantation with enslaved labourers. The basis of all their business interactions remained the trustworthiness of the individual with whom they did business and they therefore continued to operate within an economy of obligation.

William Helyar participated in the interloping trade through a social network that centered in Bristol, of which William Swymmer was a central figure. It was through Swymmer that William Helyar appeared to first connect with the network of traders outside of the Royal African Company's monopoly. Bybrook continued its association with independent traders until the Helyar's sold it in 1713. Beginning in the 1690s, Bybrook developed close connections to a host of other independent traders, including Abraham Birkin, Benjamin and Joseph Way and John, William and Gilbert Heathcote. While Bybrook received an enslaved labourer from the Heathcote's on at least one occasion, these men functioned mainly as modes of transport for provisions to and from the plantation. They had diverse business interests, much like John Helyar, and the trustworthiness, or character, of the individuals with whom he did business continued to define their relationship. John was not simply a Jamaican planter, but also an investor in the trade of African captives to the Spanish American colonies. John Helyar's involvement in the Spanish trade demonstrated the many business opportunities in Jamaica as its sugar economy developed. It also showed his adaptability to unexpected changes in his personal circumstance – in his case, solving a legal dispute to regain

control of Bybrook – that was likely emblematic of other Jamaican planters. Though this was only implied about other planters in the Helyar manuscripts, this was more likely a factor of the purpose of the documents than the reality of the island.

The Royal African Company was unable to satisfy the demand of Jamaican planters and, with the right connections interlopers were able to supply the necessary captives to plantations. Given the frequency with which they appeared in discourses by the RAC, this phenomenon doubtlessly extended far beyond Bybrook. John's interaction with other planters in Jamaica also demonstrated that planters regularly diversified their incomes in Jamaica. Beyond their plantations, Anthony Swymmer was involved in the interloping trade, for example, while Charles Modyford participated in the Spanish trade. Indeed, John's plan to enter the Spanish trade to earn a profit was not his own, but one hatched by the new Jamaican circle based on their own experiences in Jamaica. These men had already successfully exploited different business ventures in the English Caribbean and, perhaps encouraged by their success, John followed their lead. The Helyar manuscripts should thus be seen as emblematic of the versatility of planters in Jamaica and the options beyond sugar cultivation from which they might also profit. In both William Helyar's use of independent traders to supply Bybrook with labour and John Helyar's possible entry into the Spanish market, they used their social networks in order to overcome problems in Jamaica's marketplace. Moreover, the business relationships in the sugar economy continued to function within an economy of obligation, in which character and reputation dictated who they did business with. Social networks then provided a safety net for the Helyar's as Bybrook continued to grow.

CHAPTER FOUR “BEING A WOMAN PAST CHILD”: WHITE WOMEN IN JAMAICA’S ECONOMY

In 1687, the cannons in Havana fired to greet an English noblewoman. She arrived in Havana on the arm of Captain Bear - wanted by the English authorities for piracy – and it was claimed that she fled Jamaica and the obligations of her noble blood in order to marry Captain Bear. The two were married in Havana shortly after their arrival and the event was attended by some of Cuba’s elite, including the governor. Despite their warm welcome from the Spanish authorities in Cuba, Lieutenant Governor Molesworth actively sought Captain Bear’s return to English authorities for prosecution, or at least hoped to restrict Bear’s illegal activities to land by banning his ships from sailing. Molesworth made it clear that Captain Bear was wily and not to be trusted by authorities, in Jamaica or in Cuba, as he was a man so untrustworthy he lied to the governor of Cuba about the true identity of his wife - Captain Bear’s wife was not a noble woman, but “a strumpet of a rum-punch-woman of Port Royal.”²³⁵ With that, Molesworth relegated Captain Bear’s wife to the margins of history, as she warranted no further mention in extant records when her true identity was discovered. She then suffered the same fate as the thousands of women who settled in early Anglo-Jamaica.

Historians of seventeenth-century Jamaica have too often confused white women’s relative absence from public records as an absence from contribution to the development of early Anglo-Jamaica. While women certainly are less visible than men in the extant records, this tendency undervalues the many roles women played in the early decades of English settlement in Jamaica. For the most part, their appearances in primary

²³⁵ Captain Bear and his wife’s exploits in Cuba are explained in J. W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1685 – 1688* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1899), 1,382.

documents lack the same immediacy and drama of cannon fire that greeted Captain Bird's soon-to-be wife and they instead made their mark on records through their interactions with Jamaica's legal system and nearby plantations. In the case of the Helyar manuscripts, there were two legal disputes - both in the 1670s and against the estate of Cary Helyar - that illuminated significant trends in women's experiences in seventeenth-century Jamaica. The first of these cases was undertaken by Cary Helyar's late wife, Priscilla, who took William Helyar to court to recover both property and money promised to her by Cary in his will. The second of these disputes involved Cary's mulatto mistress, who attempted to claim money promised to her verbally by Cary. Though these two cases had Cary Helyar in common, they had little else in common. One was a case undertaken by a woman of a high social rank - Priscilla - and symbolized the concerns of propertied women and the ways in which respectable women might affect the reputations of the men around them. The other was a case undertaken by a woman who was much lower in the social hierarchy and represented the ways in which free women of lower social rank earned their livings in seventeenth-century Jamaica. The Helyar manuscripts offer both quantitative and qualitative information about the role of women in early Anglo-Jamaica. Their appearance in the letters and account books were certainly less consistent than the men that hovered in and around Bybrook, but their appearances do demonstrate the various ways in which women contributed to early Anglo-Jamaican society. In fact, a closer examination of the appearances of women in the Helyar manuscripts can help fortify historians' understanding of character and reputation in the early modern Caribbean as well as women's roles in the early Anglo-Jamaican economy.

4.1 Women in the Historiography

Much like their male counterparts, women in seventeenth-century Jamaica held many different titles simultaneously. They were mothers, daughters, wives and widows. They were seamstresses, owners of estates and of livestock, proprietors of taverns and, very likely, investors in the sugar economy. They were free and bound, as indentured and enslaved labourers. Their experiences in early Anglo-Jamaica were radically different depending on their race and social status, in other words. Despite the multiplicity of their roles in Jamaican society, the literature on their contribution to the economic development of early Anglo-Jamaica remains an underdeveloped field in the historiography. This is partially due to the availability of evidence, as women did not often appear in the state papers and left precious little impact on the business and personal accounts of the males around them. Yet, their limited visibility in historical accounts has led many historians of early Anglo-Jamaica to wrongly limit their place in the secondary literature. Moreover, historians of Anglo-Jamaica have been slow to re-examine the dominance of white male-centered narratives of Anglo-Jamaica's economic and social development. Women and gender history remains an undervalued and under researched avenue for historical inquiry in the literature of Anglo-Jamaica, particularly as it pertains to the literature of the seventeenth century.

For the most part, women scarcely factored into the wide-ranging studies of plantation societies of the 1970s. These traditional narratives focused on the role of white men in the rise of Jamaica's sugar economy and their increased reliance on African labour.²³⁶ Indeed, their understanding of what constituted the sugar economy were

²³⁶ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623 – 1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). And Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of*

limited to the processes of production – planting, cultivating and processing sugarcane – and the export of sugar-based products. This limited understanding of the sugar economy has gone unchallenged in the literature. Yet, Lucille Mair’s work was an early and notable exception to the dominance of planters in the literature of seventeenth-century Jamaica. Her doctoral research at the University of the West Indies, first published in the late 1970s, explored a wide range of women in Jamaica, from enslaved to free, European to African and represents an important milestone in the historiography of early Anglo-Jamaica. She explored the many roles women played in Jamaica from the conquest in 1655 to emancipation and, in doing so, established that the role of women in the seventeenth century “tended to be fluid” as Anglo-Jamaican society defined itself.²³⁷ Her work marked the beginning of women’s history in Anglo-Jamaica as well as its division according to race.

The literature about women in Anglo-Jamaica can be very broadly divided into studies of white, coloured and African women. The bulk of literature on women has focused on African and coloured women, particularly on the process by which they were objectified and sexualized.²³⁸ This research is important and many historians have drawn

the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1713 (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

²³⁷ Lucille Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica: 1655 – 1844*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles (Cave Hill, Barbados: University of the West Indies, 2006), 4.

²³⁸ Hilary Beckles, “White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean,” *History Workshop* 36 (Autumn 1993): 66 – 82. Trevor Burnard, “Rioting in Goatish Embraces’: Marriage and Improvement in Early British Jamaica,” *The History of the Family* 11 (2006): 185 – 197. Trevor Burnard, “Evaluating Gender in Early Jamaica, 1674 – 1784,” *The History of the Family* 12 (2007): 81 – 91. For the eighteenth century, where the literature is much better developed, see Marietta Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1989). Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989). Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650 – 1838* (Kingston: Heinemann Caribbean, 1990). Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Barbara Bush, “‘Sable Venus’, ‘she devil’ or ‘drudge’? British Slavery and the ‘Fabulous Fiction’ of Black Women’s Identities, c. 1650 – 1838,”

direct connections between the objectification of black women and the sexual violence they endured during slavery to present issues facing Caribbean societies.²³⁹ In fact, Hilary McD. Beckles has speculated historians have focused their attention on African and coloured women precisely because of present-day issues.²⁴⁰ Yet, this imbalance, Beckles argues, has led to no “systematic attention to the planter’s wife as a socio-economic agent,” which underscored a general perception of “white women’s relative unimportance to ideological formation within the history of the colonial complex.”²⁴¹ This chapter focuses on the experiences of white and free women, but draws parallels to the lives of African women on the island when applicable. For the most part, however, the lives of white and African women were radically different and their experiences in the early Anglo-Jamaican economy were accordingly discordant.

For the last twenty years, white women have been most often defined solely by their role as wives and mothers in the historiography. Because of their infrequent appearance in primary sources, most historians have relied on similar primary sources, like population numbers and some parish registers to discuss the role of women in Anglo-Jamaica.²⁴² By their very nature, these documents offer little or no personal information about the early settlers in Anglo-Jamaica and favor the methodology of historical demography. Given their reliance on these documents, historical demographers, in particular, have presented women with little complexity, failing to uncover a richer array

Women’s History Review 9 (2000): 761 – 789. Katherine Paugh, “The Politics of Childbearing in the British Caribbean and the Atlantic World During the Age of Abolition, 1776 – 1838,” *Past and Present* 221 (Nov. 2013): 119 – 160.

²³⁹ Hilary Beckles, “White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean,” *History Workshop* 36 (Autumn 1993): 67.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 66 and 67.

²⁴² Richard Dunn used the parish records of St. John’s in Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 172 – 175. Trevor Burnard used the parish register for St. Andrew’s in his work “Inheritance and Independence: Women’s Status in Early Colonial Jamaica,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 48, 1 (Jan. 1991): 95.

of human experiences. In fact, with a methodological emphasis on mortality, marriage and reproduction rates, demographic historians, such as Trevor Burnard, obfuscate the role women played in both the economy and social networks. Burnard has been too quick to label early Anglo-Jamaica as a demographic failure as, although the sexes were unmistakably unbalanced and many settlers died early of disease, it effectively dismisses the complexity of white women's experience in early Anglo-Jamaica.²⁴³ It primarily limited the role of women to mothers or wives. In this sense, the failure of Jamaica as a stable, settler society has been attributed to the result of the low number of white women and the low number of births.²⁴⁴ This underserves their role within early Anglo-Jamaica because their biology overshadows the other roles they played in the emergent society, like their roles in the economy. This is particularly true when women played these roles in the economy outside of their marriage. Moreover, the methodology makes no distinction between social rank. This has led Burnard to wrongly assert that women were described mostly as "whores and petty criminals" by their contemporaries.²⁴⁵ These insults were almost certainly reserved for women of lower social status, however, not elite women. Therein lies the fundamental problem of demographic history as it relates to women: it fails to account for their roles outside of marriage and the effect of their social position on their economic opportunities.

The most successful accounts of white women in the Anglo-Jamaican economy largely focus on the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Hilary McD.

Beckles has worked on the role of white women as owners of enslaved Africans across

²⁴³ Trevor Burnard, "A Failed Settler Society: Marriage and Demographic Failure in Early Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 28 (Fall 1994): 65.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

²⁴⁵ Trevor Burnard, "Evaluating Gender in Early Jamaica, 1674 – 1784," *The History of the Family* 12 (2007): 83.

the English Caribbean, though his work mostly focuses on the early nineteenth century.²⁴⁶ He has been careful to differentiate between the experiences of women, both because of their race and their social status. In doing this, he took his work a step further and examined the interactions between women of different social and racial categories.²⁴⁷ He defined women in relation to each other, in other words, and largely avoided examining them in relation to white male planters. More recently, Christine Walker studied women as owners of enslaved people, arguing that women were involved in every aspect of the market for enslaved Africans, from buying and selling to handing them down in their wills to future generations.²⁴⁸ Their participation in slavery increased their personal wealth and increased their authority within Anglo-Jamaican society. Indeed, her evidence demonstrated that this process began in the late 1670s and accelerated in the first decades of the eighteenth century.²⁴⁹

4.2 White Women in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica

White women arrived to settle in Jamaica shortly after its conquest in 1655. Women came in small numbers in the first few years after the conquest and, for the most part, they were the wives of officers and soldiers stationed in Jamaica. In fact, 173 women and children were recorded with the troops that took the island from the Spanish in 1655.²⁵⁰ The Cromwellian government also sent women over to help settle the island, as they believed that they would help settle the island, as well as demonstrate England's

²⁴⁶ Hilary Beckles, "Historicizing Slavery in West Indian Feminisms," *Feminist Review* 59 (Summer 1998): 34 – 56.

²⁴⁷ See example in Beckles, "Historicizing Slavery," 36 – 38.

²⁴⁸ Christine Walker, "Womanly Masters: Gendering Slave Ownership in Colonial Jamaica," in *Women in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 141.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 143 – 144.

²⁵⁰ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, 9.

intention to start a permanent settlement on the island.²⁵¹ Women were crucial for soldiers and settlers to start families, put down roots and stay permanently. This policy was continued under Charles II, who likewise encouraged women to travel to Jamaica.²⁵² Women's primary roles in the first decade of English settlement Jamaica, in other words, were as wives and mothers.

Although the number of white women in Jamaica grew with each decade, every other demographic group on the island, except children, persistently outnumbered white women for the remainder of the century. By 1661, for example, white women only accounted for 13 percent of the entire population of the island and 15 percent of the white population.²⁵³ As the importation of African labourers intensified in the 1670s, white women's overall representation in the population of the island fell to 12 percent but they made up a larger proportion of the white population.²⁵⁴ Indeed, their numbers increased from 645 to 2,006 between 1662 and 1673, which was more than a 200 percent increase in their numbers.²⁵⁵ By comparison, in the same time period, white men's numbers only grew 55.8 percent, from 2,600 to 4,050.²⁵⁶ In fact, these statistics demonstrated that between 1662 and 1673, white men and women migrated to Jamaica in almost even numbers, as 1,450 men migrated compared to 1,361 women. As Anglo-Jamaica became relatively more settled, in other words, women came in larger numbers.

²⁵¹ Oliver Cromwell, "By Protector: A Proclamation Giving Encouragement to such as shall Transplant themselves to Jamaica (1655)," vol. 2 of *The Early English Caribbean, 570 – 1700*, edited by Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014): 305 – 308.

²⁵² Charles II, "By the King, A Proclamation for the Encouraging of Planters in His Majesties Island of Jamaica in the West Indies (1661)," vol. 2 of *The Early English Caribbean, 570 – 1700*, edited by Carla Gardina Pestana and Sharon V. Salinger (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014): 311 – 312.

²⁵³ See Table 16 in Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 155.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

In addition to the role they played in the early social development of Anglo-Jamaica, women also played an important role in the development of Jamaica's economy. On a practical level, many of the women that travelled to Jamaica were indentured labourers and helped prepare the land for sugarcane cultivation.²⁵⁷ Their impact on Anglo-Jamaica was seen in the fields, but the size of the field in which they worked was affected by the actions of free white women. As a result of high mortality rates on the island, many women were widowed and left with large estates and men, particularly those who were high in the social hierarchy, looked to expand their estates through marrying them. Conversely, men of high social standing also arranged marriages for their daughters to men who were recently widowed in order to consolidate their own political power on the island.²⁵⁸ General Edward Morgan arranged for his daughters to marry men of high standing on the island, for example, in order to diversify his political power.²⁵⁹

The role of white women in Anglo-Jamaica changed quickly and for white women of all social groups, the increased number of enslaved Africans in Jamaica moved white women to new roles in the economy and society. To some extent, African women took over the roles filled by white women in the first few decades of English settlement on the island. As African labourers replaced indentured labourers in the fields, for example, women who worked as indentured labourers had to turn to other avenues in order to make their living in Jamaica. These women typically took on jobs that men were unwilling or unable to take on, which led many of them to work considered dishonourable or with low profit margins. Hillary McD. Beckles has identified taverns

²⁵⁷ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, 26 - 27.

²⁵⁸ For more on the process of land consolidation amongst the island's elite, see Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, 10 – 12.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

and brothels to be among these occupations.²⁶⁰ Elite white women were also marginalized and lost their traditional role running their households.²⁶¹ By the end of the seventeenth century, a women's leisure time was seen as an indication of her place in the social hierarchy – the more leisure time she had, the higher she was in the hierarchy – and an indication of her promiscuity.²⁶² Women who worked were considered less virtuous than women who did not and thus, in order to be seen as virtuous by the society around them; women of high social standing contributed less to the management of the household. In Jamaica, this trend aligned with the rise of enslaved Africans and, more specifically, African women. Male planters sexualized African and coloured women and, in order, to differentiate their wives and daughters from African and coloured labourers, elite white women were further distanced from work.²⁶³ Indeed, Trevor Burnard has posited that African and mulatto women replaced white women in the management of households and has pointed to this as a sign of white women's increasing marginalization in Anglo-Jamaican society.²⁶⁴ Burnard was certainly right on one account because, while he offered no conclusive evidence to support his assertion about the increased role of African and mulatto women within the household, the reduced role of white women within the household certainly was a sign of these women's reduced role in the economy.

White women did not appear to play much of a role in the household at Bybrook. By 1710, eight different men had managed Bybrook and only three of them had married and lived with their wives on the plantation. Of these three – Cary Helyar, Mr. Nedham

²⁶⁰ Hilary Beckles, "White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean," *History Workshop* 36 (Autumn, 1993): 71.

²⁶¹ Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence," 111 – 112.

²⁶² Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640 – 1700* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2007), 232.

²⁶³ Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

²⁶⁴ Burnard, "Inheritance and Independence," 112.

and Captain Halsted – only two of their wives left conclusive evidence of their involvement in the management of the household on the plantation. The first was Madame Halsted. In 1705, Captain Halsted purchased half of the plantation from the Helyar’s and, in doing so, became the first owner of Bybrook to live on the plantation with his wife since Cary Helyar in the 1670s.²⁶⁵ Moreover, Captain Halsted was a longtime resident of the island and an established planter in his own right.²⁶⁶ Madame Halsted therefore certainly had experience with plantations and it appeared that she occasionally helped with the day-to-day running of Bybrook. She was given £5 in 1708 to pay the overseer, for example, and thus performed her husband’s duties on the plantation when he was unable to do it himself.²⁶⁷ The second women to appear in the accounts with close ties to Bybrook was Elizabeth Nedham. She was undoubtedly connected either by blood or by marriage to Captain George Nedham who owned a plantation just south of Bybrook and had close ties with Cary Helyar in the early stages of Bybrook’s development.²⁶⁸ Bybrook was further connected to the Nedham family through Mr. Nedham, who acted as the manager and attorney for the plantation in the late 1690s and early 1700s but discharged of his duties in 1710.²⁶⁹ Yet, before he was discharged from his post, Elizabeth Nedham appeared to help him manage the plantation, or at least the household. Her connection to the management of Bybrook was much more pronounced and frequent than that of Madame Halsted, which was reflective of the

²⁶⁵ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 221 - 222.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ The Helyar manuscripts are housed in the Somerset Records Office at Taunton, DD/WHh 1089, 1090, 1151 and Addenda Papers 12. All notes that follow are a reference to these papers unless otherwise stated. April 14, 1708 in Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets, October 26, 1704 – December 24, 1710 (Bound sheets).

²⁶⁸ “A New Map of the Island of Jamaica... With the Names of the Present Proprietors According to the Late Survey,” Map, *The John Carter Brown Library*, 1685.

²⁶⁹ William Helyar to John Helyar, July 30, 1710.

difference in the roles their husbands played on the plantation. Men who did work for or supplied goods to Bybrook were paid by Mrs. Nedham's order, or by her directly. It appeared that if they were paid by Elizabeth Nedham directly, she was reimbursed for the expense – as was the case with £2 5s worth of butter in July of 1710 or a £4 hogshead of salt in 1709– or they were likely paid from the cash she received directly from Bybrook's accounts.²⁷⁰ The goods for which she was reimbursed were likely destined for the household at Bybrook, as enslaved laborers lived mostly on a diet of mackerel and plantain.²⁷¹ The butter and salt she purchased did not conform to the daily diet of the enslaved laborers, in other words, but was more likely food for her, her husband and whatever guests dined with them. As white women lost their economic influence in the household, they also lost some of their mobility within the Anglo-Jamaican economy. They no longer organized purchases of goods for the household from merchants, for example, nor did they pay the labourers their wages. Before this happened, however, elite white women were involved in the early Anglo-Jamaican economy in a variety of ways.

4.3 Priscilla's Case and Reputation

Priscilla Houghton was eighteen years old when she married Cary Helyar in October 1671.²⁷² Given that her marriage to Cary was her first appearance in Jamaican records and there is little conclusive evidence to tie her to other residents in Jamaica, it is impossible to determine when she met Cary and, similarly, one cannot make guesses

²⁷⁰ April 29, 1709 in Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets, October 26, 1704 – December 24, 1710 (Bound sheets). July 26, 1710 in Hugh Murray, Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets, January 2, 1710/11 – June 11, 1711.

²⁷¹ J. Harry Bennett, "Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 63.

²⁷² According to the inscription on her grave, Priscilla Stanton, née Houghton, died at the age of 56 in 1709, which means she was likely born between 1652 and 1653. Captain J. H. Lawrence-Archer, *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies* (London: Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, 1865), 275.

about her life in Jamaica before Cary. As a matter of fact, it appeared the first William heard of the marriage was upon Cary's death in July 1672 through letters sent to him that informed him both of Cary's death and the contents of his will.²⁷³ Her first appearance in the Helyar manuscripts was therefore not until after the death of her new husband as Cary informed his brother neither of his intention to marry, nor of the actual marriage. The shock of Cary's death was then twofold for William: his brother's sudden death from an unidentified disease and his will that required William to give a significant amount of his brother's assets to a stranger.²⁷⁴

The will left a substantial amount of Cary's property in Jamaica to his new wife – he left her £500 to be paid twelve months after Cary's death, as well as the house in Spanish Town and everything there within, to be exact.²⁷⁵ William was quick to contest this clause as he refused to accept the loss of property and money to his new sister-in-law. William argued she brought little with her to the marriage and, given their marriage lasted just shy of nine months, should leave with substantially less than what she was promised.²⁷⁶ Her dowry appeared to be little more than a horse and two cows, though men often left their wives more than their dower in early Anglo-Jamaica, especially when the couple was childless.²⁷⁷ William Whaley argued, however, that he was “shuer she can not have lesse then a 1000 pounds left her.”²⁷⁸ Indeed, if true, this meant she had more money than Whaley after Cary's death, who argued that he was “in great distress for mony” as it had been “in Mr. Helyar's hands” and he had none of his own with which to

²⁷³ William Whaley to William Helyar, July 5, 1672. Thomas Modyford and Hender Molesworth, July 7, 1672.

²⁷⁴ Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ J. Harry Bennett's articles “Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 75.

²⁷⁷ Trevor Burnard, “Inheritance and Independence,” 103.

²⁷⁸ William Whaley to William Helyar, September 23, 1672.

pay for provisions for the plantation.²⁷⁹ He further claimed that when he asked for money to help fund the plantation, “shee made me answer she was to pay no debts.”²⁸⁰ Priscilla was thus in a better economic position than Whaley after the death of Cary and her economic security seemed to be independent of Bybrook. Yet, he cast her as a cheap and ungrateful widow who would not even pay for Cary’s coffin.²⁸¹ Whaley then positioned himself not only as one who needed the money to carry on Cary’s work with Bybrook, but, by casting aspersions on her character, more deserving of it as well.

While Priscilla had difficulties extracting her money from Bybrook, another woman had more success. In March 1687/8, John Helyar recorded paying Elizabeth Everard £116:16:6 “for the Ballance of her accompt.”²⁸² Helyar did not specify when he received the money from her or how the money was used at Bybrook, but she was undoubtedly connected to Helyar’s business associate, Jonathan Everard. Jonathan invested both his time – he arrived in Jamaica with Helyar to help him manage Bybrook once they wrested control away from Thomas Hillyard - and his money in Bybrook.²⁸³ Helyar recorded settling a debt with Jonathan in 1687, which amounted to nearly £160. According to the account book, this was repayment for both money Jonathan invested in the plantation and for unspecified goods he sold to Helyar.²⁸⁴ Given that he had a vested interest in the plantation and the goods he sold Helyar showed he had a revenue stream outside of Bybrook, Jonathan likely invested more than once in the plantation. However,

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² March 3, 1687 in Bybrook Plantation accompt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691.

²⁸³ John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686. July 8, 1686 in Bybrook Plantation accompt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691.

²⁸⁴ July 8, 1686 in Bybrook Plantation accompt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691.

Jonathan died suddenly from a fever in late 1687, or as Helyar described it “he dyed as one of these feavered here taken a Tuesday & departed the Saterdag.”²⁸⁵ Indeed, Helyar’s payment in March of the following year to Elizabeth was close enough to Jonathan’s death that it was most plausible Helyar was repaying money loaned to him by Jonathan. Moreover, as his widow and without evidence of children, Elizabeth most likely inherited Jonathan’s estate. In this case, she also inherited outstanding debts that were owed to him. The payment in March of 1688 was therefore, more likely than not, Helyar squaring his account with Everard. Elizabeth Everard’s relationship with Helyar can therefore be seen as the continuation, and culmination, of her husband’s business relationship with Helyar.

Much like Priscilla, Elizabeth was a widow when she received her large payment from Bybrook, but unlike Priscilla, she received it quickly and without legal intervention. By all accounts, Jonathan and Helyar enjoyed a good working relationship and Helyar’s good will towards his deceased partner likely translated to his interactions with his widow. More importantly, Everard was not taking something John Helyar believed to be rightfully his, as William Whaley and William Helyar did. She also certainly had the bills of exchange between her husband and John Helyar. Yet, the speed with which the money was paid to Elizabeth, suggested that Helyar honoured Jonathan’s reputation by treating his widow with the same deference he had for his colleague. In this sense, Elizabeth may have assumed her husband’s reputation, at least partially. Furthermore, Elizabeth’s payment was also the largest single expense of 1688 and John Helyar did not make a habit of spending large sums of money at once, unless it directly benefitted the day-to-day management of the plantation. In April of 1688, Elizabeth had one financial

²⁸⁵ John Helyar to William Helyar, October 3, 1687.

interaction with John Helyar, when she sold him “Pistolles & other things.” Whatever the “other things” were, they were all likely her husband’s belonging; Helyar paid £8 for the lot.²⁸⁶ This was Elizabeth’s last recorded interaction with Helyar and, it appears, in Jamaica. She did not appear in any further accounts for Bybrook, nor did she appear in surviving documents from late seventeenth or early eighteenth-century Jamaica and thus most likely returned to England. These two interactions with Helyar were also therefore the likely culmination of his relationship with the Everard’s. Elizabeth left the island with her money, and her and her husband’s reputations, intact.

As the case with Priscilla Helyar dragged on, Whaley continued to attack her reputation through spreading gossip about her. Sir Hender Molesworth was chosen by Cary to be one of the executor’s of his will and was central to Cary’s Jamaican circle as one of his most important confidantes in Jamaica. Cary placed a great deal of trust in Molesworth to fulfill his wishes after his death and given the length of the legal dispute – almost three years in total – it was well placed. Molesworth acted as an intermediary in the dispute, along with Francis Harison, and deftly balanced the wishes of Cary with the resolve of William. Yet, Whaley claimed that Molesworth was “a very good friend of hers for her sisters sake... it is reported that She dus him a curtise now & thane when her husband is out of the way.”²⁸⁷ This was more than just an incendiary rumor about Priscilla and Molesworth, however, but a warning from Whaley to Helyar that the deck was stacked against them. There were several things that Cary did not include in the will and Whaley feared that Molesworth was likely to give them to Priscilla, though he did

²⁸⁶ April, 1687 in Bybrook Plantation accompt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691.

²⁸⁷ William Whaley to William Helyar, September 23, 1672.

not specify what exactly was left out of the will or their financial or sentimental value.²⁸⁸

Priscilla stood to benefit from her relationship to Molesworth, in other words, and therefore benefitted from one of her husband's social networks.

While the truth of her relationship with Molesworth was unclear from the Helyar manuscripts, throughout the legal proceedings, it was clear that Molesworth did indeed fight for Priscilla to receive what was promised her in the will. He was a powerful ally, as both a man of high political standing on the island and of central importance to Cary Helyar's Jamaican circle - Molesworth was well connected to other planters on the island. Given his position within the island and Cary's social network, he also had more clout than Whaley and his opinion of both William Helyar and William Whaley had the potential to be very damaging to both of their reputations. Indeed, Francis Harison explained to William that, because of his refusal to pay his brother's widow, "the whole Countrey [was] incensed against [him]."²⁸⁹ Priscilla was well respected on the island and many held an "ill opinion of [William Helyar's] cause."²⁹⁰ As Jamaican planters understood the dispute, William Whaley had both consented to fulfill the terms of Cary's will but their prolonged court cases looked like Whaley, and by extension Helyar, reneged on their promise. Harison claimed this enmity towards William in Jamaica would have resulted in a verdict in the widow's favor in the court but also hinted at a much more detrimental and enduring effect.

William's reputation was inextricably linked with that of the plantation, particularly as an absentee owner. His perceived neglect of the needs of Cary's widow translated into him being viewed as a man of poor character, which had serious

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Francis Harison to William Helyar, October 9, 1673.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

consequences for the fledging plantations. Harison suggested that those who favored Priscilla's claim on Bybrook might have attacked the enslaved laborers and sugar infrastructure on the plantation, for example. He also warned that a poor reputation would quickly reduce the amount of financial credit available in Jamaica to William Whaley or anyone associated with Bybrook. Given Whaley's complaints about his lack of ready money in the wake of Cary's death for provisions, it was particularly important for Whaley to access credit in Jamaica while he waited for Helyar to send him money to continue the work of Bybrook, however limited credit in the local market might have been. Indeed, this problem with credit extended beyond the purview of finance as an individual of poor character was also unlikely to receive favors or assistance from fellow Jamaican settlers. To this end, his overseers would be "disquieted hindred & discrouaged from emproving youre plantation."²⁹¹ Moreover, Molesworth held the patent for 210 acres of land just north of Bybrook. Thomas Tyler gave this land to Molesworth in his will but Molesworth was "settled in another place" and thus Cary Helyar spoke to Molesworth as early as 1670 about purchasing it to expand Bybrook.²⁹² In spite of Cary's early interest in the land, he died without adding the land to Bybrook.²⁹³ Harison deemed the land "absolutely necessary for carrying on [Helyar's] work" and thus it was essential for William Helyar to maintain a good relationship with Molesworth in order to finally acquire the land.²⁹⁴ It was in Helyar's best interest, in other words, to settle the dispute with Priscilla quickly, particularly because of her relationship with Molesworth. In many

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Cary Helyar to William Helyar, December 15, 1670.

²⁹³ It appeared that Cary was close to purchasing the land in the months before his death as Harison noted that Molesworth "had Sold to Carey H. on Condition that he payd him bills of exchange by the next Shippe for 50 pounds which was not performed," presumably because Cary Helyar died before it could be completed. Francis Harison to William Helyar, October 9, 1673.

²⁹⁴ Francis Harison to William Helyar, October 9, 1673.

ways, Bybrook's future hung in the balance while the case between Priscilla and Helyar was resolved.

4.4 Movable or Immovable Property?

Part of the dispute between Priscilla and William Helyar was likely over the interpretation of a single line in Cary's will. When Cary bequeathed his house and land in St. Jago de la Vega, he stipulated that this was to include "all the appertinances and Conveniences thereunto Belonging."²⁹⁵ The statement itself was vague and muddled. It was not clear what Cary meant by "appertinances and Conveniences" but what was clear was that William and Priscilla understood this line in increasingly different legal and social contexts. Whaley claimed that Priscilla unlawfully kept an enslaved African boy with her at the house in St. Jago de la Vega, which he believed should be returned to Bybrook and, by extension, his possession.²⁹⁶ Neither Whaley nor William Helyar had experience with enslaved labourers as inheritable possessions, as enslaved labourers occupied a distinctly new position in the emerging legal cultures of English colonies and Cary's was the first death at Bybrook in which property was inherited.²⁹⁷ To further complicate the matter, Whaley was bestowed "all the negers, horses and fowles" as part of his inheritance of Cary's share of Bybrook.²⁹⁸ The difficulty in Priscilla's case was whether or not the boy ought to be considered 'real' property – typically inherited by men

²⁹⁵ Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

²⁹⁶ William Whaley to William Helyar, September 23, 1672.

²⁹⁷ For enslaved labourers place within the law of Jamaica and the wider English Atlantic, see Edward B. Rugemer, "The Development of Mastery and Race in the Comprehensive Slave Codes of the Greater Caribbean during the Seventeenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 70 (July 2013): 429 – 458. For a specifically Caribbean context, see David Barry Gaspar, "'Rigid and Inclement': Origins of the Jamaica Slave Laws of the Seventeenth Century," in *The Many Legalities of Early America*, eds., Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 78 – 96.

²⁹⁸ Will of Cary Helyar, Copy, June 30, 1672.

in England – or ‘moveable’ goods, typically inherited by women.²⁹⁹ Whaley and Helyar appeared to define the boy as an immovable piece of property that belonged to Bybrook, while Priscilla considered him as a part of the appurtenances of the land in St. Jago de la Vega promised her by Cary.

While it was unclear in the final agreement if the boy remained with Priscilla or returned to Bybrook, the law likely sided with Priscilla. In the English Caribbean, African labourers were defined as chattel and therefore a type of movable property.³⁰⁰ Moreover, women in Jamaica increasingly began to receive enslaved people as a part of their inheritance at the end of the 1670s, a trend that became more pronounced amongst large and small planters in Jamaica by in the early half of the eighteenth century.³⁰¹ Indeed, given the importance of enslaved labourers as economic units of plantation production, the definition of them as immovable or movable property was a problem widespread in the English colonies. Virginia changed the status of enslaved people from movable to immovable property in 1705, for example, in order to streamline inheritance practices and keep estates intact.³⁰²

The dispute between Priscilla and William was resolved in 1673. In the end, it was resolved that she would receive what Cary specifically mentioned in his will, including £500, which was to be paid by 1675 with five percent interest, calculated from 1673. She was also allowed to continue to “quietly enjoy the house & goods & what else

²⁹⁹ Walker, “Womanly Masters,” 144.

³⁰⁰ For a definition of chattel slavery and its current place in the historiography, see David Brion Davis, *In Human Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York; Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006), 30 – 32.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² The year 1705 was also the same year Virginia introduced their comprehensive slave code. David Thomas Konig, “Legal Fictions and the Rule of Law: The Jeffersonian Critique of Common Law” in *The Many Legalities of Early America*, eds., Christopher L. Tomlins and Bruce H. Mann (Chapel Hill; London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 111.

her husband gave her by will during her life.”³⁰³ In return, she relinquished her claim to Cary’s estate and was to return property to William that she took after Cary’s death but was not promised in the will.³⁰⁴ As Bybrook continued to grow and Whaley was able to access credit in Jamaica, it appeared that William Helyar did salvage his reputation in Jamaica by giving Priscilla what was owed to her, but he was likely unable to salvage his relationship to Molesworth. Molesworth did not appear in the Helyar manuscripts after the resolution of Priscilla’s case, despite his close relationship to both Cary Helyar and the earliest years of Bybrook’s development. For her part, Priscilla maintained her standing both within Cary’s Jamaican circle and though the money and property she acquired in the settlement left her in a distinctly new position within early Anglo-Jamaican society: she was a propertied woman of economic means.

4.5 Women as Property Owners

As the owner of a house in Spanish Town, Priscilla joined the ranks of propertied women in early Anglo-Jamaica. By 1670, records indicated that there were no less than twenty-one women who owned property under their own name in Jamaica (Table 4.1). The group was small, particularly when compared to the hundreds of men that owned property, but, given that Priscilla gained ownership of her property after the survey was taken, this number doubtlessly changed frequently. Moreover, with high rates of mortality and of remarriage, property changed hands too quickly to make an accurate guess as to whether the rate of propertied women increased or decreased as the seventeenth century progressed. Priscilla sold the house in Spanish Town back to

³⁰³ Francis Harison to William Helyar, October 9, 1673.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

William Whaley upon her marriage to Edward Stanton in 1675, for example, and thus her entry into the world of independent, propertied women in early Anglo-Jamaica was relatively brief.³⁰⁵

Table 4.1 - Female Landowners and Acreage, 1670

Name	Parish	Acres
Widow Lawrence	St. Thomas	73
Widow Backhouse	St. Andrew's	28
Widow Gay	St. Andrew's	74
Jane Leader	St. Andrew's	19
Widow Lane	St. Andrew's	5
Anne Thorne	St. Andrew's	156
Susanna Barker	St. Katherine's	160
Dorothy Eaton	St. Katherine's	220
Angelina Fant	St. Katherine's	210
Widow Farefield	St. Katherine's	585
Alice Howell	St. Katherine's	15
Elizabeth Bagnoll	St. John's	7
Elizabeth Reid	St. John's	927
Widow Aldwinckle	Clarendon	600
Eleanor Barrett	Clarendon	55
Widow Bolton	Clarendon	100
Jane Clarke	Clarendon	240
Barbara Call	Clarendon	70
Ruth Kilby	Clarendon	90
Widow Netherland	Clarendon	120
Priscilla Willoughby	Clarendon	500
TOTAL		4254

Source: W. Noel Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1669 – 1674* (H. M. Stationary Office, 1889), 207.

What is clear from the extant records was that some women did own substantial tracts of the Jamaican countryside and owned them long enough to leave their mark on early planting culture in Jamaica. A land survey from 1670 showed that women made up a larger proportion of landowners in parishes that were settled shortly after the arrival of

³⁰⁵ Edward and Priscilla Stanton, Transfer of Ownership, May 9, 1677.

the English - Clarendon, St. Katherine's and St. Andrew's parishes (Table 4.1). There are two possible explanations for this. The first was that women were more drawn to settled parishes. The second, and more plausible, explanation was that these women inherited their land from their husbands or fathers. Indeed, some of the women identified as landowners were identified specifically as widows and these women owned some of the largest tracts of land held by women. The records only recorded the acreage of each plot of land, however, and thus the ways in which the land was used remain a mystery, yet some tracts were certainly large enough for the infrastructure of an integrated sugar plantation. Elizabeth Reid owned 927 acres in St. John's Parish, for example, and Widow Aldwinckle owned 600 acres in nearby Clarendon Parish, which were both more than large enough for a sugar plantation, or two (Table 4.1).

The records of St. John's parish in 1680 offer more insight into the number of women who owned plantations. There were 48 plantations recorded in the parish but only 43 white men were recorded in the parish and, of the five plantations unaccounted for, at least four were owned by women.³⁰⁶ All the women were named as widows and owned both large and small plantations. The crops on them generally categorized these plantations, as they were recorded as either sugar or provision plantations and this classification was not affected by the size of the plantation.³⁰⁷ In this sense, Widow Oldfield owned a sugar plantation with forty-two enslaved Africans and five servants while Widow Charnock was classified as a "middling planter" and operated a sugar plantation with sixteen enslaved labourers. Conversely, Widow Sams owned provision

³⁰⁶ Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica*, 14.

³⁰⁷ See Table 19 in Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 174.

lands, worked by forty-six enslaved Africans and two servants while Widow Allen operated her plantation of provisions with two enslaved labourers.

In 1680, Major Richard Guy was recorded in the St. John's parish register as the owner of a sugar plantation with seventy African labourers but, by 1686, John Helyar identified his wife, Madame Guy, as the owner of the sizable plantation.³⁰⁸ The plantation was attributed solely to her in the letters of John Helyar, which was a rare case in which a plantation was explicitly described as the property of a woman in the Helyar manuscripts.³⁰⁹ Indeed, she even appeared to function within John Helyar's Jamaican social network. She split the purchase and contents of a barrel of lamp oil three-ways with Helyar and Lieutenant Colonel Nedham in 1687, which was purchased from merchant Joshua Bright.³¹⁰ Helyar even appeared to extend financial credit to Madame Guy, as he paid surveyor Thomas Bridges £10 "on account of Madame Guy."³¹¹ Bridges was originally sent to Jamaica to help Helyar at Bybrook and thus Madame Guy's connection to Bridges was likely originally fostered through Helyar. Helyar then held Madame Guy's character in high regard to extend her both financial credit and share his connection with local tradesmen. Madame Guy evidently fostered a good working relationship with Helyar and proved her abilities as a businesswoman in early Anglo-Jamaica enough for Helyar to trust her with both financial credit and his labour supply. The relationship between Helyar and Guy also benefitted Bybrook. She sold Bybrook cattle deemed by John Helyar's replacement, Richard Smith, to be "verie usefull in

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ John Helyar to William Helyar, March 27, 1686. Richard Smith to John Helyar, March 18, 1689/90.

³¹⁰ December 31, 1687 in Bybrook Plantation accmpt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691 (Bound sheets).

³¹¹ February 27, 1688/9 in Bybrook Plantation accmpt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691 (Bound sheets).

bringing home wood.”³¹² Her connection to Bybrook was strong enough to last beyond John Helyar’s tenure at the plantation and, while the detail of her mobility within the male-dominated world of planters is certainly exceptional, she surely was not the only woman to own a plantation independently.

4.6 The Mistress’ Case ³¹³

When Cary Helyar died, he was not just a husband, but also the father to a young boy. His mother, however, was not Priscilla Helyar, but his longtime mistress, a mulatto woman, who was not named in the Helyar manuscripts. Cary mentioned neither his son nor his mistress openly in his letters to his brother, though he did tell his brother in early 1671 “I have no childe of my owne (yet I shall bee in a fair way shortly.)”³¹⁴ This was the only veiled reference to his children – he had another son who died in infancy – born in Jamaica. Cary then did not publically recognize his son in his lifetime, but did live with both his mistress and his son until his marriage to Priscilla. Sometime before his marriage, both his mistress and child moved elsewhere in Jamaica but Cary continued to support them. He promised to pay his mistress a yearly pension of £32, which undoubtedly also helped support their child. Yet, when Cary Helyar died, the payments stopped and she was left to fend for herself in Jamaica, despite his promise that the payments would continue after his death. No evidence survives to indicate why these payments stopped, but given that his brother was unaware of Cary’s mistress, it was undoubtedly someone in Jamaica that stopped making the payments. The agreement

³¹² Richard Smith to John Helyar, March 18, 1689/90.

³¹³ Unless otherwise stated, the information about Cary’s mistress and her court case in the next section is from William Whaley to William Helyar, December 9, 1675.

³¹⁴ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

between Cary and his mistress was an oral agreement, which meant that “since tymes [had] Changed” because of Cary’s death, she was unable to prove and enforce the agreement. She therefore turned to the courts to recover the money she felt was due to her. In any case, whoever stopped paying Cary’s mistress, they likely did not expect her to sue the estate of Cary Helyar for her missing pension in 1675.

In December 1675, William Whaley informed William Helyar that Bybrook was entangled in yet another legal dispute, this time with Cary’s mistress. She was suing Whaley for £140, £128 of which represented her pension four years in arrears and the rest was for “dammages shee sustayned by not receiving the money as it became due.” This was roughly the equivalent of fifteen hogshead of sugar.³¹⁵ Though there was an unnamed individual who witnessed Cary’s initial promise to his mistress, she was “soe over Joyed” by his offer that she did not insist on a written contract. Without a legal document, the case proceeded with witness testimonies to corroborate the claims of Cary’s mistress. Both of her parents acted as witnesses for her and both, to varying degrees, supported her claim against Whaley. In this sense, Whaley claimed that her father “Swore very Cautiously and noething to the purpose but the Old woman [her mother] swore posetively” that she heard the agreement between Cary and her daughter. She further claimed that they reached the agreement so she would not seek help from the local parish or badger him for money in the future. It was, in other words, a way for Cary Helyar to assure his relationship with her would not follow him and damage his reputation in the future, assumedly as he climbed the political and social ladder of the island. Sir Thomas Modyford also appeared at the trial, though he “sayed noething” when

³¹⁵ April 30, 1688 in Bybrook Plantation accompt Charges & Product commencing the 12th March 1686/7 to the 8th August 1691 (Bound sheets).

asked about the agreement between her and Cary. He did however refute Whaley's claim that the mistress' mother's testimony was invalid because "shee was a negroe."

Modyford told the court "shee was a Brazill negroe and had lived with him Seaven yeares in Barbados and after marryed that man." The mistress' family evidently had close ties with Modyford and, in fact, Cary's mistress worked in Modyford's house, looking after his daughter. Given that she lived with Cary, it was most likely that she found this employment after she left his house and after she stopped receiving his annual payments. It did appear that at least a few jury members sided with the mistress but, as William Whaley put it, there were "more Consciencious and wiser men" than those who sympathized with the mistress. The case was ultimately unsuccessful, however, and Cary's mistress left the courtroom without her money. This was partially motivated by race – one judge, Captain Long, believed that, as an African, the mistress' mother "knew not what an Oath was" and her testimony was therefore invalid – but also because they believed her case was undertaken "upon a vicious acct. and not Lawfull." She also had not "given Security to the Parrish."

4.7 Women as Wage Earners

Ultimately, the mistress's case was not significant for its outcome, but it did offer a glimpse at how women earned wages in seventeenth-century Jamaica. She used her connection with Modyford to secure herself a position within his household and used this wage, assumedly, to support herself and her child but was one of a number of women mentioned in the Helyar manuscripts that earned income for her work. There were numerous cases in the Helyar manuscripts in which women used their connections to

provide a plantation with goods or services. Alternatively, women were also purchasing the goods produced at Bybrook, notably rum, in order to provide services elsewhere in Jamaica. These were therefore a wide range of possible occupations for women in early Anglo-Jamaica but ultimately connected to and benefitted from the sugar economy. They were connected to Bybrook both as producers – they sold the plantation food and clothing – and as consumers. It is in this sense that women could, and should, be recognized for their contribution to the development of Jamaica’s sugar economy.

Women’s economic activity was largely on the periphery of Bybrook’s Jamaican social networks. Women in early Anglo-Jamaica worked in sections of the local economy that were either considered below the station of honourable men or businesses that were considered unprofitable.³¹⁶ The evidence in the Helyar manuscripts shows that women worked and earned profits from a variety of occupations in early Anglo-Jamaican, including livestock pens, seamstresses and proprietors of taverns, though they were almost certainly active in other economic areas not described in these manuscripts. Women’s economic activity was relatively hidden in the manuscripts; they were not described in the letters written between Somerset and Jamaica, but, instead, they were found in the account books. The bookkeepers of Bybrook kept meticulous track of money going into and out of the plantation’s coffers and, while there is little personal information about the women, it was clear that they contributed to Bybrook.

Despite the small number of women present in the account books of Bybrook, and an even smaller group when the population of contemporary Jamaica is taken into account, they were a disparate group. The women who appeared on the pages of the account books further represented a large swath of the social hierarchy in early Anglo-

³¹⁶ Beckles, “White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean,” 71.

Jamaica. The women, in other words, had little in common besides their economic connection to Bybrook. Yet, their wide variety of interests and backgrounds demonstrated the options and opportunities available to women in the developing economy of Anglo-Jamaica. These women contributed to and benefitted from Bybrook, and undoubtedly from the growing economy in Anglo-Jamaica.

Part of the reason Bybrook remained in an unprofitable enterprise for much of the time the Helyar family was involved was because the various managers spent large sums of money on provisions. While this was a constant source of tension between the Helyar's in England and the managers in Jamaica, their reliance on outside sources of foodstuff benefitted several women on the island. They bought "jerkt hogg" from Madame Bryan on at least four separate occasions between 1688 and 1689, for example. In total, she provided the plantation with nearly 330 pounds of meat in her four recorded interactions with Bybrook, but made £3:14:7½.³¹⁷ Yet, she did not appear to have a direct connection with John Helyar, who managed Bybrook in the late 1680s. The meat was both bought and brought to Bybrook by a middleman, Matthew Francis, who was then reimbursed by Helyar. She therefore operated in a social network separate from Bybrook, but benefitted from Francis's connection to Helyar. Other women did sell to Bybrook directly, like Madame Haines, who sold 181 pounds of beef in 1690.³¹⁸

While they left no other marks on the historical record, these women likely owned and operated their own livestock pens. Livestock pens dotted the countryside as early as 1660, a popular alternative to sugar planting as they required both less capital investment

³¹⁷ November 27, 1688, February 17, 1688/9 and February 27, 1688/9 in Bybrooke Plantation Accompt Charges & Product Commencing the 12th March, 1686/7 to the 8th August, 1691 (Bound sheets).

³¹⁸ October 25, 1690 in Bybrooke Plantation Accompt Charges & Product Commencing the 12th March, 1686/7 to the 8th August, 1691 (Bound sheets).

and land than plantations.³¹⁹ In these early years of economic development in Anglo-Jamaica, the pens most often supplied meat and hides to the domestic and Atlantic marketplace.³²⁰ Indeed, if the export numbers were any indication of the number of pens, early Anglo-Jamaica had a significant number of acres dedicated to livestock by the early 1680s.³²¹ While there was a sharp decline in the export of hides – from 22,345 to 576 – Madame’s Bryan and Haimés still found a market for their meat products locally.³²² Moreover, many women owned their own pens in the eighteenth century and benefitted from close ties with sugar plantations on the island.³²³ Given that the women were named directly in the account book, they were certainly the individuals through which the meat was originally purchased. They were also likely the owners of the animals. Madame’s Bryan and Haimés, in other words, represented the beginning of a trend that extended into the eighteenth century.³²⁴

Beyond livestock, women also provided the residents of Bybrook with clothing. Indeed, there was one woman in particular who appeared frequently in the accounts between 1687 and 1689: Mrs. Walters. She made a variety of clothes at the request of John Helyar, including dresses, britches and undergarments. Moreover, Helyar most likely gave Mrs. Walters the material with which to make the clothing, cutting both the time between Helyar’s order and the receipt of the clothing as well as the costs for Mrs. Walters. Indeed, in January 1688/9, Joshua Bright, a merchant who helped import and

³¹⁹ Verene A. Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica* (Kingston; Miami: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009), 7.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

³²¹ See Table 1 in Nuala Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655 – 89,” *The Economic History Review* 39, 2 (May 1986): 207.

³²² *Ibid.*

³²³ Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, 85 – 87.

³²⁴ For an overview of livestock pens in the eighteenth century, see Philip D. Morgan, “Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750 – 1751,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52, 1 (Jan. 1995): 47 – 76.

pay for goods from England, recorded receiving 141 yards of ozenbrigg, a type of course linen.³²⁵ One month later, in February 1688/9, John Helyar paid Mrs. Walters for “half dozen clothes” and in October of the same year, received “5 paires of ozenbrigg Stockings” from her.³²⁶ In supplying Mrs. Walters the fabric, Helyar assured not only that she had the supplies necessary to make the clothes but also that the clothes arrived at Bybrook in a timely manner. Sewing then required little capital investment for Mrs. Walters, as it was work she could do in her own home. Yet, it also yielded small profits. She also did not receive her money directly from John Helyar, but from her husband, William Walters, who worked as a sawyer and worked at Bybrook.³²⁷ She therefore remained on the periphery of the social networks centered at the plantation, but benefitted from her husband’s connection to it. Moreover, she did not rely solely on the income of her abilities as a seamstress, as it was one of two incomes in her household but no doubt her earnings buttressed the wages of her husband. She received just over twelve shillings to make twenty dresses, for example, and charged 1s 10½d for a pair of stockings, but always sold the clothes in multiples.³²⁸ Indeed, the quantity in which the clothes were sold grew over time, from two pairs of britches to twenty dresses. Though the accounts did not indicate who the final owner of the clothes were, the quantity and quality of the clothes gives an indication that these clothes were not worn by John Helyar, himself. In fact, given the large quantity, the low retail value, the short turnaround time and the low

³²⁵ January 24, 1688/9 in Joshua Bright, True Accompts of Bybrook Plantation April 9, 1687 to June 26, 1689/90 presented to Master John Helyar.

³²⁶ February 25, 1688/9 and October 28, 1689 in Bybrooke Plantation Accompt Charges & Product Commencing the 12th March, 1686/7 to the 8th August, 1691 (Bound sheets).

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ February 10, 1689/90 in Bybrooke Plantation Accompt Charges & Product Commencing the 12th March, 1686/7 to the 8th August, 1691 (Bound sheets).

quality of the material, the clothing she made was likely worn by the enslaved laborers on the plantation.

Mrs. Walters herself represented the lower rungs of the white social hierarchy of Jamaica, along with her husband. While neither was indentured and they both had marketable skills, they were undoubtedly considered by contemporaries as a part of the larger group of labouring whites on the island. If their wages between 1687 and 1689 were any indication, there was little chance of them buying a sizable and profitable sugar plantation on the island and therefore little chance for upward social mobility. Madame's Bryan and Haines were likely also in a similar social category, though they had a better chance of upward mobility. Livestock pens, especially sizable ones, held the potential for significant earnings and, by the mid-eighteenth century, women built prosperous estates from livestock pens.³²⁹ Yet, women from all social strata's were able to profit from their ties with Bybrook and the emerging sugar industry.

While some women successfully marketed their products to Bybrook, others purchased goods to sell elsewhere on the island. This trend was most apparent at the end of the Helyar's tenure at Bybrook, particularly from 1709 onwards, but there was at least one instance of a woman buying rum in the late 1680s.³³⁰ Regardless of when the rum was purchased, there were several patterns in the ways in which women purchased the rum from Bybrook. Firstly, the women bought rum in large quantities. Indeed, the quantity always exceeded thirty gallons, though purchases usually ranged between 60 and 130 gallons per transaction. Secondly, the purchases were made with some regularity. Ann Cleter was their most frequent customer, buying rum from Bybrook on no less than

³²⁹ Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, 85.

³³⁰ April 4, 1688/9 in Joshua Bright, True Accompts of Bybrook Plantation April 9, 1687 to June 26, 1689/90 presented to Master John Helyar.

seven occasions within a two-year period. She purchased the rum in particularly large quantities, varying anywhere between 66 gallons to over 500 gallons at one time.³³¹ Much like the quantities, the time period between purchases varied, as she once bought more rum three days after a purchase but waited nearly seven months between purchases in 1709.³³² This difference in time between purchases was almost certainly affected by the quantity of rum she purchased, as the seven-month gap between purchases – the longest – coincided with her largest purchase. Moreover, none of the women that purchased rum from Bybrook were explicitly connected to merchants or ships destined for elsewhere in the Atlantic world. The rum almost certainly stayed in Jamaica, in other words and, furthermore, the women that purchased the rum were likely connected to taverns on the island.

If women worked in sections of the economy believed to be below the status of honourable men, taverns certainly fit the mould. Many planters in early Anglo-Jamaica considered rum to be the drink of both white and African labourers.³³³ It was common for planters with enough means to import alcohol they believed to be more fitting to their social station, including Madeira wine, beer and, in the case of Bybrook, Somerset cider.³³⁴ They most often went through merchants that sent other provisions for the plantation but the Bybrook accounts demonstrated that, in a pinch, planters bought their alcohol from local sources. Sarah Turner sold jugs of wine to Bybrook on several occasions, for example, but this was abnormal for the plantation, as they largely relied on

³³¹ For examples of Ann Cleter's purchases, see December 24, 1710 in Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets, October 26, 1704 – December 24, 1710 (Bound sheets). November 28, 1709/10, December 11, 1710 and December 14, 1710 in John Halsted, Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets from 9th October, 1704 – 24th December, 1710.

³³² December 11, 1710 and December 14, 1710 in John Halsted, Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets from 9th October, 1704 – 24th December, 1710.

³³³ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 277 - 278.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

merchants to import wine for them.³³⁵ The Bybrook-produced rum, however, was either exported to the British Isles or sold to women like Ann Cleter. Women that worked in taverns or as rum-punch women were usually unmarried and by the early eighteenth-century, when Cleter appeared in the accounts, workingwomen were increasingly viewed as promiscuous and outside the confines of genteel values.³³⁶ This association with women, and particularly rum-punch women, started as early as the first few decades of English settlement in Jamaica, when Port Royal housed numerous brothels and taverns in which unmarried women made their living.³³⁷ Indeed, being defined as or associated with a rum-punch woman took on distinctly negative tones in seventeenth-century Anglo-Jamaican society. The low social category of pirate Captain Bear's wife was effectively conveyed and her marginalization from elite Anglo-Jamaican society was sealed when Sir Hender Molesworth dismissed her as "the strumpet of a rum-punch woman of Port Royal" and was therefore not the noblewoman she claimed to be.³³⁸ Her association with a rum-punch woman defined both her place in the social hierarchy and her reputation. Yet, the economic relationships between rum-punch women and planters were mutually beneficial – planters profited when the women who purchased rum from them and the women profited when they sold the rum in taverns. Their economic relationship was therefore not predicated a shared social standing in Jamaica, but on the economic opportunities they presented each other.

4.8 Conclusion

³³⁵ February 5, 1707 and July 10, 1709 in Bybrook Plantation Debit and Credit sheets, October 26, 1704 – December 24, 1710 (Bound sheets).

³³⁶ Beckles, "White Women and Slavery," 71.

³³⁷ For more on Port Royal, See Dunn's description in *Sugar and Slaves*, 177 – 187.

³³⁸ Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, 1685 – 1688*, 1,382.

The Helyar manuscripts offered several concrete examples of the ways in which white women of all social standings contributed to the economic life of seventeenth-century Jamaica. While they were certainly far from the omnipresence of men in the economy of early Anglo-Jamaica, a close examination of the ways in which women used social networks to their advantage and the effects of their participation in the economy on those around them demonstrated the quiet ways in which white women of all social categories contributed to the economic and social development of Anglo-Jamaica. Priscilla's case demonstrated that, as a member of a larger social network that her husband had also been a part of, men within that network were expected to afford her the same respect afforded to her husband. Indeed, she maintained her position within the social networks for many years after Cary's death, as her daughter with her second husband, Edward Stanton, married Colonel Modyford.³³⁹ Women were therefore not only included in social networks, but used their connections to male-dominated networks to their advantage and their family. This was apparent at both ends of white women's social spectrum as Madame Guy used her connections to Bybrook as a way to obtain financial credit and provisions she needed for her own plantation while Mrs. Walters sold clothes to Bybrook through her husband's connection to the plantation. In some cases, an analysis of women's role in the early Anglo-Jamaican economy showed the beginning of trends that became more pronounced in the eighteenth century. Women that appeared in Bybrook's accounts profited from livestock pens, for example, yet for many women in lower social positions, they were increasingly pushed to the fringes of economic activity on the island in order to earn their profits, like Ann Cleter did in taverns.

³³⁹ Lawrence-Archer, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 45.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

William Helyar's sons, William and John, sold Bybrook in 1713, having reaped little financial benefit from the plantation. As the Helyar family found out, the construction and maintenance of a sugar plantation required consistent investment in infrastructure, enslaved labourers and their own time. By 1713, both brothers agreed that Bybrook was no longer worth their time or money, as the profits it yielded were minor when one considered the nearly forty-five years in which the family owned the plantation. The brothers struggled to keep Bybrook afloat after their father's death in 1697 but it was quickly apparent that the plantation was a financial drain. By 1700, their overseer Robert Hall told William and John that the plantation required a significant overhaul in order to regain efficiency lost to crumbling infrastructure.³⁴⁰ By 1704, the brothers, unable to keep up with the debts they had accrued to update the plantation's infrastructure, were forced to sell half to John Halsted in order to pay off their creditors.³⁴¹ They sold the second half of their share in the plantation to Halsted's son-in-law in 1713 and, with that, the Helyar's removed themselves from the center of the social networks that operated at Bybrook.³⁴²

The economy of early Anglo-Jamaica was inextricable from the society in which it existed. The various moving pieces of the economy – the English investors, the planters, the bound and unbound labourers and women – all demonstrated the ways in which individuals maneuvered within it to attain and maintain their social positions.

³⁴⁰ The Helyar manuscripts are housed in the Somerset Records Office at Taunton, DD/WHh 1089, 1090, 1151 and Addenda Papers 12. All notes that follow are a reference to these papers unless otherwise stated. Robert Hall to William and John Helyar, April 16, 1700.

³⁴¹ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624 – 1714* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 221 – 222.

³⁴² William Gibbons, to John Austin, to be forwarded by Joseph Way, December 15, 1713.

Within the economy, those who operated within the same social networks as the Helyar's revealed the delicate balance between reputation and access to material and immaterial resources for the plantation. Success in early Anglo-Jamaica was predicated on access to financial capital and access to this was determined by character. It was more than just financial credit that flowed through the social networks of Bybrook, however, as material resources, labourers and all-important knowledge about how to create and manage an integrated sugar plantation also passed through them. In many ways, early Anglo-Jamaica functioned as an economy of obligation. Social networks were integral to the success of Bybrook, as was their involvement in the economies of obligation in Jamaica and England. It was an economic system in which a good reputation and access to influential social networks had a significant impact on the development and maintenance of a sugar plantation like Bybrook.

For the forty-four years the Helyar's owned Bybrook, the social networks that swirled in and around it were crucial to their successes and failures. It was through these networks in which important resources flowed to and from Bybrook from around the English Atlantic world. The social networks at Bybrook therefore were Atlantic in scope and the networks in both England and Jamaica played key roles in the development and maintenance of the plantation. The resources sent to and from Bybrook were both tangible and intangible in nature, the most notable of which were the bills of exchange, knowledge, labourers – both bound and unbound – and provisions. They crossed regional, social and generational lines, connecting Bybrook to a variety of different economic interests in early Anglo-Jamaica throughout the Helyar's tenure of the plantation.

Bybrook was, for all intents and purposes, a failure for the Helyar family. Despite their constant investment in the plantation, they sold it without amassing a significant financial profit. Bybrook was not the key to the riches of the Caribbean the Helyar family hoped it would be, in other words. The profits never reached the heights that Cary promised William were imminent in 1672, when he suggested the plantation was soon to make its first profit of £100 and profits would only increase over time. Moreover, the inconsistent profits of the plantation were only part of the reason Bybrook was a failure for the Helyar's, as it also failed to cement itself as a family legacy to be inherited through the generations. When it was purchased, Cary and William Helyar intended multiple generations of Helyar's to enjoy the spoils of the Caribbean sugar economy.³⁴³ While it was not explicitly stated in their correspondence, they likely purchased Bybrook to secure the place of future Helyar's in both English and Anglo-Jamaican societies, as the wealth from the Caribbean would ensure their continued financial prosperity and their continued influence in the English West Country. They certainly lost their place within Anglo-Jamaica society with the sale of Bybrook, though its effect on their social position in England is impossible to judge from the Helyar manuscripts.

The failure of the Helyar's at Bybrook was likely a culmination of bad decisions rather than one cataclysmic event. Richard Dunn has suggested one central reason for the Helyar's failure at Bybrook: absenteeism.³⁴⁴ For the majority of their tenure as owners of the plantation, Bybrook was run as an absentee plantation, or one in which the owner did not reside on the plantation but elsewhere in the English Atlantic world. The Helyar's contemporaries echoed this explanation. Sir Thomas Modyford saw absenteeism as

³⁴³ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

³⁴⁴ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 222.

potentially harmful to the profits of the plantation owner, for example, explaining that managers and overseer were less likely to carefully manage the plantation unless it was in their own best interests.³⁴⁵ Indeed, he mused they may even lie about the profits of the plantation in order to keep more than their agreed upon share.³⁴⁶ Modyford suggested the next best thing to the owner residing on the plantation was to have a relative to manage it in their stead, as they were more likely to manage the plantation well, out of loyalty to their relative.³⁴⁷ The Helyar manuscripts supported Modyford's claims, as the only time in which Bybrook was successfully managed as an absentee plantation was during William Helyar's son, John Helyar, tenure as the manager between 1687 and 1691.

Dunn contended that an indirect consequence of the Helyar's absence from the day-to-day management of the plantation was soil depletion.³⁴⁸ Indeed, upon the sale of the plantation in 1713, the man that helped arrange the deal in Jamaica, John Austin, noted that the soil was "quite wore in out" and more trouble than it was worth.³⁴⁹ Sugarcane drained the soil of its nutrients and thus planters had to keep a strict schedule in order to replenish the soil of nutrients with manure. Austin's indication that the soil was no longer able to sustain large-scale sugar cultivation and small profits suggested that Halsted may have neglected the regular dunging of the fields of Bybrook. Dunn contended that this neglect was a symptom of the larger neglect of managers of absentee plantations.³⁵⁰ Yet, the problem extended beyond Halsted as, when John Austin arrived in Jamaica in the 1690s to take over the management of the plantation from the Heathcote

³⁴⁵ Sir Thomas Modyford to William Helyar, July 10, 1677.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 222.

³⁴⁹ John Austin to William and John Helyar, April 30, 1713.

³⁵⁰ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 222.

brothers, he complained that they did not manure the fields frequently enough.³⁵¹ This neglect was certainly detrimental to the continued production of the plantation but it was not a problem exclusive to absenteeism, as Halsted himself was a partial owner of the plantation. It was more complicated than simply a problem of absentee ownership and spoke to the limits of the Helyar's social networks.

Though the Helyar's effectively used their social networks to acquire financial credit and material support for the plantation, they were less effective at using them to gather information. Cary Helyar was the most effective at taking advantage of his social connections with well-established planters, like Sir Thomas Modyford, in order to learn how to build and manage a sugar plantation. Indeed, his tenure at Bybrook demonstrated the great potential of social networks as a means of knowledge transfer, as it was through his connections to Modyford that Cary learned the Barbadian method of planting.³⁵² This laid the foundation for the development of the plantation and informed Cary's earliest efforts at sugar cultivation. Yet, after his death, managers of the plantation were less specific about their use of social networks to gain information. This was likely not that planters did not share information amongst themselves, but that this information itself was limited by geography. In the case of the English-centered networks connected to Bybrook, the knowledge of sugar cultivation rarely crossed the Atlantic. The exception to this was John Helyar, who brought his knowledge of sugar cultivation back to England when he returned in 1691. This was the only explicit mention of an individual in the

³⁵¹ John Austin to William Helyar, February 22, 1695.

³⁵² For more on the Barbadian method of planting, see the work of Russell R. Menard, particularly *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

Helyar's English-based social networks with extensive knowledge of sugar cultivation, however.

Through social networks, individuals also accessed the resources they needed in order to develop and maintain the plantation. William Helyar supplied his brother Cary with goods for Cary's Jamaican business, Cary Helyar and Company, for example, as well as semi-skilled labourers from the English countryside.³⁵³ These labourers were used to help construct the sugar infrastructure on the plantation, which was operated by the African captives bought by the Helyar's to cultivate the sugarcane. These enslaved labourers came in through official – the Royal African Company, after 1673 - and unofficial means.³⁵⁴ Their social connections in Bristol helped the Helyar's purchase enslaved labourers outside of the Royal African Company's monopoly. This, the Helyar's believed, was to their advantage as they were healthier than the captives supplied by the RAC.³⁵⁵ Yet, the resources that were needed to maintain Bybrook were more than just the labourers, they also required food and material support. Women helped with this, as they supplied Bybrook with the provisions necessary to continue to run the plantation. This included meat, like beef and pork, as well as clothing for the enslaved labourers.³⁵⁶ In their search of resources for the plantation, the managers of the plantation searched for the deals they believed benefitted them the most. They diminished the risk of hiring poor

³⁵³ For more on Cary Helyar and Associates, see Cary Helyar to William Helyar, September 24, 1670 or J. Harry Bennett, "Cary Helyar, Merchant and Planter of Seventeenth-Century Jamaica," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 21, 1 (Jan. 1964): 55 – 58. For more on William supplying labourers to the plantation and Cary's requests for them, see Cary Helyar to William Helyar, 7 March, 1671, September 10, 1671, June 4, 1672.

³⁵⁴ For an example of the Helyar's involvement with interlopers, see William Hayman and William Swymmer to William Helyar, December 12, 1684.

³⁵⁵ John Helyar to William Helyar, December 22, 1686.

³⁵⁶ For examples, see May 18, 1687, June 7, 1687, November 27, 1688, February 27, 1688/9 and October 25, 1690 in Bybrooke Plantation Accompt Charges & Product Commencing the 12th March, 1686/7 to the 8th August, 1691 (Bound sheets).

workmen when they hired semi-skilled labourers from the West Country, the captive Africans purchased through interlopers were of higher 'quality' than those of the RAC and the women who provided the plantation with food and clothing did so in large quantities but at low cost. It was therefore not as simple as planters profiting from sugar, but how these planters used their social networks to exploit opportunities presented to them by their business contacts.

In part, the social networks of Bybrook demonstrated the transference of England's economy of obligation to the Caribbean. For the duration of the Helyar's ownership of Bybrook, the managers of the plantation were still intimately connected to England through their social networks and, because of this, not only had to convince other settlers in Jamaica of their good character, but also the investors and merchants in England. Cary Helyar maintained his standing in English social circles by proving Jamaica had not changed his character and he was able to access English financial credit as a result. He therefore continued to function within England's economy of obligation, even from a distance. The credit Cary received from England was important for Bybrook, as it funded the earliest development of the plantation. Indeed, William Helyar cut off William Whaley's access to English credit because he spent too lavishly without results. Whaley's reputation was damaged in the eyes of the eldest Helyar and this affected Whaley's ability to do the job assigned to him – successfully run the plantation. Moreover, one needed a good reputation in Jamaica in order to access social networks on the island and, as a result, the financial credit available on the island.

The economy of obligation existed within Jamaica as well. Francis Harison warned William Helyar, the elder, that this was a probable consequence if Helyar

continued to refuse to pay his brother's widow the money promised her in the will.³⁵⁷ The planters in early Anglo-Jamaica were dependent on each other to succeed, because well established planters had the necessary knowledge, land and political power to help those who had yet to ship sugar back to England but hoped to. Sir Hender Molesworth, for example, had all the above attributes of an established planter and was a close confidant of Cary. Yet, William Helyar's refusal to pay Cary's widow, Priscilla, the money promised her put his relationship with Molesworth at risk. This was particularly worrisome to William, as Molesworth had land that Helyar believed necessary for the continued success of the plantation.³⁵⁸ Success in early Anglo-Jamaica was not individualistic, but the result of connections to others on the island with access to resources or knowledge one could not access alone. Reputation played an important role in the development of the Anglo-Jamaican sugar economy.

While those in and around Bybrook operated within an economic culture similar to that of England, there were limits to its similarities to the English model. The planters, merchants and overseers did participate in behaviours pointed to by contemporaries and histories as evidence of a corrupted moral system. They drank to excess, they stole - pirate booty for themselves and their wives - and tempers sometimes flared into violence amongst the white population, for example.³⁵⁹ Yet, there were two instances in the letters and account books that pointed to the limits of using a strictly English model of an economy of obligation to understand the culture early Anglo-Jamaica. Two Helyar's had illegitimate coloured children in Jamaica with their African or coloured mistress. At the

³⁵⁷ Francis Harison to William Helyar, October 9, 1673.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ J. W. Fortescue, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1685 - 1688* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1899), 57. Richard Smith to John Helyar, March 18, 1689/90.

core of both of these events was the interactions between the white and African or coloured populations on the island, and the unprecedented system of enslavement developed in the English Caribbean. The system of enslavement in the English Caribbean had no antecedents in English society and thus Jamaican settlers had to develop a moral code around their treatment of African and coloured women quickly.

There is little known about Cary or John's children as their references in the manuscripts were few and far between. The children were separated by at least a decade and neither mentioned their children in their letters to family. In both cases, the men paid the mother of their children money to support herself and the child.³⁶⁰ This is where the similarities in their cases end. Cary's mistress was likely a free woman of colour on the island and was promised a substantially larger sum of money than John's mistress, though she did not receive it after Cary's death.³⁶¹ John's mistress, Betty, was an enslaved labourer on the plantation and received five shilling a year after John left the island in the 1690s.³⁶² She was further guaranteed "a house Negroe" for her and her son.³⁶³ They also appeared in the Helyar manuscripts in vastly different ways. Cary's mistress appeared in court to sue his estate for what she believed to be rightfully hers while references to Betty and Thomas, her child, were buried deeply within contracts with overseers – they stipulated she was not to work in the fields – and references in account books.³⁶⁴ Their contrasting legal status – one was free and one was not – no

³⁶⁰ For Cary Helyar's mistress, see William Whaley to William Helyar, December 9, 1675. For an example of a payment to Betty, see Bybrook Account made up and examined from the 25th day of December 1704 till the 25 day of December 1706, per and sworne to by Captain John Halsted.

³⁶¹ William Whaley to William Helyar, December 9, 1675.

³⁶² For an example of a payment to Betty, see Bybrook Account made up and examined from the 25th day of December 1704 till the 25 day of December 1706, per and sworne to by Captain John Halsted.

³⁶³ Articles of Agreement between Benjamin Way, William Helyar (Junior) and John Helyar. 1704.

³⁶⁴ For Cary Helyar's mistress, see William Whaley to William Helyar, December 9, 1675. For Betty's appearances in the documents, see Bybrook Account made up and examined from the 25th day of December

doubt played a key role in the in the different appearances they made in the documents, but it also hinted that in the decade between the birth of Cary's son and the birth of John's child, Anglo-Jamaicans developed a way to deal with illegitimate coloured children. Illegitimate coloured children likely became more common as the seventeenth century progressed, as the African population increased and the sexual imbalance amongst whites grew.³⁶⁵ Indeed, by the eighteenth century, there were a significant number of coloured children on the island, which likely indicates an increase in sexual relationships between white men and African or coloured women.³⁶⁶ Trevor Burnard has further pointed to as evidence of increased toleration of these relationships in Anglo-Jamaican society.³⁶⁷ In fact, John securing Betty a less physically demanding job was consistent with how Jamaican planters and overseers treated their mistresses in the eighteenth century.³⁶⁸

In the context of the development of a Jamaican economy of obligation that was woven into larger English Atlantic economic culture, it is significant that neither Cary Helyar nor John Helyar openly mentioned the children or the mistresses in correspondences with family members. This suggested that both men recognized their family in England would not approve of their behaviour. In fact, when William Whaley informed William Helyar of Cary's mistress and child, he confessed "I never intended to

1704 till the 25 day of December 1706, per and sworne to by Captain John Halsted, and Articles of Agreement between Benjamin Way, William Helyar (Junior) and John Helyar.

³⁶⁵ Trevor Burnard, "Rioting in Goatish Embraces": Marriage and Improvement in Early British Jamaica," *The History of the Family* 11 (2006): 186.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ For more on the treatment of African or coloured mistresses and their place within the hierarchy on the plantation in the eighteenth century, see Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (London; Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 228 – 233.

acquainte you withall untill I delivered it by my owne mouth.”³⁶⁹ Whaley recognized that the news of Cary might shape how his brother remembered him and his character. It was undoubtedly shocking news for William and thus, Whaley tried to justify Cary’s behaviour by saying “in these hott Cuntryes most men are a Little veneriall.”³⁷⁰ This implied that this behaviour would not happen in a ‘cold’ country, like England, but was a distinctly Caribbean behaviour. The Jamaican response to African or coloured mistresses and their illegitimate children should therefore be seen as a distinctly Caribbean response. When Cary promised his mistress the money, it was to ensure that she did not become dependent on the parish to take care of her and her child and to ensure she did not ask for money in the future.³⁷¹ Conversely, John’s failure to free Betty and his child, even after the death of his father in 1697 when both were legally considered his property, was a symptom of the objectification of African women. More importantly in the context of economies of obligation, neither men’s involvement with African or coloured women noticeably affected their reputation on the island. The sexual lives and mores of white men in Jamaica did not affect their ability to access credit or function within elite society on the island, but the silence on the matter in the letters demonstrated that Anglo-Jamaicans were aware their actions would be viewed as debauched by their social network in England.

The institution of chattel slavery in the Caribbean was new to the English Atlantic and therefore English society had not yet integrated the treatment of African labourers into their calculations of one’s reputation. It was simply not a part of their economy of obligation and Jamaican residents had to integrate the treatment of African labourers into

³⁶⁹ William Whaley to William Helyar, December 9, 1675.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

their understandings of reputation and character as sugar production expanded. It was new territory for the residents of Anglo-Jamaica and, although the economy of obligation was transferred to the island in institutions familiar to English observers, they quickly integrated one's treatment of enslaved labourers into a Jamaican economy of obligation. In their economic culture, illegitimate coloured children did not affect the reputation of the white individual and they were able therefore to continue to access the tangible and intangible resources from their social networks there. It was important for planters to maintain their access to financial credit and labour supplies in order to expand their production of sugar and this evolution of the English economy of obligation helped Anglo-Jamaican settlers do just that on the island. Indeed, this amendment to the economy of obligation allowed Jamaica's sugar economy to rapidly expand in the closing decades of the seventeenth century. Importantly, Anglo-Jamaican residents were careful to hide their treatment of African labourers and their illegitimate children from their English social networks, particularly from those who supplied financial credit. They understood that, although their actions were tolerated, and even accepted, in the Caribbean, they could affect their reputation in the British Isles and therefore limit their access to goods and financial credit. They therefore kept the information from English networks so as not to affect their reputation and access to English resources. Their omissions from correspondences were crucial to the continued development of the English sugar economy in the Caribbean, as it allowed them to continue to benefit from their English social networks and helped fund the growth of sugar plantations like Bybrook.

By reducing seventeenth-century Jamaica to its most licentious and cruel elements, however, historians have missed an important aspect of Jamaica's economic development. Looking at Bybrook through the lens of social networks shows how individuals in early Anglo-Jamaica functioned within the economy of obligation. Further, social networks expand the scope of the investigation both geographically – to England – and socially – to all levels of the white social hierarchy in Jamaica. In doing this, it demonstrates that, for the most part, white Jamaican settlers functioned within a similar economy of obligation to that of England. They were concerned with reputation and trustworthiness, both in themselves and in the people that they did business with. This was particularly true when the institution was one transplanted from England, such as financial credit mechanisms and social hierarchy. Their continued connection to English resources was important for planters to develop and maintain plantations. Indeed, their partial adherence to an English-based economic culture worked as a form of social cohesion and solidified Anglo-Jamaica's social structure. Individuals of similar backgrounds gravitated towards each other and formed the political and social basis for the lives in Jamaica. In this sense, while they were dependent on English credit and material goods, they were also dependent on other settlers on the island for knowledge and material goods. It created an interdependent community of whites on the island, which became increasingly important in the eighteenth century as the population of African labourers grew.³⁷² More importantly, these social networks diverged from

³⁷² Trevor Burnard has argued that white society bonded together in the eighteenth century to maintain their control over the African population of the island, which was more than 90% of the population. As Burnard put it: "In order to protect themselves from a hostile black majority, whites needed to know that they were all members of a privileged community that also had shared communal duties." Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, 151. For more on how white minority maintained control of the enslaved population in eighteenth-century Jamaica, see Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, 146 – 152.

England's economy of obligation when the institutions had no precedence in English society, such as chattel slavery. As chattel slavery progressed and Jamaican planters reaped larger and larger profits from the sugar industry, their differences from England became more pronounced. Yet, this story is perhaps better left to the eighteenth century, as Anglo-Jamaica was firmly tethered, through its social networks, to the English economy of obligation in its earliest decades of settlement. To "rais a brave plantation" was to keep one foot planted in English values with an eye towards building something new in Jamaica.³⁷³

³⁷³ Cary Helyar to William Helyar, January 12, 1671.

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