

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Reconstructing the life Richard Ligon lived has been a major challenge in preparing this edition. *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* achieved a very wide readership throughout Europe and in America, but it appeared toward the end of his life. The first edition was published in 1657, and Ligon died in 1662. The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, usually called simply the Royal Society, was organized in the year he died, and its members enthusiastically read and endorsed Ligon's book, proposing it as a model for the kind of scientific environmental study they wanted to encourage. Despite its popularity and republication in a variety of languages in its own time, there has not been a modern edition of *A True and Exact History* with notes and context.

Before he left for the Caribbean in 1647, Ligon lived the life of a gentleman in London, taking care of the business affairs of his relatives in the west of England. These activities appear in public records and private notes only occasionally. From the kinds of experiences he drew on in trying to describe Barbados for English consumption, we learn about his involvement in art, music, and the theater, and these hints allow us to flesh out the bare record to get a sense of what his life was like before the coming of the English Civil War in 1642 destroyed that world.

Although Ligon died in 1662, his Barbados book was reprinted in 1673, and that version forms the basis for this edition. There are several reasons for this choice. One is that the earlier book contained a lengthy list of errors at the end, and those were all corrected in the later publication. Also, the spelling was modernized in the 1673 version, and that formed the basis for further modernization to make the present edition as accessible as possible. Punctuation remains as in the 1673 book. Numbers in brackets within the text refer to the page numbers in Ligon's original text.

Many people have assisted me in interpreting Ligon's work, including Jennifer Anderson, Karl Appuhn, Kevin Arlyck, Sir John Baker, Hilary Beckles, Warren Billings, Francis Bremer, Hugh Cagle, Christian Crouch, Cornelia Dayton, Antonio Feros, Michael LaCombe, Catherine Lugar, Miranda Marvin, Philip Morgan, Mairin Odle, Jane Ohlmeyer, Susan Scott Parrish, Carla Pestana, James Robertson, Janet C. Robertson, David Harris Sacks, Jorge Silva, Frederick Smith, Fredrika Teute, Barbara Weinstein, and Walt Woodward. Joel Budd did much of the groundwork in uncovering Ligon's life before Ligon left for Barbados. I have also benefited from the suggestions of the two anonymous readers of the entire manuscript.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman

INTRODUCTION

BY KAREN ORDAHL KUPPERMAN

Richard Ligon left England for the Caribbean in 1647 with a party of Royalist exiles as the fortunes of the English Civil War tilted in favor of parliament's forces. He returned from Barbados in 1650 and, in 1657, published his account of the strange and intriguing world he encountered across the Atlantic, *A True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbadoes*. In his experiences and in his decision to write about them, he offers an excellent example of something that was new in his period: an Atlantic life. Ligon is a person who, in ordinary circumstances, would be completely unknown to history.

Little is known of Ligon's life before he went to the Indies. Although he was a gentleman, he was a younger son of a younger son and therefore had to make his own living. His narrative hints at extensive European travel in his youth and a classical education. His younger brother John accompanied their relative George, Lord Berkeley, to Oxford and in his continental travels, and Richard might have traveled in a similar capacity earlier.¹ He had been educated as a musician and an artist, and he clearly had been at the royal court as a young man. Throughout his book, in references to hunting in royal forests and the taste of game, he marked himself as a partaker of aristocratic pastimes.

The first decades of the seventeenth century, when Ligon was in London as a young man, were exciting times of experimentation in the interrelated fields of music, science, architecture, and mathematics. James I had ended the long war with Spain shortly after he ascended the throne in 1603, opening the way to travel for pleasure on the continent, and European experience became part of elite education. When his son Charles I became king in 1625, the courtiers who surrounded him had grown up in this more

1. On the Ligon family, see John Smyth, of Nibley, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. Sir John Maclean, 3 vols. (Gloucester, UK: J. Bellows, 1883–85), II, 178, 183–84; John Bennet Boddie, "Lygon of Madresfield, Worcester, England and Henrico Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2nd ser., 16 (1936), 289–315; Michael J. Wood and Gary Boyd Roberts, "Four Thomas Lygons (Ligons): An Abstract of New Findings," *The Virginia Genealogist*, 22 (1978), 247–52; and Neil D. Thompson, "Further Observations on the Ancestry of Colonel Thomas Ligon of Henrico County," *ibid.*, 38 (1994), 48–52. Wood, Roberts, and Thompson correct errors and omissions in William D. Ligon, *The Ligon Family and Connections* (Hartford, CT: The Bond Press, 1947).

cosmopolitan atmosphere that drew on Italian models. Increasingly, elite culture came to center on the court.²

In his interest in creating rational designs for Barbados houses and the mathematics that went into his diagrams of both sugar works and house plans, as well as his hands-on involvement in projects, Ligon was clearly drawing on models presented by the court and its projects in early Stuart times. As he described his various activities, he demonstrated mastery of the elements of culture recommended by Henry Peacham in his 1634 book, *The Compleat Gentleman*, which, his title page promised, would fashion one “absolute, in the most necessary and commendable Qualities concerning Mind or Body, that may be required in a noble Gentleman.” In addition to poetry, music, painting, and writing, Peacham asserted that a gentleman must be a master of geometry and cosmography.³

Ligon mentioned his friend John Coprario, who had been Charles I’s court composer. While Charles was Prince of Wales his consort of viols and violins, “Coperario’s Musique,” included Orlando Gibbons and Alfonso Ferrabosco II as players. John Playford reported that Charles I, who was “by his Knowledge of Music a competent Judge” and a promoter of “this Science,” also participated; he “could play his part exactly well on the Bass Viol, especially of those Incomparable Fancies of Mr. Coperario to the Organ.” When Coprario died in 1626, Richard Ligon was the executor of his estate. Charles I’s treasury appropriated £45 to make up money owed to Ligon by Coprario, “his Majestie’s servant,” at the time of his death, and Coprario’s manuscripts went to Ligon.⁴

Increasingly, the ability to play an instrument as well as understand music was an attribute of gentle status. Lutes and viols were particularly

2. R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), chs. 3, 6.

3. Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman* (London: Constable, 1634).

4. Warrant for payment, January 21, 1627, Conway Papers, National Archives, UK, SP 30/14. On Charles I’s playing, see John Playford, “Preface: To All Lovers of Musick,” in *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, 10th ed. (London: A. G[odbid] and J[ohn] P[layford] the younger, 1683); on his consort, see Jonathan P. Wainwright, *Musical Patronage in Seventeenth-Century England: Christopher, First Baron Hatton (1605–1670)* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1997), 80–82. For Coprario’s life, see Richard Charteris, *John Coprario: A Thematic Catalogue of His Music With a Biographical Introduction* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1977), 1–34; Andrew Ashbee and David Lasocki, eds., *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians, 1485–1714* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998); the entry by Christopher D. S. Field in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1980); and Robert W. Wienpahl, *Music at the Inns of Court During the Reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Charles* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979), xi, 236–43.

avored among the gentry.⁵ Ligon brought his theorbo, the recently introduced double-necked lute, with him to Barbados. As an owner of the most up-to-date instrument, he was fascinated by the “antique” lute with biblical roots he heard in the Cape Verdes [12]. Ligon’s involvement in music theory prompted his interest in the Africans’ love of music and in the drums they played for their dancing.

Ligon had carved out a satisfying life for himself in London. We know about his involvement with the court and the cosmopolitan life of London before the war, but it is more difficult to determine how he actually supported himself. Scattered through the records are hints that Ligon may have been what contemporaries called a “man of business,” a kind of attorney or “friend” who looked after the interests of wealthy men, especially his West Country relatives—Ligons, Berkeleys, and Killigrews. We know he acted as executor for the wills of relatives, as he did for John Coprario.

Ligon was involved with his cousin, the playwright Sir William Killigrew, in a scheme sponsored by the Earl of Lindsey in the 1630s to drain wetlands, known as fens, in the eastern part of England in order to convert them into farmland. All the investors were courtiers, and they were promised ownership of the drained land in recompense for their efforts.⁶ Ligon served as a project manager; his promised share of 543 acres would have made him a large landowner. Understandably, local populations bitterly resented these reclamation projects that intruded on their customary use of the land. They rose up and tore down the fences and the drainage ditch banks, spoiled the crops planted in the enclosed areas, and, finally, destroyed the houses of the promoters and those who farmed their land for them. In May 1640 Ligon sent Killigrew a frantic note from “Drainland Hall” in Lincolnshire warning that the local people were threatening to destroy everything and burn the drainers’ houses.⁷ The great riot that drove the investors away occurred on a traditional feast day, Ascension Day 1642.⁸

5. Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science, and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), chs. 1–5.

6. H. C. Darby, *The Draining of the Fens*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1956), esp. ch. 2; Karen Ordahl Kupperman, “Controlling Nature and Colonial Projects in Early America,” in Hans-Jürgen Grabbe, ed., *Colonial Encounters: Essays in Early American History and Culture*, American Studies—A Monograph Series, 109 (Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag, 2003), 69–88.

7. Ligon to Killigrew, May 4, 1640, P. R. O., SP 16/452, 27. Ligon specified the size of his promised estate in his will, made in July 1659; British National Archives, PROB II/308. On the Lindsey Level investors, see J. P. Vander Motten, *Sir William Killigrew (1606–1695): His Life and Dramatic Works* (Ghent, Belgium: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent, 1980), 76–103.

8. May 9, 1642, “Petition of Sir William Killigrew, Knight, Edward Heron, Esq., Richard Ligon, and other participants, with the Earl of Lindsey; complain that

Ligon, who said he was over sixty years old at his departure, opened his book with the explanation that he had undertaken "so long a Risco" as crossing the ocean "in the last scene of my life" because he had been "stripped and rifled of all I had" in this "Barbarous Riot."⁹ But the fenland occurrences predated his departure by several years. He referred only obliquely to the events that accounted for the actual timing of his departure in June 1647. The English Civil War had reached a climax with the victory of the parliamentary forces over Charles I. Ligon himself had been in the garrison at Exeter, one of the last to surrender to parliament's New Model Army. The fortress, commanded by Sir John Berkeley, included Edward Berkeley as a captain of horse and Ligon's associate Sir Thomas Modyford. Parliamentary commander Sir Thomas Fairfax agreed to very generous terms for Exeter's defenders. All were to be allowed to leave on their promise not to fight against parliament again, and they were to be allowed to pay a relatively light fine to avoid having their estates seized.¹⁰ Ligon, Modyford, and Edward Berkeley all applied to compound "on Exeter Articles" shortly after the city fell, with Ligon testifying that he had "no estate but lands in the fens."¹¹

Ligon, who described himself as a stranger in his own land, was one of many Royalists who chose to leave the country. His once-powerful friends had lost all influence. Any hope that he and the other investors in the Lindsey Level project, all supporters of the king, would win government support in recovering their losses evaporated with the Royalist defeat.¹² Humphrey Walrond, Ligon's friend in Barbados and an investor in another fen drainage project overturned by rioters, emigrated in 1646 with similar

they have been turned out of their possessions in the Earl of Lindsey's level in Lincolnshire by a riotous multitude of people," House of Lords Manuscripts, Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Great Britain, *Fifth Report*, Part 1 (London, 1876), 22. On these events, see Brian Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1976), 126–38 and Keith Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1982).

9. Ligon mentions his age on his p. 17.

10. Eugene A. Andriette, *Devon and Exeter in the Civil War* (Newton Abbot, Devon, UK: David and Charles, 1971), 152–69, esp. 166; Col. H. C. B. Rogers, *Battles and Generals of the Civil Wars, 1642–1651* (London: Seeley, 1968), 264–67.

11. *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, ed. M. A. E. Green, 5 vols. (London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889–92): Ligon II, 1536; Modyford II, 1278–79; Edward Berkeley II, 1321–22. See P. F. Campbell, "More on Richard Ligon," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 37 (1986), 415–16.

12. P. F. Campbell, "Richard Ligon," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 37 (1985), 215–38.

feelings.¹³ Emigration of defeated Royalists was apparently encouraged by the victorious parliament. Captain William Byam was freed from confinement "on condition of accepting a 'pass' to go beyond seas with . . . Col. Walrond." Byam thus went to Barbados, described by his descendant as "the asylum and receptacle for discomfited royalists."¹⁴

Ligon's choice of a West Indian destination was made for him as he joined Thomas Modyford's expedition. However, it was natural that he would seek to redress his fortune in America. His nephew Thomas, drawing on the Ligon-Berkeley cousinship, had gone to Virginia in 1641 with the new royal governor Sir William Berkeley. Thomas became a substantial landowner; he called his estate "Mawburne," named for the Malvern Hills near Madresfield, the Ligon ancestral home.¹⁵

The Lignons were also connected to New England ventures through the Gorges family. Richard Ligon was cousin to Sir Ferdinando Gorges, who, as president of the Council for New England, was the principal rival to the puritans whose settlements radiated out from their establishment in Boston, Salem, and Plymouth. Gorges and his associates patented most of Maine, and he applied the name Lygonia to the land between the Kennebec River and Cape Porpus in honor of his mother's family. When Maine was admitted to the union, legislators briefly discussed reviving the name Lygonia for the new state.¹⁶

Unraveling Ligon's role and status in Barbados is difficult. He described himself as living the life of a gentleman marked by periods of leisure during which he indulged his passion for music and painting. He described great

13. *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, ed. Green, II, 937; P. F. Campbell, "Two Generations of Walronds," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 38 (1989), 253–85. The family name was sometimes written Waldron.

14. Edward S. Byam, *Chronological Memoir of the Revs. Henry, John, and Edward Byam; sons of the Rev. Lawrence Byam, rector of Luckham, in Somersetshire* (Tenby, UK: R. Mason, 1862), 17–18.

15. On the career of Thomas Ligon in Virginia, see H. R. McIlwaine, ed., *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1619–1658/59* (Richmond, VA: Colonial Press, E. Wadley Co., 1915), xxii, 95; Nell Marion Nugent, *Cavaliers and Pioneers*, I (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1974), 440, 516; II (Berryville, VA: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1977), 49–53, 92, 116, 124; and Virginia M. Meyer and John Frederick Dorman, eds., *Adventurers of Purse and Person, Virginia, 1607–1624/5* (Richmond, VA: Order of First Families of Virginia, 1987), 276–79, 353–61. On Berkeley and Virginia in this period, see Warren M. Billings, *Sir William Berkeley and the Forging of Colonial Virginia* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

16. On Lygonia, see Hannah Farber, "The Rise and Fall of the Province of Lygonia, 1643–1658," *New England Quarterly*, 82 (2009), 490–513 and Robert E. Moody, *The Letters of Thomas Gorges, Deputy Governor of the Province of Maine, 1640–1643* (Portland, ME: Maine Historical Society, 1978), 59–60.

planters' feasts and pastimes as if he had been a participant. An interest in fine cuisine was becoming an attribute of the cultured gentleman at this time, and Ligon implied, when he spoke of dishes he prepared, that he did this as a form of recreation. Yet he also wrote of training the chefs of the two taverns in Bridgetown, and of his own involvement in preparing food that would satisfy the tastes of English planters, thus supervising food preparation may have been among his duties.

Ligon clearly worked as an overseer or plantation manager. He recorded conversations with Africans that took place as he supervised their work clearing paths to the church, "for I was employed sometimes upon public works" [49]. When praising Humphrey Walrond's care for him in his long sickness, Ligon described himself as the "poorest of his friends" [35]. And there is a further intriguing hint in his list of necessary supplies and arrangements for a plantation, where he wrote: "The Prime overseer may very well deserve Fifty pounds *Per Annum*, or the value in such Commodities as he likes, that are growing upon the Plantation; for he is a man that the master may allow sometimes to sit at his own Table, and therefore must be clad accordingly" [114]. If Ligon, a much older man than his employer, filled this role then he participated in the life of the great planters only when invited, and the salary he recommended was a relatively modest one. His own position on the island, as previously in London, may have involved a balancing act among the roles of friend, gentleman, and salaried employee.¹⁷

Ligon's book followed the course of his journey. First the company, like all English transatlantic venturers, sailed down the coast of Europe and Africa to islands where they could take on fresh water and food before catching the trade winds that would carry them across the Atlantic. Ligon vividly conveyed the engrossing people and environment he discovered in the Cape Verde Islands where his party landed. He then described the transatlantic voyage, the party's arrival in Barbados, and their experiences there. Much of his discussion of Barbados concerned sugar and its production, but he also strove to give descriptions that would allow his readers at home to visualize the environment, especially the plants, and all the varied people he came to know. Finally, the book described his homeward journey and what befell him and the other passengers.

The Caribbean presented a world of wonders—lush tropical plants and exotic animals—to English eyes, and Ligon strove to convey accurately the strange and impressive quality of the environment. He called on his classical education, his travels in Europe, and his knowledge of the arts and

17. It was not uncommon for gentlemen to act as stewards in great houses; see Robert J. Steinfield, *The Invention of Free Labor: The Employment Relation in English and American Law and Culture, 1350–1870* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 18–19.

mathematics to find comparisons that would bring the reality home to his readers—and, incidentally, that would also impress them with the breadth of his learning and experience. One major goal of his work was to write a masterpiece of travel literature that would carry his readers to an alien and faraway land and allow them to experience its wonders.

At the same time, the *Historie of Barbadoes* was a practical book. At the outset Ligon wrote that his main purpose was to describe the sugar-making process and the tremendously sophisticated physical plant it required. He accomplished this amply, not only in prose but also in the elaborate drawings and diagrams he included. Moreover, he gave detailed instructions for people in England who might be considering investment in Barbados or the newly acquired Jamaica, or even emigration, accompanied by lists of the items the planters needed and what they would cost.

Ligon's insight and humor combined with his deep interest in the people he met make his work come alive. His writing is full of stories about enslaved Africans and Indians and their abilities and aspirations, as well as portraits of leading English planters and humorous anecdotes about their lives. He told the story of Yarico, an Indian woman from the mainland of South America who had hidden and cared for an English sailor being hunted by her own people and helped him escape back to his ship. In return, her sailor "sold her for a slave, who was as free born as he" [55]. Ligon knew Yarico on Barbados and recounted his talks with her. Her story was taken up and expanded by later authors, from Richard Steele in the *Spectator* to the French *philosophe* Abbé Guillaume Thomas François Raynal. In his version, Steele gave the perfidious Englishman the name Thomas Inkle, and the story of Inkle and Yarico stirred audiences throughout Europe.¹⁸ Ligon's critique of the harshness of slavery and servitude, highlighted by his talks with slaves whose aspirations could not be realized, brought home the poignancy of the circumstances and choices that created the institution of slavery in the English colonies.

Cape Verdes

The Cape Verde Islands, off the coast of Africa, were the company's first port of call. Portugal, which had become independent of Spain in 1640, signed a treaty with England in 1642 that opened Portuguese territory

18. Lawrence Marsden Price first collated the versions of Yarico's tragedy in his book *Inkle and Yarico Album* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937); his bibliography of forms in which the story appeared runs to over thirteen pages. Frank Felsenstein has collected many of these iterations with a very informative introduction in his book *English Trader, Indian Maid: Representing Gender, Race, and Slavery in the New World. An Inkle and Yarico Reader* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

to English traders, and Ligon's group took advantage of this. Despite the official amity, however, the English never fully trusted the Portuguese, and Ligon's scorn for Bernardo Mendes de Sousa, who was released from jail in England to be their guide, resounds through his account.

The drought-plagued Cape Verdes, which had been uninhabited before the Portuguese colonized them in the middle of the fifteenth century, were named for their proximity to the verdant cape on the African coast. Many of the islands' inhabitants were of African or mixed African and Portuguese descent. Santiago, Ligon's St. Jago, had been the seat of the bishop for the islands and the adjacent coast for almost a century when he visited. Capuchin friars first arrived to run the Cape Verdes mission in 1647, the year Ligon's party was there.¹⁹ Father António Vieira visited the Cape Verdes in 1652 and he wrote about the impressive self-presentation of the islands' leaders. "There are priests and canons here as black as jet, but so circumspect, so respectable, so learned, so very musical, so discrete, so well behaved, they could be the envy of any we see in our cathedrals. In short the temperament of the people is all one might desire. . . ."²⁰

The Caribbean: Alien Land of Wonders

Ligon found nature fantastic in the West Indies. Everything—undesirable as well as desirable plants—grew so fast. Animals, even those imported from Europe, matured earlier than in Europe. The hot semitropical environment, engendered by "the Sun with his masculine force" acting on the feminine "teeming Earth," produced luscious fruits of the most exquisite flavor [84]. Ligon picked out the pineapple as superlative and said it excelled the best fruit that grew in England as much as the finest apricot surpassed a crab apple. Pineapples did not travel well in seventeenth-century ships, so those who had tasted them struggled to find a comparison to describe how wonderful they were. Pineapple juice, according to Ligon, was "certainly the Nectar which the Gods drank" [33]. English visitors in the decade before Ligon also praised this tropical fruit. Father Andrew White, S.J., praised its health-conserving properties and described its taste

19. T. Bentley Duncan, *Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 2–6, 17–23, 175–76, 195–97, 232–35.

20. Vieira to Fr. André Fernandes, December 25, 1652, in *Cartas do padre António Vieira*, ed. João Lúcio de Azevedo, 3 vols. (Lisbon, Portugal: Imprensa Nacional, 1970), I:285–89, quote 286–87, translation by Catherine Lugar. I thank Hugh Cagle for bringing this document to my attention. On Ligon's description of the elite women he met on Santiago, see Jane Stevenson, "Richard Ligon and the Theatre of Empire," in Allan I. Macinnes and Arthur H. Williamson, eds., *Shaping the Stuart World, 1603–1714: The Atlantic Connection* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 285–310.

as "an Aromatical compound of wine and strawberries," but, he concluded, "nothing can express it but it self." Thomas Verney quoted King James as saying that the pineapple must have been the apple that Eve persuaded Adam to eat in the Garden of Eden. In fact, Verney had to break off his writing because describing it "makes me long after it."²¹

Ligon, like other West Indian visitors, found dramatic beauty everywhere—huge, colorful flowers adorned the bushes, and spectacular fruits clung to their branches. His greatest praise was reserved for the tree he called the Palmetto Royal, "for I believe there is not a more Royal or Magnificent tree growing on the earth." In describing the Palmetto Royal, Ligon called upon all his learning and displayed the full range of his interests. He deployed his mathematical education to calculate the height of the trees using the rule of three, and displayed his knowledge of Greek by recalling the ancient historian Herodotus's claim that the Persian emperor Xerxes had admired the beauty of a Lydian plane-tree so much that he had placed golden ornaments on it and had established a caretaker to tend it. Ligon's slightly garbled version compared his own admiration for his Palmetto Royal to "Xerxes strange Lydian love the Plantain tree."²² In arguing that the great classical architect Vitruvius would have modified his designs if he had seen both the beauty and the perfect engineering by which this immensely tall tree maintained its stature, Ligon demonstrated his learning in the arts [75–78].

Another manifestation of nature's wonders was the sensitive plant, whose leaves close up when touched [99]. The plant's ability to react, literally shrinking away from human touch, raised the question of whether even the boundary between the animal and vegetable kingdoms might be blurred in this exotic world. An anonymous description of Barbados written during Ligon's stay there asserted that only philosophers could determine whether this plant actually had feelings.²³

21. "A Briefe Relation of the Voyage Unto Maryland by Father Andrew White," in C. C. Hall, ed., *Narratives of Early Maryland, 1633–1684* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 29–45, quote 36. Thomas Verney to Sir Edmund Verney, February 10, 1638/39, in John Bruce, ed., *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family* (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1853), 192–95, quote 194; Columbus's sailors encountered pineapples in Guadaloupe in 1493, and Roanoke colonist John White painted a picture of one in the 1580s; see Kim Sloan, *A New World: England's First View of America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

22. For Xerxes and the plane tree see Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, trans. George Rawlinson, Book VII, ch. 31 in Francis R. B. Godolphin, ed., *The Greek Historians*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1942), I, 403. Only Books I and II had been translated into English in Ligon's time. I owe this reference to Joel Budd.

23. Anon., "A Breife Discription of the Ilande of Barbados," c. 1650, in V. T. Harlow, ed., *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623–1667*

Even the heavens were different in the Indies. Ligon believed the sun and moon were brighter close to the equator, because those lands were nearer to the skies, and this intensity eclipsed the light of some small stars seen in England. Other constellations appeared near the equator, especially the Southern Cross. Nothing was familiar. Henry Colt, one of the earliest English visitors to write about Barbados, reported the Southern Cross, but he was particularly struck by how suddenly the sun and moon rose and fell with little period of twilight: "In his descent it goeth not sloping down as with us, but strikes right down & it is a wonder how this great body becomes so soon covered with the sea."²⁴

Admiration was always mixed with uneasiness in early accounts of the West Indian environment. In some ways nature seemed out of control, not moderate and tempered as in England. Trees did not bear fruit in an orderly, disciplined way as in Europe with its well-defined seasons; they had leaves, blossoms, and fruit all at once. This fecundity was pleasing to English planters, but also somewhat frightening, especially when combined with the suspicion that nature might deceive. All that beauty and lavishness sometimes seemed to hide a hollow reality. Colt, for example, wrote that all the fruits had stones that were too big, so that, although they looked luscious, what the consumer got was actually meager.²⁵ Thomas Gage, who wrote about Mexico after many years there, alleged that he had always been hungry again two or three hours after a meal regardless of how much he ate. He argued that the attractive tropical food carried "inward and hidden deceit" and had "little substance and virtue," which Gage attributed to its too-rapid growth. An "English Kentish Pippin" apple was far preferable.²⁶ All nature deceived in the tropics. Gorgeous flowers had no scent in the Indies, and Ligon even wrote that meat had less flavor than at home.

Even more importantly, nature sometimes seemed to beckon planters with beautiful allure that cloaked a hostile intent. The lavish fruitfulness of Barbados stemmed from the island's hot, humid environment, and the trade-off was that all in that environment was subject to mold, mildew, and

(London, 1925), 47. *Mimosa pudica*, the sensitive plant's scientific name, perpetuates the idea that it experiences feelings. See Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Natural Curiosity," *Common-place*, 4 (2004), <http://www.common-place.org/vol-04/no-02/kupperman/>.

24. "The Voyage of Sir Henry Colt Knight to the Ilands of the Antilleas," 1631, in Harlow, ed., *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1925), 72.

25. "Voyage of Sir Henry Colt," 68.

26. Thomas Gage, *The English-American, His Travail by Sea and Land* (London: R. Cotes, 1648), 43, 200. On English encounters with the strange climates, see Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Fear of Hot Climates in the Anglo-American Colonial Experience," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLI (1984), 213-40.

decay. Food spoiled quickly after it was prepared, and the planters' appetites were impaired by the heat. The chili peppers and alcohol Europeans used to stimulate their appetites carried their own harm. Not only did everything the planters brought with them to enhance their lives rot, but the insects and reptiles native to the land invaded everything. Ligon described the heroic efforts and complicated schemes planters devised to foil the ingenuity of these small Barbadians, and the planters' utter lack of success. Cockroaches made the slaves miserable by biting them in the night. Chegoes, tiny insects that burrowed under the skin and sometimes caused infection, could make a person lame; Ligon credited Yarico with removing them from his own foot. Hostile plants also foiled the planters; withes, strong wiry vines, sprang up overnight wherever land was cleared, and guavas thrived wherever the cattle left their droppings. These, like other weeds, were almost impossible to root out.

Moreover, all that beauty sometimes camouflaged death. Some of these fabulous plants were deadly poison if one did not know how to use them properly. Local knowledge was essential, and Ligon demonstrated that enslaved Indians were valued for their ability to prepare foods like cassava by extracting the poisonous juices from it. Similarly, the trees he identified as the physic nut and the poison tree were both useful, but only after they had been rendered harmless. If the sap of the latter got into one's eyes, that person would be blinded for as long as a month; "Yet, of this timber we make all, or the most part, of the Pots we cure our Sugar in; for, being sawed, and the boards dried in the Sun, the poison vapors out" [68]. When Ligon was there the planters still had much to learn about dangers in that environment. One planter put fifty of his prime working oxen in a new pasture, and the next morning they were all dead. No one knew which of the plants had killed them [56].

Contingency seemed to rule everything in the Indies. Settlers could be wiped out overnight by such accidents as the deaths of animals or fire or one of the great storms the region was prone to. Such accidents could bring down the greatest planter. A plague, possibly yellow fever, was raging in Barbados when Ligon and his colleagues arrived, and Ligon was sick much of the time he was there. The terrible diseases that afflicted the island's population became famous throughout the colonies. Beauchamp Plantagenet heard in Maryland that 10,000 "brave people" had died in Barbados in the two years before he wrote in 1648. The epidemic was frequently mentioned in correspondence with New England. Richard Vines, for example, wrote to John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, of God's "heavy hand in wrath" felt in the "absolute plague; very infectious and destroying" that raged in Barbados. "It first seized on the ablest men both for account and ability of body. Many who had begun and almost finished great sugar works, who dandled themselves in their hopes, but were suddenly laid in the dust, and their estates left unto

strangers.”²⁷ The disease environment helped to wear the planters down, and Ligon argued that the medicines native to the island would not be suited to English bodies until some physicians came out to develop them. At present they had only “ignorant Quacksalvers there” [118].

The great energy penned up in that environment could suddenly break out in storms and earthquakes. A party that arrived in 1654 saw the aftermath of a great hurricane; the wrecked skeletons of ten ships lay in the Bridgetown harbor.²⁸ Ultimately, English settlers longed to return home. Ligon argued that they were worn out by toil and “misfortunes” that would “depress and wear out the best spirits in the world, and will cause them to think, what a happy thing it is, to spend the remainder of their lives in rest and quiet in their own Countries” [117]. Successful sugar planters, such as Ligon’s friend Thomas Modyford, amassed huge fortunes on which to retire; some returned to England to live lordly lives.

Barbados before Sugar

Barbados had not seemed very promising when it was first settled in 1627. For one thing, it was uninhabited; the Indians who had settled the island from Guiana and had lived there for hundreds of years had abandoned it for more mountainous and defensible islands when the Spanish began raids to capture and enslave Indians.²⁹ Barbados, “the most easterly Iland of the Caribees,” was so placed that ships entering the Caribbean sometimes missed it altogether; Sir Henry Colt, who visited the recently settled island in 1631, compared the challenge of sighting Barbados to finding a sixpence

thrown down on Newmarket Heath. If a ship sailed past by accident, the prevailing winds and currents made it difficult and time consuming to beat back to the island. On the other hand, its position rendered it relatively safe from attack by other European nations.

Nor did the environment seem to promise much at first. Colt was very contemptuous of what he saw: “For your soil it is naught, nothing else but loose sand. Your ground which you esteem the best is but the leaves and ashes of your trees. Dig but half a foot deep and there will be found nothing else but Clay. Your water is thick and not of the best.” He also found the planters’ wanting in their attention, “all things carrying the face of a desolate and disorderly show to the beholder.” He wrote that in ten days “I never saw any man at work.” Instead the planters wasted their time and money in fighting and drinking.³⁰

Development of Barbados’s economy was delayed mainly by the difficulty of adapting to a wholly new environment. In such an endeavor, spotting problems as they arose in the fields and experimenting with solutions was paramount. New crops required knowledge and technical skill that English venturers had to acquire slowly and painfully; many failures dotted the road to success. The first crop the planters concentrated on was tobacco, which was already grown very successfully in Virginia and Bermuda. John Winthrop’s nineteen-year-old son Henry went over to “this Island called the Barbados” with the first contingent in 1627, three years before his father led the founding migration to Massachusetts Bay, and Henry had expansive hopes for its future. Shortly after he arrived he wrote home of his great plans. If his relatives would send him two or three servants a year, he would be able to build a thriving plantation in Barbados, the “pleasantest” island in the West Indies. He appealed to his father and uncle to send both servants and supplies and promised to send back 500 or 1,000 pounds of tobacco in six months.³¹ Even Henry Colt, who was so critical of the soil and planters of Barbados four years after it was settled, believed that the “air & soil produceth with a marvelous swiftness,” and the variety of produce matched its abundance when people gave up their “sloth & negligence” and applied themselves.³²

Sloth and negligence were not the only problems. All projections for the future of West Indian colonies were based on best-case scenarios and always assumed that nothing would go wrong. More realistic assessments of

27. Beauchamp Plantagenet, *A Description of the Province of New Albion*, 1648, reprinted in Peter Force, comp., *Tracts and Other Papers, Relating Principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1844; rept. Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), 5; Vines to John Winthrop, April 29, 1648, *Winthrop Papers*, 6 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929–), V, 219–20. Although Vines thought the epidemic was over in 1648, later letters revealed that it raged on; see for example Lucy Downing to John Winthrop, January, 1649, *ibid.*, 297. Richard Dunn identifies the disease as yellow fever in his work *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 76–77.

28. Jerome S. Handler, ed. and trans., “Father Antoine Biet’s Visit to Barbados in 1654,” *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXXII (1967), 65. On the impact of hurricanes, see Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624–1783* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

29. David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change Since 1492* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 109–10.

30. Anon., “Breife Discription of the Ilande of Barbados,” in Harlow, ed., *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana*, 42; “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” *ibid.*, 65–67.

31. Henry Winthrop to Emmanuel Downing, August 22, 1627, and to John Winthrop, October 15, 1627, in *Winthrop Papers*, I, 356–57, 361–62.

32. “Voyage of Sir Henry Colt,” 67–69.

the environment and of the migrants' lack of knowledge about its vagaries would have produced more sober predictions, but might also have retarded necessary investment from England. John Winthrop did send supplies to Henry, but found he was laying out money and getting nothing in return. Early in 1629 he wrote that the tobacco Henry sent him was "very ill conditioned, foul, full of stalks and evil colored." Merchants would not pay even five shillings per pound for it. Winthrop pointed out that he had other children to provide for and was already in debt for Henry's supplies, and wrote that a less grandiose course in such a young man would have been preferable. In any case, he could do no more. Unbeknownst to his father, Henry had already quit and was on his way home when the letter was written.³³

Barbados had entered the tobacco-growing world at an inauspicious time. In just a few decades tobacco had gone from a luxury only the very wealthy could afford to an item of mass consumption at home. Yet the market for tobacco in Europe was easily saturated, and with increasing plantations in Virginia and the influx of more tobacco from Barbados and elsewhere, prices plummeted in the late 1620s and early 1630s. Henry Winthrop tried to enter the tobacco market when it was selling for only pennies per pound in 1629—not the five shillings that his father unrealistically expected. With tobacco as its principal crop, Barbados was a very poor colony. The planters needed to branch into crops not grown in other English colonies, a frightening proposition because expertise was lacking and the risks were so high.³⁴

The second crop they tried was cotton. Colt, after castigating the poor quality of the plantations he saw in 1631, remarked, "But now the trade of Cotton fills them all with hope."³⁵ The party sent out to found the

33. John Winthrop to Henry Winthrop, January 30, 1629, *Winthrop Papers*, II, 66–69. Henry Winthrop went to Massachusetts Bay in 1630 and drowned trying to swim across a river on his second day there at the age of 23; on his life, see Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129–31, 187 and Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *The Winthrop Family in America* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1948), 59–62. I thank Francis Bremer for advice on John Winthrop's letter.

34. On tobacco prices and attempts to control planting, see Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 20–21; "A Note on Chesapeake Tobacco Prices, 1618–1660," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 84 (1976), 401–10; and "The Tobacco Industry in the Chesapeake Colonies, 1617–1730: An Interpretation," *Research in Economic History*, 5 (1970), 109–77. Menard's research shows that John Winthrop was dramatically out of touch with Atlantic realities when he chastised Henry. On continuing complaints about poor Barbados tobacco and low prices, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 53–54.

35. "Voyage of Sir Henry Colt," 69.

Roman Catholic colony of Maryland stopped in Barbados on the way and reported on the island's situation three years later. Fr. Andrew White, S.J., was delighted by the sight of cotton growing, in which the "little bud . . . opening in the middle into four quarters, their appears a knot of cotton white as snow."

But at their arrival in January 1634, the Maryland party found scarcity and discontent. All the food they tried to buy for the rest of their voyage to the Chesapeake was so expensive "that nothing could be had, but it Cost us our eyes." White said the Barbadians lived entirely on cornbread (which he called "pone"), hominy, and potatoes. Moreover, although the governor had originally told them that corn was one shilling a bushel, when he discovered that they had come especially to get corn for planting in Maryland, "he called a Council and decreed there should none be sold us under 2s a bushel." This exploitative attitude also characterized relationships between masters and servants. At their arrival the Maryland party found the island "all in arms." They learned that the servants had "conspired to kill their masters and make themselves free, and then handsomely to take the first ship that came, and so go to sea." White's ship was spared only because one servant had revealed the plot and it had been foiled.³⁶

In the middle of the 1630s, though, cotton was thriving and the planters gained knowledge in processing it. The island's population grew sevenfold in the second half of the decade.³⁷ Some also cultivated indigo, which produced a rich blue dye. Both products were much in demand in England's textile industry. Ginger was cultivated by some farmers. But by the early 1640s the Barbadians again found themselves with a saturated market as the price of cotton dropped.³⁸ Barbados "was in a very low condition," and "small hopes appeared of raising any fortunes there for the future."³⁹

The foundations of a successful economy had been laid, however, and some planters now began to experiment with sugar planting. James Dering wrote his cousin Sir Edward Dering in 1640 that he had acquired a plantation for £150 and, if Sir Edward would pay for it in England, he expected

36. White, "Briefe Relation of the Voyage Unto Maryland," in Hall, ed., *Narratives*, 34.

37. Alison F. Games, "Opportunity and Mobility in Early Barbados," in Robert L. Paquette and Stanley Engerman, eds., *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 165–81 and *Migration and the Origins of the British Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

38. On the Barbados cotton crop and endeavors in indigo and ginger, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*, 21–25.

39. Nicholas Foster, *A Briefe Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion Acted in the Island Barbados, in the West-Indies* (London: I. G., 1650), 1–2. On this early period, see also Handler, ed. and trans., "Father Antoine Bict's Visit to Barbados," 69.

to be able to make three or four times that amount in a few years. Like Henry Winthrop, all aspiring planters depended on help from substantial backers. James Dering wrote that if Sir Edward did not pay the required amount, "I were utterly undone."⁴⁰

Sugar

Ligon arrived in Barbados at a time of momentous change: the development of the sugar economy that quickly made that island the richest in the English empire, richer than all the other colonies put together.⁴¹ George Downing, who wrote to his cousin John Winthrop, Jr., of his trip through the West Indies in 1645, found Barbados "a flourishing Island." By 1647, the year of Ligon's arrival, the planters were "so intent upon planting sugar that they had rather buy food at very dear rates than produce it by labor, so infinite is the profit of sugar works after once accomplished." New England merchants quickly capitalized on the opportunity to ship food to Barbados, and to sell the commodities acquired there in Europe, according to John Winthrop. Not only did it make sense for them to buy food from New England, according to Beauchamp Plantagenet, but the Barbadians relied on mainland sources for the horses and oxen that powered their sugar works.⁴²

Certainly, once sugar was established in Barbados, "they found that to be the main plant" but, Ligon wrote, the knowledge of how to grow and

process it "though they studied hard, was long a learning." Much of the knowledge came from Brazil, where Portuguese planters had established sugar cultivation. The Dutch West India Company, which was heavily involved in trade with Brazil, had seized the area around Pernambuco, the most flourishing of the Portuguese sugar-producing areas, in the early 1630s, but their occupation was short lived. As Portugal began to reassert control in the mid-1640s, Dutch migrants, including among them many Sephardic Jews, left Brazil for other New World locations, bringing with them the technical knowledge to produce high-quality sugar. At the same time, English merchant capital was important in underwriting the building of the extensive and sophisticated physical plant that sugar processing required.

With sugar established, Barbados became the model of a successful colony. In 1649 Merchant William Bullock pointed to Barbadian success as he urged Virginia planters to diversify. He wrote that until five or six years before, Barbados "lay languishing of the disease Virginia now groans under" but "by the strength of an indifferent Staple Commodity, viz Sugar, Indigo, Cotton Wool, & Ginger, it is strangely recovered." Now there was constant traffic and Bullock had learned "from very good hands inhabiting in that place, that the last year there was from all places employed thither above one hundred Sail of Ships, and they are seldom without twenty, or thirty Sail in their harbor." And all this success was due to their good commodities "for their Government is not so good that any wise man should be in love with, nor is this Island so extraordinary pleasant to entice men above other places. . . ."⁴³ At the same time, John Dury and Benjamin Worsley, members of a group of men with scientific interests who were vitally interested in England's American projects, noted that "new Commodities" in Barbados had "within these 10 years raised the worth of its land from almost nothing to be as dear or dearer than in England."⁴⁴

40. James Dering, "A Letter from Barbados in 1640," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXVII (1960), 124–25.

41. On the founding period of Barbados and the economic experimentation of the early decades culminating in the sugar boom, see Menard, *Sweet Negotiations*; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, "The Sugar Industry in the Seventeenth Century: A New Perspective on the Barbadian 'Sugar Revolution'," in Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 289–330; Larry Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados, 1627–1660* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hilary McD. Beckles, *A History of Barbados, From Amerindian Settlement to Nation-State* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chs. 2–3 and "The 'Hub of Empire': The Caribbean and Britain in the Seventeenth Century," in William Louis Roger, gen. ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 218–39; and P. F. Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History* (St. Michael, Barbados: Caribbean Graphics, 1993).

42. Sir George Downing to John Winthrop, Jr., August 26, 1645, *Winthrop Papers*, V, 43; Richard Vines to John Winthrop, July 19, 1647, *ibid.*, 172; John Winthrop, *The Journal of John Winthrop, 1630–1649*, ed. Richard S. Dunn, James Savage, and Lactitia Yeandle (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 692–93; Plantagenet, *Description of the Province of New Albion*, 5.

43. William Bullock, *Virginia Impartially examined, and left to publick view, to be considered by all Judicious and honest men* (London: John Hammond, 1649), 31–32; see also Foster, *Briefe Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion*, 1–3. On Bullock's goals, see Peter Thompson, "William Bullock's 'Strange Adventure': A Plan to Transform Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 61 (2004), 107–28. On the transition to sugar, see, in addition to the sources in note 41, Robert Carlyle Batie, "Why Sugar? Economy Cycles and the Changing of Staples on the English and French Antilles, 1624–54," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 8 (1976), 1–41; F. C. Innes, "The Pre-Sugar Era of European Settlement in Barbados," *ibid.* (1970), 1–22; Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648–1795* (Leiden, Netherlands: KITLV Press, 1988); and Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 237–40.

44. Memo on Virginian Plantation in Dury's Hand, adapted from Worsley's letter to Dury, Ref. 33/2/22A-B; see 33/2/18 for Worsley's letter to Dury, July

Col. Robert Hunt, writing in 1650, the year Ligon returned to England, pointed to Barbados's success in arguing for colonization of the island of Assada near Madagascar. He argued that Assada could be as profitable as Barbados, but at a much lower cost. This island was, he argued, in a similar latitude and about the same size and "whatsoever will grow upon Barbados is likely to grow there." He included a table in which investors could compare the price of land, labor, and supplies in the two locations in support of his claim that every commodity could be produced "at far easier Rates, than at Barbados." He wrote that 300 acres would cost £2,000 in Barbados, but a comparable estate in Assada could be procured for £15. Total cost for a plantation in Barbados, according to Hunt, was £6,000; that for Assada was £640.⁴⁵ Assada's location would also allow English merchants to become established in the East Indies trades.

Once sugar production was established, Barbados land prices had skyrocketed, and Ligon documented the change. Ligon was engaged as a plantation manager in the expedition of Colonel Thomas Modyford, which was financed by Modyford's brother-in-law Thomas Kendall, a merchant who traded with the West Indies. Modyford, who had been an officer in the army of the defeated English king, had already made one trip to Barbados in 1645 and decided to rebuild his fortune in the West Indies. Ligon reported him as saying often that he would not return to England until he had built an estate worth £100,000.

Modyford's entrance on the Barbados scene demonstrates that the island had become an arena for the wealthy. Whereas in the tobacco era of the 1630s £200 bought a good plantation of around 100 acres stocked with servants, in the 1640s prices rose steeply. Ligon wrote that William Hilliard's 500-acre plantation had been worth £400 before sugar was perfected, "which was not above five or six years" before the Modyford party's arrival. In 1647 Modyford bought half the plantation with all its stock for £7,000; the plantation was in St. John parish, and the house in which Modyford and Ligon lived was in the present-day Old Dwelling Field.⁴⁶ Ligon wrote that the ongoing consolidation of small holdings of ten to thirty acres "in poor mens' hands" into plantations of 500 to 700 acres would soon make Barbados "one of the richest Spots of earth under the Sun" [86].

27 [1649?], The Hartlib Papers, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, UK: University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute), HRI Online, 2002.

45. Lt. Col. Robert Hunt, *The Island of Assada, Neere Madagascar* (London: Nicholas Bourne, 1650), quotes 3–4. On Hunt, see Kupperman, *Providence Island*, especially 342–43 and Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560–1660* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), ch. 6.

46. For these locations; see Campbell, *Some Early Barbadian History*, 136–39.

That money was needed to get established became known slowly. In 1648, the year after Ligon and Modyford arrived, Samuel Winthrop, Henry's brother, hoped to settle in Barbados, "where in all probability I can live better than in other places." His goal was to set up as a merchant between Barbados, New England, and the Canary Islands, as concentration on sugar production made Barbados a good place for the trade in provisions. "I hope our New England Friends will be as willing to employ me there in their business as soon as others, my greatest strait will be at my first Settling, my Stock being very small. What I have, is gotten by the sweat of my brows, and So I must live." Samuel quickly moved on to the island of Antigua, which was in an earlier and more open phase of the sugar boom, and used his profits as a merchant to become a successful sugar planter.⁴⁷

The huge sugar-processing plants in mid-seventeenth-century Barbados were the most extensive and sophisticated industrial operations run by Europeans anywhere in the world, and Ligon was the first to describe them. In tapping and enlarging upon Portuguese and Dutch technology, the English planters quickly moved into the forefront of the Caribbean sugar industry. Exports of sugar from English-owned islands rose dramatically through the second half of the seventeenth century as the price of sugar steadily dropped. As a crop sugar achieved the kind of steady market growth that eluded tobacco planters. Sugar was the dream product of early modern commerce: the market for it could apparently grow without limits and never be saturated. Sugar had always been deemed desirable, but its price and scarcity in Europe had earlier limited its use to the wealthy few. As the price dropped, its consumption broadened to all levels of society, and its place in the diet of English men and women grew steadily greater.⁴⁸

Environmental Change

The Barbadian environment was completely transformed by the influx of Europeans and their imports, both intentional and unintentional. The island had been heavily forested in 1627; the planters cleared the landscape for cultivation, mostly by setting fires that destroyed the trees. As early as 1652, Heinrich von Uchteritz, a prisoner of war sent to Barbados in servitude, wrote, "Although this island lies in a pleasant location, one hears no birds." The great trees that Ligon so admired, and the songbird population that lived in them, were certainly gone by 1665, replaced by sugar fields

47. Samuel Winthrop to John Winthrop, Jr., September 28, 1648, *Winthrop Papers*, V, 254. On Samuel Winthrop's career, see Larry D. Gragg, "A Puritan in the West Indies: The Career of Samuel Winthrop," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., L (1993), 768–86.

48. See Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Sifton, 1985).

and pastures for the horses and cattle that powered the sugar-processing machinery. Native environments remained only in small, inaccessible pockets. Food crops from the South American mainland and from England were introduced early. Many of the exotic fruits Ligon praised had actually been imported from Guiana. Some of the invasive grasses that so troubled the planters had also been introduced inadvertently.⁴⁹

The Europeans also brought animals. A century before the English settled the island, a Spanish ship had deposited some hogs on Barbados. The Spanish followed this practice wherever they landed; in the absence of natural enemies, pigs multiplied rapidly all over the Americas, thus creating a ready food supply for later mariners who might find their way to the islands. Descendants of those early animal migrants fed the first English colonists. In 1647 John Marbaroe wrote to John Ferrar in England that there were "numberless" goats and hogs; Ferrar rendered it as "great Store of Goats Infinite abundance of Swine."⁵⁰ Other introduced animals produced far different results. Rats moved off English ships and invaded all American colonies. They proved to be more successful colonizers than the humans and created havoc.

Sugar, Servitude, and Slavery

Ligon witnessed the early stages of the most momentous change in the seventeenth-century colonies: the transition from a labor force composed mainly of young English men and women, who filled a term of servitude in order to pay for their passage to America and a small stake with which to set up on their own when their term was up, to lifelong inheritable slavery for Africans. Africans were brought in ships belonging to English merchants, some based in New England, as well as Dutch entrepreneurs, all of whom

49. Alexander Gunkel and Jerome S. Handlers, trans. and eds., "A German Indentured Servant in Barbados in 1652: The Account of Heinrich von Uchteritz," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXXIII (1970), 91–100, quote 93; Watts, *Man's Influence on the Vegetation of Barbados*, chs. 3–4, and *The West Indies*, 154–55, 166–68, 184–86, 219–23; Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Imperialism, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63–71. The destroyed trees included some of the richest mahogany stands in the Caribbean. See Jennifer Anderson, "Nature's Currency: The Atlantic Mahogany Trade and the Commodification of Nature in the 18th Century," *Early American Studies*, 2 (2004), 47–81. The first "systematic" map of Barbados, that by Richard Ford published in 1681, shows these changes; see Campbell, *Printed Maps of Barbados*, 11.

50. John Marbaroe, Answers to questionnaire on Barbados, December 9, 1647, Ferrar Papers 1117; John Ferrar, Description of Barbados, [1647?], FP 1120.

pioneered in the trade from the African coast.⁵¹ Observers at the time understood clearly that enslaved Africans built the Barbadian economy. George Downing, acknowledging that slaves were "the life of this place," wrote his cousin John Winthrop, Jr., in 1645 that the planters had bought 1,000 enslaved Africans that year, "and the more they buy, the better able they are to buy, for in a year and half they will earn (with god's blessing) as much as they cost."⁵² Even in this early period of experience with slavery the English had no difficulty in assuring themselves that God favored the arrangement. There were fewer than 7,000 enslaved Africans in the island at the time that Downing wrote. In 1650, when Ligon departed, there were almost 13,000 slaves, and in 1655, Barbados had 20,000. By 1661 the planters had enacted a slave code and one for servants, with the goal of creating and maintaining order, especially as the number of maroons, self-liberated slaves who had colonized inaccessible parts of the island, grew.⁵³

This growing labor regime accompanied the establishment of sugar, and Ligon observed and commented on the situations of both servants and slaves. The slaves and their lives fascinated him; he portrayed them going through their days at work, in their families, and in their leisure times. He was particularly interested in their dancing and music. Like other English observers of the time, Ligon found great difficulty in learning about the Africans' religious beliefs, although he was very interested in the subject. Ligon was also particularly interested in childbirth and rearing, and described the close and happy relationships between mothers and their "Pickaninnies," a word he introduced into English from the Spanish or Portuguese *piqueño-nino* [47–48].⁵⁴

Ligon was concerned about the plight of both slaves and servants, and in some moods he wrote that servants, whose labor was only available to the masters for a fixed period of time, were worked harder than the slaves.

51. On the transition, see Hilary McD. Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627–1715* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). On the conduct of the slave trade, see Larry Gragg, "To Procure Negroes": The English Slave Trade to Barbados, 1627–60," *Slavery and Abolition*, 16 (1995), 65–84 and "The Troubled Voyage of the Rainbow," *History Today*, 39 (1989), 36–41.

52. Sir George Downing to John Winthrop, Jr., August 26, 1645, *Winthrop Papers*, V, 43.

53. John Marbaroe, Answers to questionnaire on Barbados, December 9, 1647, Ferrar Papers 1117; John Ferrar, Description of Barbados, [1647?], FP 1120; John Povey, "An Estimate of the Barbadoes and of the now Inhabitants there," British Library, Egerton MS 2395 fol. 625. For modern estimates of the slave population, see Beckles, "'Hub of Empire,'" 224–29 and McCusker and Menard, "Barbadian 'Sugar Revolution,'" in Schwartz, ed., *Tropical Babels*, 293.

54. See Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 174.

Although sugar and slavery became intertwined in a single system, Ligon's period was really transitional; Barbados continued to receive a large number of British servants, many of them very young. What these migrants found was far different from what they had been led to expect. A servant rebellion that rocked the plantations shortly before Ligon arrived ended with the execution of eighteen leaders.⁵⁵

Servants' discontent mounted as sugar cultivation led to consolidation of plantations into larger and larger units. Building up from a small starter holding became much less feasible, so that the promise of land for those who had served out their terms began to lose its meaning. Increasingly, freed servants had to leave Barbados to get established, and their labor in Barbados felt like pure exploitation. A visitor in 1651 wrote that servants served for four years; at the moment of freedom, the servant was supposed to receive "(which he hath dearly earned) 10£ Sterling or the value of it in goods." The writer added sardonically, "if his Master be so honest as to pay it." The implication was that dishonest masters could get by with sending servants away to fend for themselves with nothing.⁵⁶

The situation of English servants in Barbados partook of some of the attributes of slavery; for many it was not even nominally voluntary. Samuel Hartlib, who gathered and disseminated news and information, wrote in his diary in 1653 that "One Barker in the Minorites as I take it is much soliciting the transplantations of condemned Thieves or Felons. And there is a Court of Judicature in every County to be erected for it. . . . One Coole having robbed the Post and so condemned to be hanged, would not accept of a reprieve, but rather chose to be executed than to be sent into the Plantation of Barbados."⁵⁷

By the time Ligon's book was published in 1657, England's puritan Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell had sent thousands of captured Royalists, even some of great age and high social status, to servitude in the West Indies. Those who disapproved of this policy spoke of prisoners being

55. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 52–53. Jill Sheppard demonstrates that later writers misconstrued Ligon's account to make it a rebellion by slaves rather than servants in "The Slave Conspiracy That Never Was," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXXIV (1974), 190–97.

56. Anon., "Breife Discription of the Ilande of Barbados," 44–45. See Hilary McD. Beckles, "Plantation Production and White 'Proto-Slavery': White Indentured Servants and the Colonisation of the West Indies, 1624–1645," *The Americas*, 41 (1985), 21–45 and "English Parliamentary Debate on 'White Slavery' in Barbados, 1659," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXXVI (1982), 344–52.

57. Samuel Hartlib, "Ephemerides," 1653, Part 2 Ref. 28/2/54A–62A, quote 54A, Hartlib Papers 2nd ed.

"Barbadozz'd."⁵⁸ Ligon's description of the plight of servants was echoed in the transported Royalists' petition against the "merchants that deal in slaves and souls of men" who sold them in Barbados and the "unchristian and barbarous usage" they had endured. These English prisoners of war joined captives from the Irish rebellion of 1641 who had previously been shipped into servitude there. Parliament's debate on the petition brought the plight of English servants to national attention and contributed to the notion that such servitude was acceptable only for enslaved Africans.⁵⁹

Slaves, of course, lacked even the small amount of choice available to servants; their labor ended only with their deaths, and they saw their children forced into the same pattern of endless service. Henry Whistler, who was in Barbados in 1655, was impressed by the large enslaved forces held by the planters. He said a child born to an enslaved mother was reckoned to be worth £5 at birth and they grew up with no expense to the masters, who sold "them from one to the other as we do sheep."⁶⁰

Much of Ligon's attention was absorbed by the lives of the enslaved Africans and Indians and he greatly admired the community and society they built. He presented a far more complete picture of individual slaves as people than he did of English planters, and he was scornful of the

58. William Gorge spoke of prisoners being "Barbadozz'd" in a May 1655 letter intercepted by John Thurloe's intelligence network; Thomas Birch, ed., *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq; Secretary, First to the Council of State, and afterwards to the two Protectors, Oliver and Richard Cromwell*, 7 vols. (London: Printed for the executor of the late Mr. Fletcher Gyles, Thomas Woodward and Charles Davis, 1742), III, 495, see also 548–49. John C. Appleby estimates the number of captured Royalists sent into servitude as "about 12,000"; Appleby, "English Settlement in the Lesser Antilles" in Paquette and Engerman, eds., *The Lesser Antilles*, 101.

59. "The Humble Petition of Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle, as well on the behalf of themselves as of three score and ten more freeborn people of this nation now in slavery," 1659, and debate on it is printed in Leo Francis Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments respecting North America*, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution, 1924), I, 247–63. The petition was published as *Englands slavery, or Barbados merchandize; represented in a petition to the high court of Parliament, by Marcellus Rivers and Oxenbridge Foyle gentlemen, on behalf of themselves and three-score and ten more free-born Englishmen sold (uncondemned) into slavery: together with letters written to some honourable members of Parliament*. (London: printed in the eleventh year of Englands liberty, 1659). See also Gunkel and Handler, trans. and eds., "German Indentured Servant in Barbados in 1652: The Account of Heinrich von Uchteritz," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXXIII (1970), 91–100 and Harlow, *History of Barbados*, 117–18.

60. "Extracts from Henry Whistler's Journal of the West India Expedition," in C. H. Firth, ed., *The Narrative of General Venables* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), 146.

planters' policies toward those who labored for them. Ligon was particularly incensed that the English refused to teach the slaves about Christianity because they believed the laws of England forbade holding Christians as slaves. Ultimately, laws were enacted stipulating that baptism would not affect an enslaved person's status.

The slaves, according to Ligon, repaid their masters with honesty and loyalty despite the treatment they received. On an island where he thought Africans outnumbered Europeans two to one, he wondered why they did not rebel. His answer was that they were never allowed to touch weapons, and "their spirits" were "subjugated" by enslavement. Most important, "They are fetched from several parts of *Africa*, who speak several languages, and by that means, one of them understands not another: For, some of them are fetched from *Guinny* and *Binny*, some from *Cutchew*, some from *Angola*, and some from the River of *Gambia*" [46].⁶¹ But their loyalty stemmed from deeper instincts, he thought. When, in a time of great food scarcity, some of the slaves plotted to burn the sugar-processing plant, others revealed the plot to the owners. These loyal slaves were given a day of no work and extra food for three days, but they refused to take the reward. When the planter enquired about their refusal, Sambo, their speaker, replied that they had acted out of a sense of justice, not for any hope of reward. Ligon took this opportunity to lament again their exclusion from Christian instruction.

61. English conceptions of African regions were hazy. "Guinney and Binney" meant Guinea and Benin. In practice, this phrase, according to P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, "encompassed the whole of the West African coast from Senegal to what is today Nigeria." "Cutchew" probably referred to Cacheo, a Portuguese post in modern-day Guinea Bissau that was a significant trading center and slave exporting port at the time. Thus "Cutchew" and the "River of Gambia," an important part of the river system on which African trade traveled, were within the broad region known as "Guinney and Binney." Angola, farther south along the west coast, was a major source of slaves for America in this period. See P. E. H. Hair and Robin Law, "The English in West Africa," in Canny, ed., *Origins of Empire*, 241–63, quote 251; John A. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 18–19, 62–63, 92, 190–205; Engel Sluiter, "New Light on the '20. and Odd Negroes' Arriving in Virginia, August 1619," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 54 (1997), 395–98; John Thornton, "The African Experience of the '20. and Odd Negroes' Arriving in Virginia in 1619," *ibid.*, 55 (1998), 421–34; and Johannes Menne Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1815* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 3, esp. 56–61. I particularly thank John Thornton for help in identifying Cutchew. Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton argue that West Central Africa predominated as a source for enslaved Africans in this period; see *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

The small number of Indians on Barbados, all of whom were brought from other locations around the Caribbean, were equally enslaved, but their knowledge of the environment made them valuable for specialized roles. Indian women prepared cassava and other foods that required local knowledge to make them safe, and the men were employed as footmen and in fishing. Servants and slaves all worked ten hours a day.⁶²

Ligon drew a contrast between the sumptuous banquets with which planters entertained each other and the poor diet of slaves and servants, who never got any meat unless cattle or horses died [37, 43]. Father Antoine Biet, a priest accompanying a party of French planters on their homeward journey from Cayenne, was in Barbados in 1654; he wrote that slaves ate meat only once a year and the rest of the time their only food was potatoes: "there is no nation which feeds its slaves as badly as the English." Like Ligon, Biet observed that servants were "not much better treated." Biet was horrified by the harsh punishments inflicted on slaves by their masters to force the pace of work or in retribution for disobeying, and he intervened to prevent one planter from mutilating a slave who had made his master angry. As early as 1648 another visitor, Beauchamp Plantagenet, reported that slaves retaliated by liberating themselves: "There are many hundred Rebel Negro slaves in the woods."⁶³

Despite his sympathy for the enslaved Africans he knew, in some passages Ligon betrayed disregard for the slaves and their treatment, and he expressed scorn for their character and notions. His perspective remained that of an English gentleman, and his highest praise was that Africans were capable of learning from him. He never considered that he might learn from them.

Sugar Society

When Ligon left Barbados in 1650, the planters' society was assuming its full form.⁶⁴ Despite his interest in mathematics, his estimate of the island's European population at 50,000 was wildly inaccurate [43]. Historians

62. Elaine G. Breslaw argues that Tituba, the slave of Samuel Parris who was one of the first three accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692, was a Guiana Indian enslaved on Barbados when Parris acquired her; *Tituba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Fantasies* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).

63. Handler, ed. and trans., "Father Antoine Biet's Voyage to Barbados," 66–67; Plantagenet, *Description of the Province of New Albion*, 5.

64. On society in mid-seventeenth-century Barbados, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640–1700* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, ch. 2; and Jack P. Greene, "Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study," in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds., *Colonial*

estimate that in 1655 the population consisted of 23,000 Europeans and 20,000 enslaved Africans; by 1673 when the second edition of Ligon's work was published, the balance had shifted, with 33,000 Africans and 21,000 Europeans.⁶⁵

Everyone who visited the island was struck by its evolving style of life. The failed French planters heading home from Cayenne with whom Father Antoine Biet traveled spent several months in Barbados in 1654. Biet described feasts in which all kinds of wines were served, after which the planters set out a bowl of brandy mixed with sugar and egg yolks, set it alight until a third was evaporated, and then spent the afternoon smoking pipes presented to them by kneeling slaves and drinking the brandy. Often, Biet wrote, the men were so drunk they could not return home, and he added: "Our gentlemen found this life extremely pleasant."⁶⁶

All visitors remarked on the planters' heavy drinking, and on how insulted inhabitants were if anyone refused their offer of hospitality, calling it "incivility." Henry Colt, who was in Barbados very early, lamented the rate of alcohol consumption there and said that in order to participate in society, he had gone from drinking ".2. drams of hot water a meal, to .30. & in few days . . . I do believe I should have been brought to the increase of .60."⁶⁷ Some argued that planters used alcohol to stimulate their appetites in the heat and because they believed it would help mend their poor digestion. Even the slaves and servants were given a dram or two of rum when they caught cold or found their "stomachs debilitated" [93].

As sugar planting became established, Barbados came to take on the attributes of a wealthy society. James Parker wrote to John Winthrop in Boston complaining of the profane way of life in Barbados and the growing differences between rich and poor. He wrote that "the common people" had such "mean estates" that they ate no meat and their bread was made of cassava, "a bread I approve not of; though it's true the rich live high."⁶⁸ Moralists were conscious of the dangers of living in such sudden wealth. In 1652 Welthean Richards wrote from New England to her son in Barbados saying that she was concerned about him because of his calling as a merchant and "because of the place you are in . . . for I know that you

Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 213–66. On Ligon's construction of this society, see Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), intro., ch. 1.

65. Beckles, "'Hub of Empire,'" 224; see also Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 55, 74–76.

66. Handler, ed. and trans., "Father Antoine Biet's Visit to Barbados," 60–62, 67.

67. Anon., "Breife Discription of the Ilande of Barbados," 44; "Voyage of Sir Henrye Colt," 66.

68. James Parker to John Winthrop, June 24, 1646, *Winthrop Papers*, V, 83–84.

meet with many temptations."⁶⁹ Some visitors were contemptuous. Henry Whistler produced a caricature that stuck, when he wrote that Barbados was "the Dunghill whereon England doth cast forth its rubbish." He alleged that the ladies in their fine clothes had been whores in England and the wealthy planters were rogues. The inhabitants were unworthy of this island, "one of the Richest Spots of ground" in the world.⁷⁰

Visitors in Barbados at the time Ligon was writing were all struck by the extravagance of the great planters and the sums they spent on clothes, feasts, and houses. Biet wrote that they "lived like little princes."⁷¹ But, while noting such opulence, observers agreed with Ligon that the luxury was all on the surface. The planters did not use their resources to arrange the material circumstances of their lives for maximum ease and style, but lived uncomfortably in poorly designed buildings. Ligon repeatedly wrote of the many intelligent house designs he drew up while he lived in Barbados, ones in which planters could live in comfort, with their windows open to the cooling breezes that blew constantly and shaded by groves and lines of trees. But, although his clients saw the sense in them and wanted such beautiful and commodious residences, when they thought about diverting resources from the sugar works to build them, "they fall back, and put on their considering caps" [42].

Ligon also bemoaned the planters' lack of interest in music and all the attributes of the cultured life. Neglect stemmed partly from the realities of the hot, humid environment. Fabrics and pictures deteriorated through mildew and mold, and other artifacts of refinement were destroyed by insects and rats. But the planters also seemed sunk in a kind of *ennui* from which they had difficulty extricating themselves. Ligon presented humorously the spectacle of planters so drunk and bored that they set up elaborate wagers involving the length of time required for ants to clear the corpses of their fellows from the sugar puddle the planters had made on a table to trap them.

Barbados in the Empire

Governor Philip Bell, with the support of his council, tried to avoid bringing the bitter divisions of civil war England into Barbados. When called on by an official commission to declare for the parliamentary side in 1646, the

69. Welthean Richards to John Richards, March 20, 1652, *Winthrop Papers*, VI, 266–67.

70. "Henry Whistler's Journal," 146. Caricature of West Indian hospitality continued as a prominent theme throughout the colonial period; see Roger N. Buckley, "The Frontier in the Jamaican Caricatures of Abraham James," *The Yale University Library Gazette*, 58 (1984), 152–62.

71. Handler, ed. and trans., "Father Antoine Biet's Visit to Barbados," 67–69.

planters “desired to be spared a little till things be settled.”⁷² But choice could not be put off forever. In 1649 the English Civil War had ended with parliament victorious; Charles I was executed, and Oliver Cromwell headed the new English Commonwealth. As news of these events filtered across the Atlantic, the colonies found themselves in the awkward position of having to take sides formally. Governor Bell resisted calls either to recognize the Commonwealth as the legitimate government of England or to denounce the king’s execution as treason and proclaim Charles II the rightful monarch as Virginia, Bermuda, Antigua, and Maryland had done. Ligon departed Barbados on the eve of a political crisis. He boarded his ship on April 15, 1650, and by the end of that month, Royalists, led by Ligon’s friend Humphrey Walrond, engineered a “coup” on April 29, which succeeded in forcing Bell to proclaim Charles II on May 3.⁷³

The Barbados Royalists’ plans to expropriate and punish the planters who opposed them were foiled by the arrival of a new governor, Francis, Lord Willoughby. Although he was a Royalist, Willoughby adopted a conciliatory stance as governor and removed Walrond from all authority. However, according to an August 1651 letter by planter Giles Silvester, whose brother Constant had been banished, the reign of terror continued for those who adhered to the Independent, or puritan, party.

Whatever accommodation had been made in Barbados, Oliver Cromwell and the parliament ruled in England, and banished puritan planters now made their voices heard in London. Nicholas Foster published his account of *A Briefe Relation of the Late Horrid Rebellion Acted in the Island Barbadas, in the West-Indies*, which appeared in September 1650. Parliament moved immediately, placing an embargo on goods from the offending colonies. Confusion was brought to an end by a parliamentary fleet under the command of Sir George Ayscue, which took the island in 1652. Barbados was brought firmly into the orbit of the English government. Prominent Royalists among the planters left Barbados for other locations around the Caribbean.⁷⁴

72. James Parker to John Winthrop, June 24, 1646, *Winthrop Papers*, V, 84.

73. See Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Caribbean in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), esp. ch. 3; for her description of the events of 1650 as a “coup,” see 93; Robert M. Bliss, *Revolution and Empire: English Politics and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1990), 58–65, 86–91; and Sarah Barber, “Power in the English Caribbean: The Proprietorship of Lord Willoughby of Parham,” in L. H. Roper and B. van Ruymbeke, eds., *Constructing Early-Modern Empires: Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World, 1500–1750* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 189–212.

74. Giles Silvester’s “Letter from Barbados By the Way of Holland Concerning the Condition of Honest Men There, 9th Aug. 1651,” addressed to his father, is

Barbados had always had a reputation for toleration in religion, as long as groups did not attempt to proselytize or stir up controversy. After the upheavals of the 1650 coup, the planters received a promise of religious toleration from Ayscue, and quiet diversity reigned during the rest of the 1650s. Henry Whistler, who was in Barbados in 1654, reported that “they have that Liberty of conscience which we so long have in England fought for,” but, he added, “they do abuse it.” Father Antoine Biet, in the same year, believed that the island contained a large number of Roman Catholics, including enslaved Africans converted by former Portuguese masters, who kept their religious allegiance secret, but longed for a priest to minister to them. He said they kept their religion “the best they can.” While they were in the island, the French party with Biet held religious services in their own plantation, and Biet wrote that as long as these were private, “no one bothers with what one is doing.” Jews were also tolerated; the key was not to be “conspicuous in public.” Calvinism was the only officially recognized form of Christianity, Biet wrote, but he thought the planters were not much interested in religion. Like Ligon, he was disgusted that “the masters never think of their slaves’ souls.”⁷⁵

The advent of sugar cultivation made the Caribbean islands the most desirable American lands because of the riches they brought to the planters and to England. In the middle of the 1650s, long-dormant hopes for sweeping the Spanish from the region and diverting the islands’ riches to England took on new life. Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell called on the tradition of the great Elizabethans such as Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake and revived their dreams of a great Protestant English empire. Promoters portrayed the Spanish as bullies who exploited Indians and Africans alike, and argued that they were really weak and would be easily toppled by honest and forthright English men who would be welcomed as liberators.

published in Harlow, ed., *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana*, 48–53. Ayscue’s letter describing the surrender of Barbados, together with a letter from Thomas Modyford, were read to the House of Commons on April 23, 1652; see *Journals of the House of Commons From August the 15th 1651, to March the 16th 1659, Re-printed by Order of the House of Commons*. (London, 1813), VII, 124. Father Antoine Biet met a woman whose husband, “one of the most influential people” in Barbados, had fled to found a plantation in Surinam; Handler, ed. and trans., “Father Antoine Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 62–63.

75. “Whistler’s Journal,” 146; Handler, ed. and trans., “Father Antoine Biet’s Visit to Barbados,” 61–63, 67–69. On the modes by which Roman Catholics maintained their religious lives in Protestant English colonies, see Jenny Shaw, “Island Purgatory: Irish Catholics and the Reconfiguring of the English Caribbean, 1650–1700,” unpub. PhD diss., New York University, 2008.

Unfortunately for the English, they believed their own propaganda and sent out an inadequate and poorly supplied armada. Barbadians were outraged when the fleet's commanders tried to make up their deficiencies by seizing supplies and signing on men on their island. The great prize, Hispaniola (modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), eluded the English, and the forces limped on to Jamaica, which was finally won after thousands of men had died, most from disease and dehydration.⁷⁶

Ligon's book, published in 1657, pointed the way to the future. English-grown sugar from Barbados was just beginning to make an impact on the English market in the mid-1650s, and Jamaica was destined to surpass it.⁷⁷ Ligon's descriptions and diagrams provided both the guidance for creating sugar works and the assurance that they would be successful. Thomas Modyford certainly recognized the possibilities; he sold his Barbados plantation and moved to Jamaica as royal governor in the early 1660s, where he became the richest planter in the English Caribbean.⁷⁸

After Barbados

Richard Ligon completed *A True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbadoes* in prison.⁷⁹ He was imprisoned for debt in the Upper Bench prison (known as the King's Bench prison under the monarchy) on St. Margaret's Hill in Southwark, London, on November 18, 1652, and the "actions" against him were for £500. Imprisonment for debt was a growing practice in England as a way of forcing debtors or their families to pay creditors. Creditors could get their debtors imprisoned, but could not seize their property in land. The prisoners had to pay the jailers for their lodging, and were responsible for buying their own food. In the daytime, huge prisons like the Upper Bench resembled public squares, with hordes of visitors and tradesmen going in and out catering to the prisoners' needs. We know the date of Ligon's imprisonment and the amount for which he was liable because the marshal of the Upper Bench, Sir John Lenthall, took a census of all the prisoners in May 1653. His list included people who had been there since the early 1630s; women as well as men were among the inmates,

76. Pestana, *English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution*, ch. 5, and Karen Ordahl Kupperman, "Errand to the Indies: Puritan Colonization from Providence Island through the Western Design," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLV (1988), 70-99.

77. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, 37-46.

78. On Modyford's career, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 81-82.

79. An exchange of letters with Bishop Brian Duppa included in the first edition of his *Historie of Barbadoes* indicated that Ligon had written a draft of the book by mid-1653.

and knights, lords, and earls also appeared on the list. The overwhelming majority of prisoners were there for debt.⁸⁰

Not only had he lost his property in the fen drainage project, but Ligon also believed he was the victim of fraud perpetrated by his cousins and former associates: "I am now cast in Prison, by the subtle practices of some, whom I have formerly called Friends" [121]. Ligon brought suit against Jane Berkeley, Sir William Killigrew, and Edward Nosworthy in the Court of Chancery in 1652 and he also stated his case in a pamphlet, *Severall Circumstances to prove that Mistris Jane Berkeley and Sir William Killigrew have combined together to defraud me of an estate left unto me by Henry Killigrew, Esq; for payment of his debts, for which I lye now in prison* (1654).⁸¹

In the pamphlet and his court materials, Ligon asserted that he had been appointed executor for Henry Killigrew. As part of the process, he had assumed Killigrew's debts and in turn Killigrew had deeded two properties to him so that outstanding debts could be paid at his death. Ligon had done this many times before, but nothing went according to plan in this case. For one thing, Henry Killigrew had been, like Ligon, on the wrong side in the Civil War. But Ligon also argued that his cousins had nefariously moved to get control of Henry's property when Ligon had been in "foreign parts, That is to say into some parts of the West Indies." The result was Ligon's imprisonment in 1652.⁸² Someone wrote the date 1655 in the margin of his court papers, which may indicate when he was released, presumably through a court judgment in his favor. In his will, "written with my own hand" in July 1659, Ligon mentioned the "greate sums of money" he owed to "several persons which at present I am no ways able to pay."⁸³

Ligon continued to have hopes for his fenland property for the rest of his life. When he died in 1662 he left the estate he still hoped to reclaim in the Lincolnshire fens to Edward Berkeley, the cousin who took him into his home in Pill, Somerset, and cared for him during his final illness,

80. *A List of all the Prisoners In the Upper Bench Prison, remaining in Custody the third of May, 1653. Delivered in by Sir John Lenthall* (London: Livewell Chapman, 1653), 17.

81. Jane Berkeley was the sister of Sir William Berkeley, the governor of Virginia. Sir William Killigrew, the playwright, was the son and heir of Sir Robert Killigrew, for whom Ligon had been executor; the Berkeleys, Killigrews, and Lignons were cousins. I thank Warren Billings for his help in identifying Jane Berkeley. On Sir William, see Vander Motten, *Sir William Killigrew*.

82. Ligon's suit and the Chancery Court's order, with replies from Jane Berkeley Davis and John Davis, Sir William Killigrew, and Edward Nosworthy, are in the British National Archives, NA C10 46 116, 1-6. I thank Sir John Baker and Kevin Arlyck for guidance in interpreting this case.

83. British National Archives, PROB II/308.

including directions for its sale to his “best advantage” to pay his debts, with the “surplusage” going to Berkeley and his wife. Edward Berkeley left the still-unclaimed lands in the Lindsey Level to his son.⁸⁴

Ligon's Relationship to Other Authors

As with many authors of his time, Ligon borrowed from the work of others. His discussion of the classical architect and writer Vitruvius and the principles of architecture was drawn directly from Sir Thomas Wotton's 1624 book, *The Elements of Architecture*. And Wotton said of himself in his own book's preface: “I am but a gatherer and disposer of other mens stuff, at my best value.”⁸⁵

Ligon made clear that the large pull-out map that was one of his book's major contributions also involved borrowing another man's work. Ligon's map reproduced one created by Captain John Swan in 1638, which had been seized by governor Henry Huncks and taken to England. Ligon tells us that he interviewed Swan, “the ancientest, and most knowing Surveyor” on the island [26]. So closely did Ligon's map follow Swan's that the names of plantation owners on it are those of 1638; Ligon did not add the great owners of his own time in Barbados. Ligon did add the drawings of camels, pigs, donkeys, and cattle, and the dramatic scene of a planter on horseback pursuing and shooting at an African. Both Swan and Ligon estimated the island's length and breadth, and both exaggerated its length. Swan put the length at twenty-eight miles, which Ligon accepted, but the scale of miles Ligon included on the map would have made the island thirty-two miles long, too much by one-third.⁸⁶

Ligon mentioned in his first edition that he had done “some pieces of Limning” of Barbados flora and fauna. He wrote that he had intended to make a full set of watercolor illustrations of his Barbados experience, but had been forced to give it up in prison and was reduced to black-and-white illustrations, which he characterized as “a piece of wild Grottesco, or loose extravagant Drolory.”⁸⁷

84. *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, ed. Green, I, 1321–22; *Calendar of the Committee for Advance of Money*, II, 803; British National Archives, PROB II, 308. See Ligon, *The Ligon Family* and Campbell, “Richard Ligon.”

85. *The Elements of Architecture, Collected by Henry Wotton Knight, from the best Authors and Examples* (London: John Bill, 1624), 30–33. I thank Joel Budd for bringing this to my attention.

86. Tony Campbell, *The Printed Maps of Barbados from the Earliest Times to 1873*, The Map Collectors' Circle No. 21 (London, 1965); Campbell, “Richard Ligon,” 143–47. I thank Frederick Smith for advice on Ligon's map.

87. Ligon, *A True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbadoes* (London, 1657), sig. a. Limning is painting in watercolor.

Publication

After his release from prison Ligon apparently resumed his life among London's cultural elite. In 1656 he was included in the list of “Principal Benefactors” to the collection of curiosities and plants from around the world assembled by the two John Tradescants, father and son, and displayed in their museum, known as The Ark.⁸⁸ And circumstances soon improved for publication of his book with the capture of Jamaica in 1655. The latter part of his book may have been added to meet the demand of prospective planters; it offers an eleven-page how-to manual on the financing, stocking, and setting up of functioning sugar plantations [108–18]. He also inserted large pull-out diagrams of the sugar works with instructions on their operation. The overall effect is of a prospectus for investment in the Jamaica project.

A True and Exact Historie of the Island of Barbadoes was considered an important book in its own day and left a lasting literary mark. As it was published, a group of men interested in natural science, including writers such as John Evelyn, were coming together to pool knowledge and encourage experimentation; their activities would contribute to the organization of the Royal Society for the promotion of science and the breakthroughs that became known as the Scientific Revolution later in the century.⁸⁹ One precursor of the Royal Society was the correspondence network maintained by Samuel Hartlib; they wrote about Ligon's work in ways that indicated it was well known to all of them virtually as soon as it appeared. The Reverend John Beale, in a letter to Hartlib, lamented the lack of “some happy pen” to write descriptions of the natural world in New England and Virginia “as is Civilly exemplified in Mr Ligon's Barbados.” Only someone with Ligon's background could match his accomplishment: “Had He not been completely educated for the use of the pencil, music, Architecture, Cookery, games of all sorts, as well for . . . Recreations as for Seriousness, He could never have given us such a lustrous account of all things civil, natural, artificial.”⁹⁰ Several of Hartlib's correspondents wrote about Ligon's recipe

88. *Museum Tradescantium: Or A Collection of Rarities. Preserved At South-Lambeth near London by John Tradescant* (London: John Grismond, 1656), the list of benefactors occurs after page 179.

89. For Evelyn's mention of Ligon's work, see *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. Guy de la Bédoyère (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell Press, 1995), entry for August 19, 1668, 168.

90. John Beale to Hartlib, December 7, 1658, Ref. 51/39A-40B, quotes 39A-B, Hartlib Papers; John Beale to Hartlib, December 21, 1658, Ref. 51/51A-54B, quote 53A, *ibid.* I thank Walter Woodward for bringing these references to my attention. The Reverend John Beale was a well-known science writer of his day and a member of the Royal Society. Beale outlined the kind of information the Royal Society wanted about the mainland colonies in a letter to Henry Oldenburg of

for curing "the stone," including Johan Morian, who wrote in German.⁹¹ The second edition of Ligon's history, reproduced here, was published in 1673 after his death, indicating that the first edition had sold out. The next year, a French translation appeared in Henri Justel's *Recueil de Divers Voyages Faits en Afrique et en l'Amérique*.

By the opening of the eighteenth century, opinion of Ligon's contribution was more mixed. John Oldmixon considered him *passé*. As he put it, "Ligon is old."⁹² Stressing his own examination of every informant and manuscript source he could find for his *British Empire in America*, Oldmixon asserted that Ligon's description of the island and the sugar works were outdated. Oldmixon never went to the islands; he had family business connections in Barbados and derived much of his information from them. On the other hand, Sir Hans Sloane, who was in Jamaica in the late 1680s at the beginning of his medical career and whose lifetime of collecting formed the foundation of the British Museum, referred to Ligon's work constantly in his *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*, published in two volumes in 1707 and 1725. Sloane's many "Ligon tells us" references were to plants and animals and their uses, demonstrating that for those interested in natural history, Ligon continued to be invaluable.

History forced Richard Ligon into a whole new career as an author. In normal times he would have lived out his life in London attending to the business affairs of his relatives, visiting the theater, playing music with his friends, and dying in obscurity. Two developments came together to change all this: civil war in England and the opening of possibilities across the Atlantic. The first forced him to embark on a career in the second. And in Barbados Ligon found an entirely new line of endeavor as an interpreter of this world that was so novel to him and to his readers, and as a guide to English enterprise abroad. Had he not been forced to emigrate at a time in his life when retirement beckoned, we would have been deprived of one of

the richest books about the momentous changes taking place in the English Caribbean as sugar cultivation and the slave system on which it was based became established.

August 29, 1668; A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall, eds., *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, 13 vols. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965-86), V, 28-33.

91. "The Cure of the Stone Described by Richard Ligon's History of the Island of Barbados, Pag: 118. 119. London: 1657," Ref. 55/4/1A-1B; Johann Morian to Hartlib, in German, June 22, 1657, Ref. 42/2/10A-11B. Other cures were mentioned in Ref. 14/5/34A-35B, 27/1/4A-B, 55/4/3A-6B, 55/4/15A-B, 55/4/18A-19B, 55/4/23A-B, 60/4/1A-2B, 60/4/6A-11BF.

92. John Oldmixon, *The British Empire in America, containing the history of the discovery, settlement, progress and present state of all the British colonies, on the continent and islands of America*, 2 vols. (London, 1708), I:xv; Sloane, *A voyage to the islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica*, 2 vols. (London: John Nicholson, Benjamin Tooke, Richard Parker, and Ralph Smith, 1707, 1725).