his feelings, placing blacks outside the boundaries of his concern. If he had lived longer, he might have been forced to modify his views. The rise of abolitionism and the advent of sympathetic responses to slave suffering would force slaveholders to confront, in ways Thistlewood did not have to do, the question of how civilized people could be indifferent to the pain they inflicted on slaves.

TREVOR BURNARD,
MASTERY, TYRANNY
& DESIRE

chapter five

Weapons of the Strong and Responses of the Weak

Thistlewood's War with His Slaves

There is not one planter who has not seen with concern the daring walk of my negroes. . . . What safety will three or four whites have among one or two hundred men, whose courage will be strengthened by the support you give them? My cause in this matter becomes the cause of every *colon*. . . . The unhappy condition of the Negro leads him naturally to detest us. It is only force and violence that restrains him; he is bound to harbor an implacable hatred in his heart, and if he does not visit upon us all the hurt of which he is capable it is only because his readiness to do so is chained down by terror; so, if we do not make his chains as proportionate to the dangers that we run with him, if we let loose his hatred from the present state in which it is stifled, what can prevent him from attempting to break the chains? The bird locked in his cage profits from the slightest negligence to escape. I dare to say that our negroes lack only sufficient courage or resolution to buy their freedom with the blood of their masters. Just one step can enlighten them about what they have the power to undertake. . . . It is not the fear and equity of the law that forbids the slave from stabbing his master, it is the consciousness of absolute power that he has over his person. Remove this bit, he will dare everything.—Speech of Nicolas Lejeune, a coffee planter in Plaisance, St. Domingue, to the Superior Council of Le Cap, 1788, defending himself on a charge that he had tortured to death four slave women by burning them

"However They May Disguise It, [Slaves] Hate Their Masters and Wish Them Destroyed"[1]

One Saturday in late March 1765, Thistlewood's nephew John, a young white servant, decided to spend an afternoon shooting and fishing. He never returned. A search party was formed, which found a hat and an overturned canoe. The next day, his body was discovered floating in the river. Flanders, a slave, made a coffin, and John's distraught kinsman read prayers over him and buried him. Another white man and two male slaves were in attendance. The next day, Thistlewood wrote in his diary that he divided his kinsman's "old cloaths" between a fellow white servant, two slaves who had retrieved his body from the river, and Flanders. He noted, "I feel Strangely, pain all over me and can eat nothing etc." Yet not everyone on the estate mourned John Thistlewood's death. Four days after the funeral, Thistlewood wrote in his journal that "Last Night between 8 and 9 O'Clock heard a Shell Blow on the River, and afterwards in the Night 2 guns fired with a loud huzza after each, on the River against our Negroe houses for joy that my Kinsman is dead, I imagine. Strange Impudence."[2] Here was one of those rare occasions when the hidden transcript of a subordinate group suddenly became public.[3] Here the artifice that prevented slaves from speaking their own minds was dropped. Thistlewood was made aware once more of a fact he had known very well for most of his fifteen-year residence in Jamaica: the relationship between him and his slaves and between all whites and all blacks was an undeclared war, always likely to erupt, as it had done in May and June 1760, into sudden violence.

Whites were in an extremely precarious situation in mid-eighteenth-century Jamaica. On the one hand, they had established an awesomely productive economy in which they made enormous profits.[4] On the other hand, they made those profits within a highly distorted social structure that included a mass of exploited, brutalized, and resentful African slaves. The result was a society in which fear was, as the historian Bryan Edwards argued, "the leading principle upon which the government is supported."[5] Although, as Edwards noted, a "sense of that absolute coercive necessity which . . . supersedes all questions of right" was evident in "all countries where slavery is allowed," fear was much more firmly established in Jamaica than elsewhere. Africans outnumbered Europeans by a ratio of nearly 9 to 1, and slave revolts and Maroon attacks were common.

A growing literature on slave resistance in the Caribbean points to the ever-present desire of slaves to overturn their masters' rule, the considerable solidarity and secret complicity that determined slaves were able to achieve, and the numerous methods of covert and open resistance that slaves were able to employ against their enemies.[6] The outpouring of work on the weapons the weak used to oppose their masters leads one to wonder how whites were ever able to withstand slave assaults on their property, authority, and person. Yet except in late-eighteenth-century St. Domingue, slaves never managed to overcome white rule. Although slaves contributed to their own liberation, the principal destroyer of the flourishing plantation system in the British West Indies was metropolitan authority. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider the weapons that the few but powerful whites used to prevent continual war between themselves and their slaves. Thistlewood's diaries are a useful medium through which to view the strengths and weaknesses of white power and the methods by which whites kept slaves, usually successfully, in check.

We need to do this in part because explaining the success of masters in maintaining their rule in frontier areas of Jamaica is more difficult than explaining the power of masters in places where whites were more numerically dominant, such as the American South. Peter Kolchin succinctly summarizes what slaves were up against in the antebellum American South, concluding that conditions were such "as to make organized rebellion virtually suicidal." Whites' numerical dominance and control of firepower in the South prevented violent resistance. Most slaves were Creoles with no experience of Africa or life outside slavery. They enjoyed relatively good living conditions in comparison to slaves in the West Indies. More important, they lived in small units among generally resident planters and a large, stable white population unburdened by major military conflicts between 1783 and 1861. Slaves were physically outnumbered, isolated, and economically impotent. Moreover, a resilient and enormously confident planter class, which employed a wide variety of psychological techniques to cow its bondspeople, confronted them at every turn. Increased settlement reduced slaves' ability to escape and prevented them from forming outlaw bands. Not surprisingly, revolts were few and easily suppressed. Slave rebellion was so clearly suicidal that most rational slaves knew it was pointless. By 1830, only a half-crazed visionary such as Nat Turner would embark on open rebellion and only desperate slaves careless of the future would join such a doomed attempt to overthrow white power.[7] As Eugene Genovese concludes: "The slaves of the Old South should not have to answer for their failure to mount more frequent and effective revolts; they should be honored for having tried at all under the most discouraging circumstances."[8]

Eighteenth-century Jamaica was different. The relatively large black popu-

lation posed a great threat to continued white dominance and provided a prime opportunity for oppressed slaves. As the anonymous author of *An Essay concerning Slavery and the Danger Jamaica is expos'd to from too great Number of Slaves . . .* put it, "if some Stop not be put to it [the buying of Negroes], or if better Discipline not be observed, the Island must be overrun, and ruined by its own Slaves."[9] Jamaican whites' fear of a slave revolt is palpable in the complaints they made to imperial authorities about the danger they were in, the draconian laws they passed to keep their servile population in check, and the grandiose, expensive, and ultimately unsuccessful schemes they hatched to increase white settlement in the island.[10]

"They Being Very Ripe for It"

Whites were right to be afraid. Jamaican history was punctuated by numerous slave revolts and rumors of revolt. Even though his thirty-seven years in Jamaica were a period of relative quiet,[11] Thistlewood experienced a number of revolts and near revolts in Jamaica. No revolts occurred in his first decade in the island, despite considerable worry in 1751 that there would be "an insurrection of the Negroes; they being very ripe for it, almost all over the Island."[12] But in 1760, Thistlewood found himself in the middle of one of the largest revolts ever staged in Jamaican history—Tackey's revolt. Whites in Westmoreland had to contend with a well-organized revolt that nearly replaced European rule in the island with an African kingdom. Thistlewood never came so close to disaster again, but he noted at least three other rebellions in his diaries: one in 1765 in St. Mary's; one in northeastern Westmoreland, not far from his estate, in October 1766, during which he participated in a "slave rebel hunt"; and an islandwide revolt, concentrated in the northern parish of Hanover, in July 1776. To these actual revolts should be added potential rebellions, such as the foiled attempt of urban slaves to burn down Kingston in 1769, and the fear of revolt, such as the panic following the hurricane of 1780, when local leaders asked the Jamaican House of Assembly for a sloop to provide protection against "exceeding turbulent and daring" slaves.[13] In addition, the day-to-day business of running a plantation was fraught with danger. Individual slaves occasionally murdered their masters and mistresses, or at least were rumored to have done so. In 1760 and again in 1764, Thistlewood reported rumors of slaves killing their masters.[14]

Severe penalties were meted out to slaves who dared to strike whites, as we have seen. Not many slaves were willing to risk such punishment, and conse-

quently, most slaves put up with whatever provocation whites gave them. Yet the fact that a number of slaves were prepared to resort to violence was sufficient to give white Jamaicans pause. Thistlewood found it necessary to carry a stick, and sometimes a gun, for protection. As early as 3 August 1750, he was confronted by a slave who "pull'd out his knife" when apprehended gathering fruit. On several occasions in his early years on the island, he was forced to defend himself from slave attacks by knocking down recalcitrant and hostile slaves.[15] Thistlewood often found slaves on his property who were carrying guns and endeavored to take the guns away.[16] In January 1752, he noted that Ambo very nearly had an accident with a gun that "our Negroes brought with them from Salt River, with intent to Shoot the Monkey yt troubles their grounds."[17] Thistlewood helped train the first slave he purchased, Lincoln, to become an excellent shot. He often sent Lincoln out shooting, as in October 1758, when he "Sent Lincoln into the Morass with a gun, [and] he Shott a whistling duck."[18] Thistlewood did this despite laws that prevented blacks from carrying arms. Allowing armed slaves to wander the countryside posed a constant danger to whites. In March 1761, for example, two runaway slaves with guns who were pretending to be Maroons came to a Mr. Torrents, who "suspecting them to be Rebells, order'd one off them to be Seized, upon which he resisted, killed one off Mr. Torrents dogs with his Cutlass, snap't his piece at Mr. Torrent, and made his escape from 4 Armed Negroes."[19]

Thistlewood realized as soon as he arrived that whites faced physical danger every day from their slaves. Any doubts he had about the perilousness of his situation were erased in late December 1752 when he encountered a runaway, Congo Sam, on a narrow causeway near a morass. Attempting to capture Sam, Thistlewood met with spirited resistance. Sam tried to "chop" him with a machete and drove Thistlewood into the morass, declaring, "I will kill you, I will kill you now." Thistlewood called for assistance, but no one responded, although many slaves were watching. He was only just able to hold the blade while Sam retained his grip on the stock or handle. After a fight lasting perhaps twenty-five minutes, Thistlewood overcame the runaway slave and persuaded a watching slave to help him. It was a very close call, as Thistlewood realized at once. What was most disturbing was that the attack was probably premeditated. Thistlewood recalled a conversation a few days earlier with Quashie, a slave who had told him "(before all the Negroes) that I should not eat much more meat here!" In all probability, Thistlewood speculated, many of the slaves "knew that Sam had an intent to murder me when we should meet, by what I heard them speak one day in the cookroom when I was in the back piazza read-

ing." The premeditated nature of the event was confirmed by the slaves' unwillingness to assist him. London, the slave who eventually did help him, was particularly suspect. Thistlewood believed that London loosened Sam's bonds after his capture in order to join with the runaway against the overseer and had only desisted when he heard two white gentlemen riding by. Thistlewood believed that his slaves wanted to kill him.[20]

Weaknesses Inherent in White Rule

The uncertainty of whites' position in the island was heightened by their profound lack of knowledge about Africans and African society. One of the conceits that many whites had was that slaves were hopelessly divided by language, ethnicity, and status in the plantation system. Charles Leslie noted that slaves were brought to the island from a number of different countries and that, consequently, they "cannot converse freely; or, if they could, they hate another so mortally, that some of them would rather die by the Hands of the English, than join with other Africans in an Attempt to shake off their Yoke." In addition to such divisions between African-born slaves, Leslie argued, Creoles—slaves born in Jamaica—had little to do with slaves brought to the island.[21] The latter claim had some small truth to it. Until the early nineteenth century, few Creoles participated in largely African-led revolts.[22] But Leslie was deluded in thinking that slaves lived together as mutually uncomprehending and hostile individuals—perhaps it was for this reason that Thistlewood and his friends felt that Leslie was such an unreliable witness.[23] West African societies had sufficient commonalities, especially linguistic commonalities, to enable slaves to communicate intelligibly with one another and share a common cosmological understanding.[24] Moreover, the nature of the slave trade and the structure of the slave community on large plantations ensured that West Indian slaves lived among sufficiently large concentrations of their fellow countrymen to allow many African traditions to be transplanted to the New World, including language. Bilingualism and multilingualism were common in Africa. Jamaica was probably multilingual from its colonization, and linguists argue that a Gold Coast language, Twi-Asante, very quickly became a lingua franca among slaves, in addition to Creole English.[25]

Olaudah Equiano in his autobiography confirms the relative ease by which slaves from different regions of West Africa were able to communicate with one another. Equiano was kidnapped in 1756 and sent to the coast from his native

Ibo homeland; during this journey, he recalled, he passed through "many strange lands" where he met new people who "resembled our own in manner, customs, and languages." Although initially he was not able to understand the language of these strangers, spending a short time together led to mutual comprehension. Arriving in Barbados in a cargo of slaves with "Africans of all languages," including slaves who he thought were "from a distant part of Africa," he had little difficulty "convers[ing] with different Africans."[26] Although some hereditary tribal animosities remained after transplantation to the New World, the common experience of slavery and slaves' subjugation to European masters bound slaves together more effectively than most whites realized.[27] The degree of unity among slaves and the danger that unity posed to whites who knew little and understood less of African customs and language can be seen in Thistlewood's encounter with Congo Sam.[28] At a crucial moment in his fight with Sam, Sam called out to two slaves, neither of whom was from the Congo, "in his language," which everyone except Thistlewood understood. Unsurprisingly, Thistlewood "was much afraid of them" and their collusion.[29]

Whites' difficulties were compounded by their need to allow slaves considerable freedom: to move around the countryside unsupervised, carry guns, and gather at slave markets on Sunday where they traded, drank, and plotted. In short, whites allowed slaves to violate most of the laws that were meant to guarantee whites' safety on a daily basis. Thistlewood's diaries are full of slave derelictions of slave laws.[30] He supplied alcohol to slaves, allowed favored slaves to travel when they pleased to neighboring plantations and Sunday markets, and trained slaves to be highly proficient shots. He did so in order to provide food for his plantation and acquire additional income. Nevertheless, whites' latitude toward slaves caused problems. He dealt daily with slaves found wandering on his estate, slaves catching crabs and fishing, slaves stealing property, and slaves quarreling with slaves under his control. On 3 August 1750, for example, Thistlewood "Catch'd a Negroe fellow gathering fruits in ye Penn, he pull'd out his knife and refus'd to give account of himself for some time—he belongs to Salt Spring, his name is Duke, I sent him home and wrote to Mr. Clarke to punish him." Still new in Jamaica, he was unsure whether he had acted properly, but this type of episode happened so frequently that he soon perfected his response. Believing himself absolutely in control on his own estate, Thistlewood seldom left punishment to others, as he did with Duke, but whipped first, then asked questions later. When one of his slaves brought a slave of Nathaniel Herring's to Thistlewood, Thistlewood gave the slave a sound thrashing, commenting that

the man was "Notorious for taking Money, Crabbs etc from our Negroes."[31] Such determined exercise of independent authority by Thistlewood did not endear him to fellow members of the master class, as we have seen.

Slaves were quick to exploit such tensions. They were formidable enemies, able to organize and carry out revolts. Whites knew they had to be prepared to meet slave violence with superior violence of their own. A well-regulated militia was thus essential, but the effectiveness of local militias was uncertain.[32] Governors who had been military men dismissed Jamaica's militia as woefully deficient. Governor Robert Hunter, a "brave old soldier," lamented in 1730 that "our indifferent Militia" was comprised mostly of white servants "of whom much the greater part is not to be trusted with arms."[33] The Jamaican militia was unlikely to strike fear in invading regular troops or fierce Maroon guerrillas. It may have been sufficiently awe-inspiring, however, to cow recently arrived Africans. That, at least, was what Leslie argued, stating that when Africans "see the muster and exercise, there can be no Terror in the World greater than what they lay under at that time." This terror only applied to African-born slaves: "'Tis true that the Creolian Negroes are not of this Number: They all Speak English and are so far from fearing a Muster, that they are very familiar with it and can exercise extremely well."[34]

Thistlewood took his militia duties seriously. Between December 1752, when he was first called to exercise with the local militia, and August 1758, the parish held forty-three musters. He went to all but five, being sick once, being excused two times, and sending a substitute on another occasion. Absences were taken seriously. When Thistlewood did not attend a 19 October 1753 exercise and gave no excuse for his absence, he was fined, much to his annoyance. Exercise was more than just an occasion for men in an isolated rural area to socialize. Arms were checked regularly, and officers and men were expected to do duty when, as happened in 1756, 1757, 1760, 1776, 1780, and 1781, the island was placed under martial law. In November and December 1756, for example, Thistlewood was called to exercise eight times. On three of these occasions, he had to stay all day and stand guard for hours at the courthouse door. On Sunday, 12 December 1756, the Westmoreland militia put on a more elaborate display than usual. After being on guard at Savanna-la-Mar, Thistlewood marched with the rest of the troops to church, where he "heard Mr. Ramsay preach a very good sermon" and then was feted at Colonel James Barclay's house before "marching to the Bay, with Beat of drum and Colours flying." Thistlewood's morale was boosted by the day's events. Slaves watching this show of force and display of white unity also may have been impressed or awed. Yet a moment's

reflection would have assured a thoughtful slave that the white militia was not that impressive. No matter how well disciplined and well trained white militiamen were (and Thistlewood was not alone in being an accomplished marksman: he and his friends often had shooting competitions in which they sharpened their skills), resident whites were too few in number to be able to overcome a body of blacks bent on overthrowing white rule. Whites needed allies. In Westmoreland Parish, these allies came in two forms—Maroons and British soldiers. Neither Maroons nor soldiers, however, were entirely reliable.

Maroons formed a semi-autonomous African community in the interior of western Jamaica. Resolute adversaries of white rule for the first third of the eighteenth century, Maroons and whites agreed in 1739 to an often uneasy truce in which both sides recognized the other's authority in their respective regions of power. Determined to preserve their rule in their own area, Maroons were relentlessly fierce, especially against runaway slaves. In 1763, Thistlewood related that "the wild Negroes (Cudjoe's I mean) lately Come up with eleven Runaways in a hut in the Mountains, kill'd three and took the rest."[35] Yet he was wary of these "wild Negroes," as he significantly called them. Maroon ferocity was extreme, even in an island that was no stranger to savagery. In 1757, whites called on the Maroons to capture a runaway slave who had murdered his own child, a white overseer, and several Maroons. The Maroons obliged, but in a chilling way. Taking "that villain Bowman" prisoner, they were carrying him to Montego Bay when, sick of Bowman's abuse, one Maroon said that Bowman "had a damned foul Mouth" and shot part of his mouth off. Another said "he had a damn'd ugly Belly" and bayoneted him. The group then cut out the man's heart, roasted it, and ate it. Whether the Maroons in fact did this—and there is no reason to suspect that they did not—is less important than the fact that Thistlewood believed them capable of such things.[36] The Maroons received a large reward, but their actions were disturbing. Was it wise to trust such savage allies? Maroons had their own agenda that sometimes coincided but sometimes clashed with what whites desired. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, as white settlement began to intrude into Maroon territory, Maroons began to reconsider their willingness to act as a police force for whites. In 1776, Thistlewood reported that Maroons might have been at the bottom of a recent uprising in Hanover.[37] By the 1790s, consensus had changed to conflict and white Jamaicans once again had to battle their most resolute internal foes.[38]

It could be expected that "wild Negroes" would have no loyalty to Europeans who held blacks in bondage. But British soldiers were only marginally more reliable. Soldiers were necessary to supplement local militias, but they

caused a great deal of trouble. In 1756, Thistlewood encountered three deserters who were refused lodgings for the night by his employer, John Cope. The soldiers, "for malice," pulled down stakes used in sugar cultivation. In 1760, in the aftermath of the great slave rebellion, Thistlewood was forced to put up a body of rangers (mostly mulattoes and blacks) for the night. After he gave them a gallon of rum, the rangers got drunk and tried to procure slave women. Thistlewood was "obliged to get out off Bed, take my pistolls and go quiet them, which Soon affected but they fought after, one against another till almost Midnight." Early in 1762, Thistlewood came under real danger from four soldiers, armed and "much in liquor," who had wounded the slave London "barbarously" and threatened to run Thistlewood through when he intervened. Thistlewood was forced to call other plantation whites to help him keep order. Thistlewood was reminded of the danger he faced from soldiers later in the year when five soldiers called on him and demanded refreshment. Thistlewood refused, believing them to be "impudent in an Extraordinary manner." He endeavored to throw the soldiers out, but one "Struck me with a Naked Masheat over my left hand and Wounded me." Such an attack was not a freak occurrence: Thistlewood recalled that an overseer named Ned Stephens had been murdered in similar circumstances.[39]

The Sources of White Dominance

The weaknesses inherent in white rule in Jamaica were only partially alleviated by the support whites received from purported allies. How, then, did whites survive? In part, of course, experienced overseers such as Thistlewood relied on well-documented day-to-day methods of social control.[40] But as important as these methods were in ensuring slaves' submission to masters' authority, they do not explain why white control over blacks was so infrequently challenged. The numerical imbalance between whites and slaves was clearly in slaves' favor, blacks hated whites, and the conditions of slavery were so obviously appalling that almost any other condition was preferable. The reasons for Europeans' safety amid great insecurity must be sought elsewhere.

One theory advanced as an explanation for continuing white dominance in the antebellum South is that whites fashioned an ideological strategy after 1750 in which paternalism and white supremacy combined to implant in blacks an assuredness of their inferiority and a willingness to accept racial subservience to whites.[41] Drew Faust has described the effectiveness of such a strategy in her

We have no likeness of either Thistlewood or his mistress Phibbah. William Blake's famous engraving of a Surinam planter and his maid or mistress gives some idea of how Thistlewood and Phibbah might have dressed. William Blake, *A Surinam Planter in His Morning Dress*, in John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five years' Expedition, against the revolted Negroes of Surinam* (London, 1793), 2:56.

exploration of how antebellum South Carolina planter James Henry Hammond sought to exert mastery over his slaves. Hammond "developed a carefully designed plan of physical and psychological control intended to eliminate the foundations of black solidarity" while attempting, with only a limited measure of success, to present himself to his slaves as "a beneficent master whose guidance and control represented the best of all possible worlds for the uncivilized and backward people entrusted to him by God."[42] Hammond was firmly convinced that Africans were an inferior race ideally suited to slavery and committed to the powerful antebellum notion of stewardship as a rule governing the behavior of superiors toward inferiors, and his theories of slave management were designed to inculcate in his slaves a sense of their master's overwhelming moral and physical authority.[43]

This explanation does not work for eighteenth-century Jamaica. Some white Jamaicans, of course, caricatured Africans as racial inferiors. The virulent racism of antebellum proslavery advocates in the American South echoed the themes developed by Jamaican Negrophobes such as Edward Long in the late eighteenth century. Long's diatribes against Africans are couched in a racial philosophy that assumed a biological basis for white supremacy.[44] Yet there were several varieties of thinking about Africans in eighteenth-century Jamaica, and it does not seem that Thistlewood shared Long's scientifically based theories about black inferiority. He uttered virtually no racial diatribe against blacks in his diaries. As discussed in chapter 4, Thistlewood was able to see Africans as humans, if distinctly inferior humans. He believed they could be excluded from polite discourse mainly because they were outside the social contract that secured individual—and exclusively white and European—rights. But he was no paternalist. He did not see himself as a "beneficent master," nor did he attempt to mask the exercise of his authority through psychological inculcations of his racial and moral superiority. He did not appeal to his slaves; he threatened them. Thistlewood's attitude toward slavery was that it was a natural condition that arose out of the power of Europeans and the powerlessness of Africans. He was, in a sense, a patriarch, but one unconstrained by any sense that his patriarchal power needed to be tempered by a recognition of reciprocal duties. He did not need to reciprocate with slaves because, as Africans, they were not part of a patriarchal familial model in which unequal social relations could be naturalized.

The clearest guide to how the racial thinking of Thistlewood and other white Jamaicans influenced their slave-management strategies is found in the commands of Richard Beckford to his Jamaican attorneys in 1754, instructions that

Thistlewood dutifully copied in full. Beckford was an enormously wealthy planter who became a British MP before dying at a young age. The proprietor of nearly 1,000 slaves, he began his instructions on the care of his charges with a lament for the state in which he forced his slaves to live. "The Unhappy Situation of a Slave," he started, "is a Circumstance that will touch every Generous Breast with a Sentiment of Compassion." After recommending that slaves be treated with "Justice and Benevolence," Beckford gave detailed instructions about the feeding and care of slaves before concluding with a reminder that "ye Success of my Plantations will chiefly depend upon your Prudent direction in governing ye Mind of my Slaves as well as exercising their bodies in a Reasonable manner." But by "governing ye Mind," Beckford did not mean the comprehensive reordering of the social and cultural world of slaves that Hammond envisioned. He did not mention altering slaves' devotion to African culture and an African cosmological worldview. Slaves were free to fashion their own culture as they saw fit or were able to do, given the strictures they were under. This indifference to the cultural practices of slaves was found not only in Beckford's schema but also in Thistlewood's daily slave-management techniques. He made no attempt, for example, to regulate how slaves worshiped and, unlike Hammond, never considered "destroying the autonomy of the slave community" as a means of forcing slaves to accede, seemingly willingly, to a master's dictates.[45] By "governing ye Mind," Beckford meant that whites were to exercise "a Steady and Temperate Government" with "a firm reliance on your Justice and Humanity." Slaves, it was assumed, were as intolerant of injustice as were whites (they were human, after all), and although their "Colour of Condition" and "want of education" suited them to be slaves, this condition was not "a reason for not treating them as Rational Beings" or for supposing that they did not have a "Sense of Injury which will dispose them to Revenge that may produce more fatal Consequences than desertion." Whites, in short, should do unto slaves as they, if slaves, would have masters do unto them.[46] White despotism, at least in the mid-eighteenth century, did not extend to psychological domination that rooted out all cultural traces of Africa.

The principal method of controlling slaves in Jamaica was through terror, as the St. Domingue planter Nicolas Lejeune argued. Terror, or naked power, was at the core of the institution of slavery. Jamaican slavery was especially brutal even by the elevated standards of New World brutality. Whites were encouraged to keep firm discipline and to punish slaves frequently and harshly. Thistlewood whipped slaves; rubbed salt, lemon juice, and urine into their wounds; made a slave defecate into the mouth of another slave and then gagged the un-

fortunate recipient of this gift; and chained slaves overnight in "bilboes" or stocks. Indeed, whites frowned on overseers and planters who were deemed to be lenient toward their slaves. In 1763, Thistlewood noted that his neighbor had dismissed an overseer because he did not discipline slaves sufficiently.[47] A more common complaint by experienced white Jamaicans, however, was that newcomers were overly rigorous in punishing slaves. In the middle of Tackey's revolt, when the danger to whites was most acute, Thistlewood commented that the new white man on the plantation, John Groves, was "in a frenzy," shooting randomly both rebel and faithful slaves. Groves may have been unhinged by the revolt because henceforth he was overly violent toward his charges, at least in the view of Thistlewood, who was himself no lax disciplinarian. In January 1761, Thistlewood was forced to reprimand his underling for being "like a Madman amongst the Negroes flogging dago, primus etc without much occasion." The reproach caused Groves to depart in protest because "he might not flogg the Negroes as he pleased: very Stubborn and resolute."[48] In short, Thistlewood was a brutal and cruel master—but he was not alone and, at least according to his own testimony, was far from being the most sadistic or tyrannical master in his area. Tyranny was the natural by-product of the transition from Europe to the savagery of a slave society. An English doctor commented on this transition in his description of the ubiquity of flogging of male slaves by Dutch women in Dutch Guiana in the 1790s: "The corporal punishment of slaves is so common that instead of exciting the repugnant sensations, felt by Europeans on first witnessing it, scarcely does it produce, in the breasts of those accustomed to the West Indies, even the slightest glow of compassion."[49]

Public punishment of slaves was equally barbaric. Persistent runaways faced bodily mutilation or execution. In March 1765, Thistlewood appeared as a witness against his slave Plato, who had been sent out with a machete to look for runaways "with a Tickett" and had then run away himself for nearly three months. Plato was found guilty and "Sentenced to have 100 lashes at 4 difft places on the Bay . . . and to have his right Ear cut off." In 1753, several of William Dorrill's slaves were tried for running away. One was hung, and two had "both ears Cropp'd, both nostrills Slitt and mark'd in both Cheeks." Whites constantly reminded slaves of the punishment they faced for committing a serious crime. After Robin was hung for running away in 1751, Thistlewood mounted his head on a pole, where it stayed as a grim reminder of white power for four months.[50] Nervous whites also punished slaves when they suspected them of plotting rebellion. Thistlewood commented in 1771 that he had heard that "Frazier's Beck, on Thursday last, tried for having a Supper and a great number of Negroes at

her house last Saturday night." Her punishment was to have "her ear Slit, 39 lashes under the gallows, and 39 again against the Long Stores."[51]

Not surprisingly, the most gruesome punishments were reserved for those slaves who had nearly brought the colony to its knees in 1760. Tackey's lieutenants suffered slow torments and lingering deaths after their revolt was quashed (Tackey fell in the rebellion itself). Over 100 slaves were executed and 500 transported, mostly to Honduras, as revenge for the murder of 60 whites and free coloreds and blacks in the revolt.[52] Executions of slaves in Westmoreland began shortly after the revolt was quelled. On 31 May, Salt River Quaw was burned to death over a slow fire, while Paradise Dover was hung. These were the two preferred methods of killing rebels, but an even more sadistic punishment—gibbeting alive—faced the principals in the revolt. The leader of the revolt in Westmoreland was Apongo, or Wager, a supposed "Prince in Guinea," who was condemned to "hang in Chains three days then be took down and burnt." Wager died before his three days on the gibbet were up, but some slaves lingered there for a considerable length of time, all of which Thistlewood carefully recorded. One slave, Cuffee, was "Jibbetted 43 hours, then took down & Burnt."[53]

In the aftermath of Tackey's revolt, Jamaican whites demonstrated remarkable unity. That unity was not always so apparent in peacetime, when whites quarreled with one another over women, work, politics, and property. Yet, on the whole, white society was remarkable for its solidarity. In many respects, whites formed the strongest and certainly the most unified tribe in the country, with remarkably few divisions between classes and ethnicities. They were unified around a number of firm rules. The first rule was a presumption of white egalitarianism, as has been outlined above, manifested principally in ostentatious hospitality. The presumption of hospitality was so strong that it served a crucial role in uniting all ranks of white society. Whites were obliged to acknowledge the special character of having a white skin in a society predicated upon white dominance. In order to protect themselves from a hostile black majority, whites needed to know that they were all members of a privileged community that also had shared communal duties.

Whites stuck together against blacks even when they had private misgivings about the behavior of individual whites. Beckford emphasized that servants should be treated with consideration and according to the laws of the land. Indeed, servants were to be considered part of an overseer's family. More concretely, Beckford insisted that "it must be laid down as an inviolable Rule never to proffer a stranger to be a Storekeeper distiller or Overseer whilst there is a

Servant in my Employ of Sufficient Abilities to fill any Vacancy yt: may happen."[54] Thistlewood followed such policies of special treatment toward white servants as much as he could. One afternoon, when out making holes to plant sugarcane, Thistlewood ordered "Lewie to flog the Negroes that were holing because they did not work." Thistlewood's subordinate, Robert Lawrence, however, countermanded the order and told Lewie "not to regard" Thistlewood. Thistlewood was irate but vented his anger at the unfortunate Lewie, whom he had flogged and demoted from his position as driver. He said nothing to Lawrence in front of the slaves, but he later informed him of the etiquette by which whites did not publicly contradict each other. Thistlewood noted: "Robert afterwards was Submissive."[55] He had absorbed a valuable lesson, one that slaves also would have observed. Slaves learned that although they might sometimes be able to play off one white against another, in the end whites would stick together, whatever provocation there might be between individuals.

Slave Acceptance of Enslavement

Nevertheless, white solidarity and the implementation of terror were not enough to keep slaves in check. If we are to understand the sources of white safety in a hostile environment, we need to examine the extent to which slaves were willing to accept their condition. Slaves may have been in a birdcage, as Lejeune opined. But if they wished to, they could always force open that birdcage and escape, as Lejeune's slaves did in the Haitian revolution. The numerical dominance of Africans in Jamaica and the limitations of whites' coercive powers meant that slaves always had it in their power to overthrow slavery, difficult though that may have been. What preserved slavery in Jamaica was that slaves accepted, albeit reluctantly and conditionally, that they were slaves and that masters had the right, or at least the capacity, to force them to do what they wanted them to do. Without some measure of consent, masters such as Thistlewood would have been unable to survive.

That slaves accepted the inevitability of their condition does not mean that they welcomed it; that slaves did not resist slavery to the full extent of their ability does not mean that they were contented. Slaves did not like being slaves. They actively resisted both slavery as a system and those aspects of enslavement they particularly disliked. An extensive body of work has made us aware of slave resistance. But slaves had much to lose if resistance was unsuccessful, as slave resistance almost always has been throughout history. One key to understanding how whites could be relatively safe in a society in which they were in great danger was the position of slaves within the plantation economy. Slaves, as Sidney Mintz and Douglas Hall argue in a seminal essay, were petty producers, wedded to an ideology of protopeasant capitalist accumulation. Slaves cultivated a large proportion of the food needs of plantations and were allotted individual provision grounds in order to achieve the planters' goal of slave-based slave maintenance. Slaves provisioned themselves and much of the white population as well. In this respect, Jamaican slaves operated within economic and social parameters that were fundamentally different from those within which slaves in Barbados and the American mainland operated. There, slaves (even those involved in local provision markets) were outside the realm of ordinary market relations: they had the "privilege" of producing garden fruits and vegetables, as Virginia tobacco planter William Tatham observed, but their efforts were not essential to the maintenance of the plantation system and the feeding of the white population. In Jamaica, the internal economy operated by slaves was crucial to maintaining the plantation system.[56]

Turning over the provisioning of slaves to slaves had two contradictory consequences. Because blacks fed themselves, theoretically they were not dependent on whites for their physical survival (although in practice the amount of food slaves eked out from provision grounds put them only at subsistence level and they still needed white help in times of famine or personal difficulty). Their provision grounds gave slaves a measure of economic independence, allowing slaves to act as if planters owned only their labor, not their lives or personalities.[57] Jamaican slaves were thus able to maintain more autonomy than slaves in the colonial American South and Barbados, where masters preferred to feed slaves from rations produced on their plantations rather than through a provision-ground system.[58] But although provision grounds liberated slaves from the economic and cultural control of their masters, they tied slaves firmly to the physical ground of the plantation and induced in them a wary conservatism typical of peasants and petty commodity producers. Planters may not have grasped all of the implications of turning over slave maintenance to slaves themselves, but they were conscious of the value this process had in reconciling slaves to their condition. They eagerly advocated the laying out of provision grounds for slaves. Beckford, for example, placed special emphasis in his instructions on the importance of provision grounds. Significantly, he discussed the need to give provision grounds to "New Negroes" not because slave production would supplement planter-provided food allowances but because it would help reconcile newly arrived Africans to their position. He insisted that new slaves be given "a little property of their own and for yt: Purpose every New Negroe must re-

ceive a gratuity in Stocks, a house built, and at least a quarter off an Acre of ground Planted in Some Species off Provisions." Slaves, in effect, were to be protopeasants, able to accumulate property while being property themselves.[59]

Nevertheless, it was not to their masters that slaves became reconciled when given provision grounds. Slaves became committed to their particular patch of ground and their particular plantation. The slaves under Thistlewood's care had little fondness for their overseer, as was evident in their rejoicing over the death of Thistlewood's nephew and their refusal to offer assistance in his fight with Congo Sam. But they were attached to the piece of land on which they lived and planted. Like most preindustrial peoples, Africans invested land, and residence on land, with a host of meanings, cultural and social as well as economic. In particular, genealogy and locality were linked. Barry Higman notes that a source of the isolation that newly arrived Africans in the New World felt was their removal from ancestral land, a process that "dislocated their linking of genealogy and locality, and the veneration of specific pieces of land."[60] Cultivating their provision grounds, which slaves considered heritable estates distributed to relatives upon their death, reconciled Africans to their dispossession and removal from Africa.[61] Slaves bitterly resented any disruption of their attachment to their land and property. In 1754, when it appeared that slaves might be moved from the Egypt estate, Thistlewood noted that there was a "Visible grief in all our Negroes, upon acct off Moving."[62] When slaves were forced to move, they usually protested vigorously. In 1784, Thistlewood arranged for the sale of fifty-three slaves of Samuel Hayward to Julines Herring. He reported that the slaves protested vociferously, declaring that "they will not go" and being "quite refractory."[63]

Slaves as Propertied Persons

The difficulty that slaves faced, however, was that their ability to control their economic production and maintain their own patch of ground was very tenuous. Slaves lived in a world of radical uncertainty, always vulnerable to attack from both inside and outside the plantation. Slave attachment to property was merely custom, not law, and was dependent on masters' sufferance. In short, slaves were capitalists without the benefit of laws protecting property and person. Whites could use their access to the mechanisms of law to take advantage of slaves' attempts to enter into market relationships. Whites could change any relationship entered into with a slave from one between buyer and seller to one

between master and slave.[64] Slaves' lack of legal protection meant they could never fully enter into a market economy. Masters' control of the laws that governed market exchange severely limited slaves' freedom to act within the market by rendering them dependent on whites' continued tolerance of their market activity. Slaves' vulnerability as propertied persons made them conservative and encouraged, on most occasions, a temporary truce between slaves and whites because whites were not only the principal predators on plantations but also sometimes the only protectors slaves had. Slaves needed white protection because they lived in a classic Hobbesian world. The long-term battle was between blacks and whites, and when the opportunity was ripe, slaves acted against whites. But in the short term, whites benefited from the temporary accommodations slaves were forced to make with whites in a white-controlled market in order to protect their property and person.

The life of a slave on a Jamaican plantation in the mid-eighteenth century was an extraordinarily difficult one. Thistlewood's diaries merely reaffirm and add a fresh gloss on the universal opinion of modern scholars that Caribbean slavery was one of the most dehumanizing systems ever devised. The work regime was debilitating. Overwork, malnutrition, accidents, harsh punishment, and disease all contributed to low fertility, high mortality, and fragile and uncertain family relationships. Masters generally did not interfere in slaves' cultural, social, and family lives, but slaves found it difficult to establish viable social and cultural practices given the hard work they were forced to endure and the remarkable flux that characterized life in eighteenth-century slave communities. Slaves came and went so frequently that it is misleading to even describe groups of of slaves as communities. Slaves were always dying or, given high white mortality rates and rapid estate turnover, being sold. Unacclimatized slaves from Africa were continually being imported to the island and placed into ever-fluctuating slave communities where they had few kin or friends to help them adapt to their frightening new world.

These traumatized and bewildered plantation slaves found that they were constantly under attack. These attacks came from three directions: from resident whites; from slaves on the same plantation; and from slaves and whites on other plantations. Thistlewood was one of the principal predators on the properties he controlled. Few days went by without Thistlewood recording that he punished a slave for some infraction or other. His subordinates and superiors did the same. What was most worrisome, from the perspective of his slaves, was the unpredictability of Thistlewood's punishments. What passed without comment

one day was viciously punished the next, depending on Thistlewood's mood. Undoubtedly, Thistlewood's slaves watched their master's moods very carefully and avoided him when they saw he was irritable.

Thistlewood's Sex Life

Slave women probably observed Thistlewood's moods very carefully. He satisfied his sexual urges by having sex with slave women, particularly those under his care. He recorded all of his sexual conquests in schoolboy Latin in his diary, and it is clear that few slave women were safe from him. He had sex with slave women from early in the morning to late in the evening and in places that ranged from his dwelling place to cane fields to curing houses to slave houses. He did not have sex in Jamaica for four months after his arrival, although he learned on arrival that white men had free access to black women. He does not explain, of course, why he waited so long to avail himself of sexual gratification. But following his first sexual experience in Jamaica, on 10 August 1750, he embarked on an active sex life. Thistlewood engaged in 3,852 acts of sexual intercourse with 138 women in his thirty-seven years in Jamaica. To reduce these intimate acts to the banality of statistics, in an average year (excluding 1750 and 1786, the year he arrived and the year he died, as exceptional), Thistlewood coupled 108 times with 14 different partners. The intensity of his sexual activity varied over time, peaking in 1754, shortly after he took up with Phibbah, when he had sex 265 times, then gradually declining from an average of nearly 200 sex acts per annum in his thirties, to over 100 sex acts a year in his forties and early fifties, to around 80 sex acts per annum in the last decade of his life. The number of separate partners he had each year also declined, from a high of 26 in 1755 to under 10 in the 1780s. His sexual activity suggests that he was a highly but not inordinately sexed man. Modern surveys indicate that the average Briton who has sex (23 percent of adults do not) has sex around 96 times per annum and has 10 sexual partners in a lifetime. Thistlewood thus had sex slightly more often than the average person who has sex nowadays. His situation, however, gave him virtually free access to slave women, meaning that he had more opportunity to have sex with larger numbers of partners than is common today.[65]

The pattern of his sexual activity shows both continuity and change. Although he had many sexual partners, the majority of his sexual congresses were with a principal partner who served as his "wife." From August 1750 until September 1751, he lived with a slave called Marina. That relationship ended when he left Vineyard Pen. After moving to the Egypt estate in 1751, he took up with

Jenny, a Nago slave woman. His relationship with her proved stormy. Phibbah replaced Jenny in his bed and in his affections in late 1753. He and Phibbah lived as master and concubine, except for when he left for the Kendal estate in 1757, until his death in 1786. Phibbah was far and away his most frequent sexual partner. He records having sex with her 2,142 times, accounting for 55 percent of his total sex acts. The degree of his attachment to Phibbah varied—it was strongest in the earliest years of their relationship between 1754 and 1759, when sex with her accounted for 63 to 88 percent of his sexual activity each year—but at no time did any slave displace Phibbah as his most frequent sexual partner. The only times Phibbah did not monopolize his attentions came in the early 1760s, when Phibbah had a young child to care for, and between 1771 and 1774, when Abba was his partner on 128 occasions, which constituted 29 percent of his sex acts in those years.

Nevertheless, Thistlewood never confined his attentions to Phibbah alone. Even in the year of his death, he had sex with 6 other women besides Phibbah. Thistlewood had sex with 2 women—Egypt Susannah and Abba—172 and 169 times, respectively, and had sex with 10 other women more than 30 times each. In total, he had sex with these 12 slaves 871 times, accounting for 23 percent of his sexual activity. All of these women were slaves he controlled—5 slaves belonged to the Egypt estate and 7 slaves were among those he owned. The only slave he did not own or control with whom he had a significant number of sexual encounters was Mulatto Bessie, a slave owned by his friend Samuel Hayward. He had sex with her 25 times between 1776 and 1779. He had sex more than once with another 33 women. Of these, 22 were women he either owned or controlled. Thistlewood did not confine his attentions solely to his own slaves—63 of his partners, with whom he had 374 sex acts, were slaves who lived on other plantations. Few of these women were white. On 30 October 1752, Thistlewood had sex "cum mulier, in Sam's hutt in Paradise." On 4 February and 6 April 1758, he had sex "cum mulier sup terr. Hill sea side." Given that Thistlewood was very precise about racial nomenclature, the lack of a racial signifier here probably indicates that the women were white. He never showed any interest in white women besides these prostitutes. Predictably, he never explains why, but an obvious reason must have been that it was easier to have sex with black women, especially when they could not escape him, than it was to seek out white women, whom he would have to woo. He mostly preyed on slaves who were answerable to him. Besides the sex acts he had with Phibbah, 1,336 of his sex acts were with slaves who resided on the four properties he managed. He was especially likely to have sex with his own slaves. None of them escaped

his attentions, and all, except Abba's daughter Blind Mary and Fanny, who had sex with him once and twice, respectively, had sex with him on numerous occasions. Abba, Bess, Sukey, Franke, and Phoebe had sex with him more than 50 times each. At Egypt, he also had sex with most female slaves. He had sex with 42 women and did not have sex with 10 women, at least 4 of whom were designated as old and superannuated. From his perspective, he was a sexual opportunist or sexual enthusiast; from the viewpoint of his female slaves, Thistlewood was the quintessential sexual predator and exploiter. Only the very young and the very old could be hopeful that Thistlewood would not have sex with them, and even they probably had their doubts. He had sex with his slaves when they were either in puberty or not long after—he had sex with Bess, Sally, Maria, Sukey, Coobah, and Phoebe for the first time when each was only fourteen or fifteen and had sex with Abba perhaps before puberty—and made them have sex even when they were very heavily pregnant. Thistlewood had sex with Abba twice when she was over eight months pregnant, once a month before she gave birth in 1776, and most notably on 23 August 1772, two days before she was "brought to bed of a girl." Similarly, Thistlewood had sex with a heavily pregnant Franke on 16 March 1776. Eight days later, she miscarried.

The essential features of his sex life—sex with a regular partner interspersed with sex with secondary favorites and opportunistic sex with his own slaves and strangers—changed little over time. Nevertheless, we can discern several phases. The first phase was before Phibbah became his principal partner. He had sex relatively infrequently—227 times in three years—but with a comparatively large number of partners, few of whom predominated as his sexual partner. Between 1753 and 1767, his Egypt years, he was very sexually active. Most of his sex was with Phibbah, except when she had a young child in the early 1760s, but he also had sex with lots of other women, averaging over 20 partners a year. An analysis of his sex acts in 1758 gives us some indication of his patterns in this phase of his life. He had sex 179 times that year with 23 partners. Phibbah was his partner in 131 of his sex acts, all of which were in his bed at night. Of his other 22 partners, only Mazerine, with whom he had 9 sexual encounters, had sex with him more than 5 times. The only slave to share his bed apart from Phibbah was Abba, whom he had recently purchased and who was still a girl. He had sex with her "sup lect" on 19 April, but it was "non bene," which is not surprising given that Abba was probably very young, possibly a virgin, and certainly still recovering from the traumas of the Middle Passage. He had sex with 4 other women in his house: once with Cynthia in his parlor and once each,

"sup chest lid mea room," with Chrishea, Little Doll, and Egypt Susannah. The remainder of his sex acts took place on Egypt's grounds, except for an encounter with Esther, a Congo slave belonging to Mrs. Appleby, with whom he had sex near a loading place by the sea. He had sex twice with Cynthia (alias Worsoe) in the curing house and once with Nancy in the washhouse. Otherwise, he had sex on the ground—"sup terr"—in various clearings near cane pieces and coffee grounds, near the guava walk, and near the morass. Two favorite locations were on a hill looking out to sea and in the "Negro grounds," where he had sex 6 times. In total, he had sex in 18 different places. He provides few other details besides place, time (more often P.M. rather than A.M.), and participant, except to note that on four occasions he had sex "Stans! Backwd." He also noted when he paid the woman involved. In 1758, payment was relatively uncommon. He gave his partner either 1 or 2 "bitts" only 18 times and did not do so 30 times (excluding the times he had sex with Phibbah, whom he did not pay).[66]

The number of his partners declined by half after he moved to Breadnut Island and reduced even further, to less than 10 per annum, as he aged in the 1780s. He also became less enamored of Phibbah, especially between 1771 and 1776, when he showed partiality to Abba, and after 1781, when Bess (then in her late twenties or early thirties) became a favorite. Nevertheless, Phibbah was always his most frequent partner, accounting for over two-thirds of his sex acts in the late 1770s and around 60 percent of his sex acts in the years immediately before he died. His sexual activity also became more predictable. In 1776, for example, he had sex 101 times with 11 women, including 62 times with Phibbah, always at night in his bed. He had sex 3 times in his library, with Abba and Damsel, and had sex with 10 women in 7 separate outdoor locations. Two of these locations—"sup bench, under shed, in New Garden" and "sup Terr, over morass, near duck pond"—accounted for 19 of his sex acts. He had sex away from Breadnut Island only once, when he had sex at 7:00 P.M. with Robert Chambers's Mirtilla "sup terr in kirkpatrick's pen pasture, to the East of the Coromantee pond and North off the road." Many more of these acts involved financial transactions than his sex acts in 1758. He gave between 2 and 4 bitts to every partner except on 5 occasions—3 times with Hayward's Little Mulatto Bessie (each time resulting in the comment "sed non bene" being recorded) and twice with Abba. Only Little Mulatto Bessie and Phibbah never received payment for having sex with Thistlewood. By 1776, Thistlewood's sex life was more routine than it had been in 1758. He tended to have sex with the same

slave in the same place at the same time and was much more likely to view sex as a form of prostitution rather than opportunistic exploitation, which had been a feature of his sexual activity earlier, especially in the mid-1750s.

Sex and Social Control

White men molested slave women in part because they could do so without fear of social consequence and in part because they constantly needed to show slaves the extent of their dominance. The institutional dominance of white men had to be translated into personal dominance. Slave owners needed to show that they were strong, violent, virile men who ruled the little kingdoms of white autocracy that were Jamaican plantations as they pleased. What better way for white men to show who was in control than for them to have the pick of black women whenever they chose? What black men and women thought of these transgressions can only be surmised, but they could not have accepted such violations of their sexual autonomy with equanimity. On occasion, they took revenge. Thistlewood reported, as we have seen, that slaves murdered his former subordinate, Harry McCormick, "for meddling with their women."[67] The already strife-torn fabric of slave community life was further weakened by white men's continual sexual exploitation of slave women. Sexual relations between black women and white men made dramatically clear not only the powerlessness of blacks against white dominance and white exploitation but also the differences between the experiences of men and women in enslavement. Men faced physical punishment; women faced the same punishment as well as the additional burden of having to provide sexual services to white men.

Thistlewood was probably a rapist in deed. He was certainly a rapist in thought. He harbored attitudes concerning the sexual exploitation of black women that were deplorable, even for men of his time and place. He related, for example, a story from a Mr. Banton about "ye Barb[ados] woman that was rap'd by three of them (at Kingston) in a short space, he ye Middle one yet she laid ye Bastard Child to him and how he made her explain herself."[68] A gang-rape of a black woman was only cause for comment when there was a story attached to it. Thistlewood made it clear to female slaves who were caught transgressing that they could avoid punishment by having sex with him. On 1 February 1753, Clara was "wanting" all afternoon. On her arrival home, Thistlewood promptly had sex with her "by the Coffee Tree." On 16 September 1753, he had sex with "Waadah in the Still House sup floor," having found her there, "runaway I suppose." Refusing to have sex with Thistlewood was not a realistic option. Clara

and Waadah knew they had to submit to his sexual demands or else receive physical punishment—punishment that may have been more severe as the result of their refusals.

Black women's capacity to resist the sexual advances of white men was extremely limited, as the following accounts show. On 12 March 1755, Thistlewood noted that his employer, John Cope, brought a party of six men to the Egypt estate, where they caroused. Late in the evening, "all except Cope and one other, after being heartily drunk, haw'led Eve separately into the Water Room and were Concern'd with her[.] Weech 2ce [twice]. First and last." Thistlewood's tone suggests he disapproved; his subsequent failure to punish Eve when she ran away after her ordeal confirms his distaste. But he did nothing to stop the rape—it was hardly possible for him to do so when his employer was involved—and continued to associate with the men who committed the rape. Two years previously, however, he had intervened in an attempted rape: "At Night Mr. Paul Stevens and Thomas Adams going to tear old Sarah to pieces in her hutt, had a quarrel with both of them. They burnt her and would fire the hutt Note they both drunk." Thistlewood was not so much alarmed at the attack on Sarah as concerned at the white men's presumption in interfering with one of his charges. He was disturbed that Stevens and Adams had attempted to damage estate property. The episode demonstrates how perilous it was for slaves to resist white advances: Sarah was burned for trying.[69]

Certainly the cost of resistance could be high. Following a drinking session with a Mr. McDonald ("who had Eve to whom he gave 6 bitts"), Cope made "Tom fetch Beck from the Negroe's house for himself with whom he was with till morning." Beck, however, was not his first choice, as events the next Monday proved, when Cope ordered "Egypt Susannah and Mazerine whipped for refusal." Cope's actions so outraged his slaves that they exacted revenge. Thistlewood tells that "Little Phibbah told Mrs. Cope last Saturday night's affair. Mrs. Cope also examined the sheets and found them amiss."[70] The slaves' sense of moral economy had been sufficiently upset by what they considered an unfair whipping that they chose to inform on their master to their master's wife. Nevertheless, the effect of such disclosures was minimal. Cope continued his escapades in the slave quarters and became an assemblyman and custos of the parish. The whipped slaves received no recompense, and Cope's young wife, Molly, was forced to turn a blind eye to her husband's infidelities.

A minority of slave women tried to make the best of their uneasy situation as the sexual playthings of white men. Having sex with Thistlewood could be turned to a woman's advantage. Thistlewood often gave money to his sexual part-

ners, as we have seen. The sums earned from what was essentially forced prostitution could be considerable. Two of Thistlewood's sexual partners—Egypt Susannah and Mazerine—each earned sufficient money from their sexual encounters to either buy enough food to last half a year or purchase half a pig. Slave women were active participants in a dynamic internal commerce based on exploitation of their sexuality. Earnings from prostitution were one means whereby they could pursue entrepreneurial activities and enhance the likelihood that they would someday own property.[71] Slave mistresses of white men were especially adept at turning their liaisons into commercial gain, as we will discover in chapter 7 when we examine the life of Thistlewood's mistress, Phibbah. Nevertheless, although a few slave women may have achieved measurable benefits from their association with white men, the overall effect on slave communities of white men's sexual pursuit of black women was mostly detrimental. Thistlewood's sexual opportunism reinforced slaves' already-strong sense of helplessness and contributed to the psychological damage suffered by slaves living under traumatizing conditions in a radically unstable society. We can see this in Thistlewood's admonishments to underlings to desist from pursuing the wives of slave men. He was especially firm in his condemnation of his nephew's attempted conquest of Little Mimber, the wife of Johnnie, the driver on the Egypt estate and thus a man of some importance in the slave community. Johnnie strongly resented John Thistlewood's "taking" Little Mimber and attempting to keep her as his wife and complained vociferously to his master. Thistlewood took his slave's side, remonstrating with his nephew that he needed to confine his attentions to women who were not attached and refrain from angering slaves whose support was crucial for the smooth management of the estate.[72] Nevertheless, the damage had been done. Little Mimber had been with John Thistlewood. Johnnie's only recourse was to complain—a complaint he knew might be taken seriously or might be ignored.

Thistlewood's Management of Slaves

White men's sexual avidity was not the only issue that fractured harmony in slave communities. Slaves had to fear others besides resident whites. Slave men and women quarreled and fought with each other frequently. Sexual relations on the plantation were like a complicated game of musical chairs, and the many permutations of partners often created problems and disputes. In 1773, for example, Thistlewood "Flogged Maria for cuckolding Solon at the Retrieve, and stirring up Quarrels etc." In 1774, Maria was again flogged "for leaving Solon

and running to her sweetheart at the Retrieve." After that affair foundered, she lived with two men from neighboring estates in quick succession before setting up housekeeping with a slave named Monday. That relationship soon ran into trouble. On 13 November 1778, Lincoln visited the couple, at 3:00 A.M., ostensibly to give Maria some sugarcane. But when he "began to inquire for his countryman [Maria]," Monday refused to let him speak to her. Lincoln persisted. He went "into her room to stay with her." Monday, however, "laid hold of him first" and beat him. Monday incurred no further punishment from Thistlewood. By 1787, Maria was living alone. Maria was not unusual in her variegated sex life. In 1774, Thistlewood noted, "Understand Jimmy wants to throw away Abba, he having long kept Phoebe slyly, Phoebe has also thrown away Neptune (or wants much to do it) upon Jimmy's account."[73]

Thistlewood's slaves experienced marked domestic discord. Monogamy was as unfashionable among slaves as it was among whites, and slaves sometimes changed partners with dizzying rapidity. In part, slaves tolerated promiscuity because West African practices such as polygamy allowed it.[74] But whereas in Africa polygamy operated within a secure social context and served to reduce domestic friction, in Jamaica African rules governing polygamous relationships no longer applied. African women in Jamaica had more control over domestic arrangements than women in Africa had. In West African cultures, women were expected to live in families and have children who would perpetuate the families. They were "valued for child-producing properties, for their economic contribution to the household, and for the affinal relationship they represent to husband and his kin." These traditional African assumptions about the role of women did not hold in Jamaica. As Michael Mullin has argued, women in slavery in Jamaica may have had more say, power, and independence compared to men than women in Africa had. A skewed sex ratio, combined with the propensity of some slave women to reserve themselves for white men, meant that many black men were left without partners. Competition for women was thus keen, and disputes often arose when men found their "rights" to sexual access frustrated or challenged. Some women recognized their value and the inability of slave men to become controlling patriarchs and insisted, like Maria, on playing the field. The sexually independent slave woman was not uncommon. For example, Thistlewood's principal partner on the Kendal estate, Aurelia, did not confine her attentions to her master alone: Thistlewood was told that "six different men lay with Aurelia" one night, by her own volition. Her deviation from traditional models of African female behavior, moreover, did not lessen her status as the leading woman on the plantation. Slave men were dominant

within slave communities, but their authority was precarious and was shaken by the insistence of some slave women on sexual independence. The peculiar conditions of slavery rendered black men's attempts to control the sexuality of black women problematic, especially when white men could always undermine black men's sexual authority and power. Changed gender expectations may have increased slave men's demoralization.[75]

Thistlewood used this sexual climate to advance his slave management. Slaves often needed to refer disputes about sexual infidelities to him. Sometimes he interfered; sometimes he punished transgressors; sometimes he let slaves mete out justice themselves. When Sancho complained to Thistlewood about the infidelity of his wife in 1752, he "advised them to part, which they accordingly did." When London molested Hannah in 1755, Thistlewood, "upon Hannah's complaint Whipp'd London." London "went to complain to his Master and Mistress but they w[ou]ld not hear him then he Absconded." In the case of Cobbena, however, who "catchd London and Rosanna [Cobbena's wife] at work upon London's bed," he let Cobbena act the part of the master and refrained from punishing him for giving London "a good thumping."[76]

To a limited extent, Thistlewood recognized slaves' relationships and honored slaves' rights in these relationships. He also, as we have seen, tried to prevent white servants from interfering too blatantly with what he considered to be the sexual rights of male slaves. He chastised his nephew for trying to sleep with the partner of the driver on the Egypt estate. But it is clear that slaves' relationships were at the mercy of the master. That the most important slave in the slave community had to appeal to Thistlewood's authority to secure his sexual rights showed how Thistlewood exploited the chaotic conditions that characterized slave life—chaos that he, through his sexual opportunism and ready resort to violence, in large measure created—to solidify his hold over a harassed, tormented, and brutalized slave population.

Thistlewood also exploited general conditions of lawlessness in a lawless society. Slaves stole from him and from each other constantly. Thistlewood frequently flogged slaves at Egypt for stealing cane or corn. On 1 January 1763, for example, he flogged Will for stealing corn and a month later caught "Col. Barclay's boy stealing cane." On 18 December 1764, he "Flogg'd my Johnie for stealing corn and Agnes and Solon for breaking cane." A week earlier, he had caught three slaves eating cane and had flogged Quamina a month before that for "destroying the Cane in the old Neg. gd. pce."[77] On 27 June 1763, he flogged Dago for stealing oranges and, on 29 August 1763, punished Primus, whom he caught "filling a large pint Bottle with Rum." Slaves also stole from each other.

On 28 October 1763, for example, Cudjoe robbed Neptune of a pair of shovel-billed ducks that Thistlewood was sending to Richard Hungerford. Thefts were most frequent between slaves living on different plantations. In 1763 and 1764, Thistlewood noted nine examples of his slaves being robbed of property by slaves from other estates. He noted on 22 March 1763 that "a shirt of Mason Quashie, got up and ironed, was stolen out of the washhouse & pawned" by a slave of Elizabeth Bennett. On 12 November 1764, he wrote to George Lesley complaining that Quashie and Sukey had had "6 bitts worth of Corn, took from them by Long Pond Negroes." On 27 October 1763, a runaway female "whom Cubbena & Rosanna, Quamina & Quasheba, had long harboured in their houses" stole chickens belonging to Egypt Lucy and Dago. Thistlewood ordered Cubbena and Quamina to "make Them Satisfaction." Again, on 13 April 1764, Thistlewood's "Negroes were fishing in the Salt Savanna at dinner Time" when "[William Henry] Ricketts Negroes Come and Robb'd them off the fish." Thistlewood sent his nephew and "some Negroes" to bring in the six slaves concerned, all of whom he flogged, much to the displeasure of their wealthy owner, who confronted Thistlewood the next day. Slaves had little protection from thieves besides the intervention of their masters. Their vulnerability can be seen in the successful thievery of "a Negroe man Named Julius" who was marked as a "Notorious runaway" because his left ear was cut off. When Thistlewood apprehended him a week after he had stolen new hoes belonging to newly purchased slaves, he was also carrying "2 dead pigs a dead fowl & a living one 2 womens pockets [and] a Black Jack."[78] If Thistlewood had not apprehended him and given him 100 lashes, Julius could have continued to steal with virtual impunity. When a thief was from within a slave community, slaves could humiliate or ostracize the violator of group norms. But when a thief came from outside the closed society of the plantation, slaves had little option other than to turn to their masters, who alone had recourse to the law and the authority to apprehend and punish slaves, wherever they came from. When a white person attempted to take slave property, slaves were entirely defenseless and relied absolutely on their masters' protection. Thistlewood realized this early in his time in Westmoreland. On 27 September 1752, he quarreled with "Messrs. Jemmison and Mason," who "pretend to bring an order from John Filton for the fishing dory, [and] old canoe, he gave the Negro driver (Quashe), [and the] old seine he gave Phibbah." Thistlewood was not prepared to let them abscond with his slaves' property and "desired them get out of the plantation."

Slave criminality and misbehavior were enhanced by the policy of providing slaves with provision grounds. Slaves moved easily from rationalizing a theft of

food or supplies from the master to rationalizing purloining food from fellow slaves. When slaves were given ready access to markets, the temptation to steal increased.[79] It was just as easy, if not easier, to become a property-owning individual through thieving as it was to become a property-owning individual through the careful cultivation of provision grounds. Pervasive slave criminality in an essentially unregulated society must have caused slaves to become wary and conservative.[80] Eugene Genovese points out the negative implications of slaves' thievery, even if we accept that slaves did distinguish between stealing from other slaves and taking the goods of the master and thus transferring his property from one form to another. Of course, stealing or taking did have positive connotations if viewed as part of an alternative morality in which the oppressed saw themselves as having the right to use whatever weapons they could, including thieving, to counter the hegemonic rule of masters. But as Genovese insists, making a distinction between stealing and taking was easier in theory than in practice. For many slaves in many slave systems, from eighteenth-century Jamaica to newly independent Haiti to the antebellum U.S. South, stealing became a way of life and was not just confined to stealing from the master. More important, constant thievery passed the moral advantage to the planter. Stealing conflicted with the moral values most slaves held—notably those who were Christian or Muslim but also other slaves who sought to live morally respectable lives. Even if stealing can be seen as resistance (and it was only so in some cases), Genovese is surely correct in arguing that it encouraged slaves to slip into degradation, division, and self-contempt and weakened their self-respect.[81]

Yet although frequent disputes between slaves weakened communal solidarity and reduced the likelihood of collaboration between slaves across estates, an embryonic social consciousness and awareness of the necessity for slaves to join together for mutual safety also slowly developed. Attacks from outside slaves, either runaways or slaves from other plantations, were far more frequent and dangerous for slaves attempting to increase their wealth and prosperity through acquisitive individualism than were day-to-day conflicts with slaves from the same estate. In resisting incursions from hostile outsiders intent on extending their own economic interests, Thistlewood's slaves were forced to join together as a collective unit. In the process of creating slave communities that exhibited considerable cultural and political autonomy, they needed on occasion to enlist the help of Thistlewood to protect their interests, particularly their interests in property. The short-term need for white support helped to preserve white dominance and prevented the undeclared battle between whites and blacks from erupting into an all-out war. Even when it seemed as if whites might be wiped

off the island, as in 1760, the conflict between long-term objective and short-term necessity kept whites in their precarious position of power in the island.

The world outside the plantation could be very dangerous for slaves. Thistlewood details many instances of his slaves being attacked when traveling for business or pleasure outside the estate. The roads were full of brigands and runaways who attacked slaves. In 1758, for example, "Mr. Cope's Simon's head broke by Negroe men in the Road, who took a Crabb from him."[82] A year later, he found Cambridge dead in the morass and speculated that "he was Murdered by Runaways, Who it seems threatened to murder him the last time he was runaway if he did not leave them, least they should be found upon his account, by our looking for him."[83] Whites also attacked slaves. In 1756, for example, Thistlewood wrote that a white man was brought "before Mr. Cope by Peter the Constable upon Complaint made by William Crookshanks off his Robbing and abusing House Franke yesterday Evening, near Paradise." Sometimes slaves could be attacked for no reason save a man's fancy. In 1764, Thistlewood wrote a long account of the shooting and death of Humphrey—"a Stout hopefull young Fellow, and begun to Understand his Business"—by white, mulatto, and quadroon servants in a canoe. The men called Humphrey over to the canoe, demanded that he give up his fish, and then shot him when he refused. Thistlewood expostulated that Humphrey was shot "Wilfully and purposely (out of Mere Wantonness) without giving them any Manner off Provocation."[84]

In such cases, slaves found whites of material assistance. Thistlewood's subordinate, William Crookshanks, helped House Franke in her complaint against her white attacker. Crookshanks brought the white man before the justice of the peace, who imposed a fine. Thistlewood presumably stopped Sarah from being raped or burned to death when attacked by two white men. He also tried to avenge Humphrey's death (and recoup his losses from the early death of a promising worker) by having his killer brought before a court. Yet white assistance to blacks attacked by whites was not always successful, given Jamaica's legal presumptions in favor of whites. Although Thistlewood's nephew cornered three of the men in the canoe in Savanna-la-Mar and extracted a confession in front of a judge that they had shot Humphrey, Humphrey's murderer was acquitted when one of the two white men in the canoe swore that it was the mulatto (presumably long since vanished) rather than the quadroon who had mortally wounded Thistlewood's slave. The testimony of white men was always preferred in any case involving blacks.[85]

One way slaves could avoid being harassed was to join together for mutual

protection. Planters designated slaves according to who owned them. Thus, the slaves of Colonel Barclay became Barclay's Ned and so on. Slaves also identified themselves by reference to the plantations they came from, but for different reasons. Slaves had a clear sense of belonging to a particular patch of ground and being part of a group with shared interests. Consequently, when Thistlewood stumbled upon a group of Barclay's slaves fishing at a bridge demarcating Thistlewood's and Barclay's estates, Barclay's slaves repelled Thistlewood from an area in which they believed they had customary economic privileges. Thistlewood noted that the slaves were "very insolent with menaces and Threatenings etc refused to go at my Bidding etc." After Thistlewood and his companion escaped, he reported, they were "glad to find our Selves Safe away." When he took matters into his own hands a week later and whipped "some of their Negroe women," he noted that "the Negroe Men followed us home, with menaces and Impudence." Clearly Thistlewood had interfered with what Barclay's slaves saw as their exercise of customary economic rights. They were prepared to challenge Thistlewood's violation of their privileges. They complained to Barclay, the leading magistrate in the parish, who immediately confronted Thistlewood on their behalf and threatened to whip Thistlewood if he caught him punishing his slaves again.[86]

Thistlewood's slaves used him in a similar fashion to protect their economic interests when other slaves threatened them. Thistlewood often intervened to protect his slaves' property and person. He was continually writing letters to other whites asking that slaves who had intruded onto the provision grounds of his slaves be punished. On 6 September 1763, for example, Thistlewood wrote to Aaron Moffat "acquainting him off more than Twenty Negroes being seen [to] go thro' this Estate to Windward last Saturday." Occasionally, slaves dealt with intruders themselves. On 10 September 1756, for example, a watchman "Shot and Cut" Mr. Mould's Scotland "with a Machete till he died in Colonel Barclay's Negroe Ground." The slave escaped punishment because Thistlewood considered his actions reasonable since he was defending slave property from a slave who was "stealing corn, plantanes etc." More often, however, Thistlewood's slaves called on him to take action against offending slaves. On 3 July 1759, he rode to a neighboring estate to talk with a fellow overseer about "Yaw robbing Quasheba off 7 Bitts worth of fish." His intervention worked: "[T]hey agreed to make satisfaction."

In many respects, the interests of Thistlewood and his slaves coincided, especially when outside slaves made incursions onto estate property that was valuable to his slaves. An episode in 1764 reveals the degree to which masters' and

slaves' interests overlapped. On the afternoon of 18 February 1764, a slave woman, Chrishea, brought word to Thistlewood that "many Negroes were fishing in the greenwood ponds." Thistlewood armed himself with a cutlass and went with ten slaves in search of the offending slaves. He was told the band of thirty belonging to George Williams's estate had gone "Thro' the Estate to the Leeward, Vapouring their Sticks in an Impudent Manner, and Singing Country etc." Heavily "in liquor," Williams's slaves had already "robb'd Melia off her fish" and beat her and cut her face. Giving chase, Thistlewood and his slaves caught up with the slaves, who "behaved very impudently." Thistlewood fired buckshot at one and took two others who had beaten and robbed Melia into custody, flogging them on the spot. Proceeding to the Greenwood Pond, he apprehended "many Negroes, belonging Col: Barclay and the Retrieve" and confiscated their fishing gear and the fish they had caught. Both Thistlewood and his slaves returned home satisfied with a job well done. Thistlewood had preserved the safety of his estate and defended one of his slaves; his slaves had protected their right to fish in the Greenwood Pond undisturbed.

The property rights of slaves within the slave economy weakened slave resistance to white power. On the one hand, the tendency of slaves to engage in capitalist market-oriented activity worked, in the long run, against the logic of plantation slavery because it reduced slaves' dependence on the bounty of the master and thus reduced his control over them. On the other hand, private property and market exchange fractured slave communities. Disputes over property and property-related crimes opened fissures within slave ranks. Confronting attacks on slave property rights from outside often healed these fissures, but it also often weakened the black community as a whole. The idea that slaves approved of all types of resistance, even when it made them suffer, is a myth. Slaves, for example, were reluctant to succor runaways when they could survive only by raiding slave provision grounds. When London and Quaw came upon two runaways on 10 March 1755, they immediately tried to apprehend them, taking away a gamecock and a "Bag of Plantanes." They were not going to allow foreign slaves to acquire their hard-earned property or property they believed they had a right to by virtue of being slaves at Egypt. In trying to secure the miscreants, however, London cut his hand very badly with a knife, allowing the two men to escape. The traffic, however, between runaways and resident slaves was not all one way. Slaves exploited runaways just as they believed runaways exploited them. When one of Thistlewood's slaves escaped, others sometimes used the incident as an excuse to raid the master's property and then blame the loss on the unfortunate runaway. This seems to have occurred on 17 July 1750

when Robin escaped. The storehouse was broken into, goods taken, and Robin blamed. Although the slaves reported the thief to be Robin, Thistlewood thought it "pretty certain to ye contrary as they found everything so readily."

Establishing a moral economy in which slaves had customary rights and could engage in primitive capitalist accumulation was one thing, but translating theoretical property rights into an actual economy was quite a different matter. Slaves had neither laws nor customs to protect them in their pursuit and defense of economic gain. Slaves sought and gained considerable economic autonomy within the plantation economy but in so doing trampled on the economic autonomy of other slaves who were equally determined to seek power by owning property. Slaves did develop some sense of community and probably some political consciousness as members of plantation communities with interests, especially property interests, to protect against hostile forces who wished to take slave-produced resources for themselves. But this communal solidarity was limited and territorially defined. Thistlewood's slaves knew who the real enemy was: their actions when John Thistlewood drowned and when Thomas Thistlewood was attacked by Congo Sam showed that they were aware that whites were their ultimate enemy. Both whites and blacks knew this fundamental truth of Caribbean existence. The ever-present fear of black servile revolt transfixed white minds. It was the ultimate weapon slaves knew they could always employ against whites. They knew that whites feared them and that it was this fear, as Lejeune bluntly suggested, that led them to treat slaves with unremitting ferocity. Yet, especially before the advent of such ideological unifiers as Christianity, which transformed Afro-Caribbean culture in the early nineteenth century, it was difficult for slaves to overcome the inherent tensions and suspicions based on conflict over property that existed between differing groups of plantation slaves. Those inherent tensions and suspicions probably saved whites in the very dangerous near-disaster of Tackey's revolt in 1760.

Tackey's Revolt

The revolt that first swept through St. Mary's Parish in north-central Jamaica and then spread to Thistlewood's Westmoreland Parish in May 1760 was the most significant Caribbean slave revolt before the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804. In its shock to the imperial system, it would not be equaled until the Jamaican rebellions of 1831 and 1865 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857.[87] Thistlewood's diary is an excellent eyewitness account of the revolt by a coolheaded but frightened participant at one of the centers of the storm. What emerges is

the atmosphere of rumor, panic, and confusion that swept over Westmoreland in late May 1760. The degree to which this revolt shook the colony to the core is evident in the many diary entries referring to the revolt's aftermath as Thistlewood and other whites tried to make sense of the revolt and did their best to exact fierce vengeance on those slaves who had been bold enough to try to overcome white rule. The revolt was a highly organized conspiracy planned in remarkable secrecy by Akan slaves from the Gold Coast in several places in the island. The impressive organization of the rebellion was matched by the ambitiousness of its intentions. According to Edward Long, Tackey and his followers aimed at "the entire expiration of the white inhabitants; the enslaving of all such Negroes as might refuse to join them; and the partition of the island into small principalities in the African mode; to be distributed among their leaders and head men."[88] It very nearly succeeded in its objective to create a West African state in the Caribbean. Bands of rebels rose against whites in St. Mary's, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth, St. James, and Westmoreland. Considerable success was achieved in both St. Mary's and Westmoreland. Militias were routed, estates were torched, and slave rebel numbers exceeded 1,000 in each parish. Only the death of Tackey, whose leadership had been crucial in the conflict in St. Mary's; resolute action by the competent Jamaican-born governor, Henry Moore; and the assistance given to hard-pressed settlers by British regular troops and the British navy, as well as, more problematically, by Maroons, allowed whites to survive the rebels' determined onslaught.[89]

The revolt was also foiled at the local level by the resoluteness and courage of whites such as Thistlewood and the ambivalent reaction of many slaves to a revolt in which they were more likely to lose their painstakingly acquired property than they were to achieve freedom. On 26 May 1760, four of Thistlewood's neighbors rode bareback, wearing very few clothes, to inform him that an overseer had been murdered, another had been "sadly chopped," and Thistlewood "should probably be murdered in a short time." Thistlewood fled in panic to Savanna-la-Mar, where he did his "duty" until daylight. Bravely, he then returned home to secure his property and defend his estate. Thistlewood knew he was in great danger. The day of greatest crisis was 29 May. On the nearby Jacobsfield estate, rebels tore down the great house. Meanwhile, news of the militia's rout had reached the ears of Thistlewood's slaves. Thistlewood noted, "[O]ur Negroes have good intelligence [of the rout], being most elevated, and ready to rise, now we are in the most imminent danger." The evening was spent in confusion, with Thistlewood seeing a house burning in the distance while parties of soldiers tramped through the estate "on the way to Leeward." It was not

until 2 June that the tide turned in favor of the whites when a force comprised of regular troops, the Westmoreland militia, and Cudjoe's Maroons, the latter performing "with great bravery," overcame a large body of rebels. By early July, with the capture of "William Grove's Apongo . . . King of the Rebels," the danger had effectively passed. Nevertheless, Jamaican whites remained very fearful. The revolt had shaken their confidence in the assertion that white dominance would last in Jamaica. Many people were so discouraged that they left the island. Thistlewood commented in August, "It is said a Thousand people are already gone off upon account of the Negroe Rebellion." The fear remained even after the principal rebels were tortured, executed, or transported. In October, Thistlewood supped with John Stewart, who told him of an old proverb "which frights many people: 'One thousand seven hundred and sixty three, Jamaica no more an Island shall be,'" with Thistlewood adding, "(Not for the whites)."[90]

What remains particularly curious about the revolt, as seen in Thistlewood's tense diary entries, is the degree of ambivalence of his slaves toward rebel objectives. Thistlewood had good reason to believe that several of his slaves knew about the plot and were sympathetic to it. On 28 May, he noted, "When the report was of the Old Hope Negroes being rose, perceived a strange alteration in ours. They are certainly very ready if they durst, and am pretty certain they were in the plot, by what John [Groves] told me on Sunday evening . . . that he, what signified him, he would be dead in a Egypt etc etc, and from many other circumstances, Lewie being over at Forest's that night etc. Cuffee and Job also being very outrageous." Lewie may have been a conduit between slaves planning to rebel on Forest's estate and slaves at Egypt. When Apongo was condemned, Thistlewood asked him if he knew "any of our Negroes." Apongo replied that "he knew Lewie & wished him good bye." Thistlewood thought only three of his slaves—Quacoo, Abraham, and Achilles—were active in the rebellion, but he suspected that many others at Egypt knew what was going on. In October, still reflecting on the events of late May, he noted, "[A]t the beginning of the rebellion, a shaved head amongst the Negroes was the signal of war. The very day, our Jackie, Job, Achilles, Quasheba, Rosanna etc had their heads remarkably shaved. Quasheba's brother fell in the rebellion."[91] Yet even though he suspected his slaves of complicity in the rebellion, Thistlewood was forced to rely on their assistance. As far as possible, he maintained his normal working routine in the worrying days of late May, giving slaves tickets, for example, to go to Roaring River and Savanna-la-Mar to buy provisions. He tried, nevertheless, to ensure that all of his slaves were close at hand and under strict surveillance. At night, four slave men were given arms and told to guard the estate buildings while Thistlewood and Groves took turns sleeping. On 29 May, when things were most desperate, Thistlewood armed most of his slaves and "kept a strict guard and a sharp lookout."

It is difficult to be sure why Thistlewood's slaves did not rebel. Wisely, they kept their thoughts to themselves, leaving Thistlewood unaware of which slaves were loyal to him and which were not. But they clearly knew of the plot and had access to firearms. Why did they not rise against their beleaguered overseer? Possibly, slaves hesitated before committing themselves to a revolt that, if unsuccessful, promised torture and death. Thistlewood's clearheaded and determined actions probably compounded their hesitation. Thistlewood knew what was going on, even if imperfectly; had a plan of action that defended his property effectively; and was prepared to send "suspicious" slaves to jail. Matters may have been different if Egypt had been under the control of Thistlewood's sole white companion, Groves, who panicked dreadfully, shooting at strange slaves on sight, wounding a harmless domestic, and bolting to Savanna-la-Mar when the situation was most desperate. Slaves may have been willing to take their chances against Groves but not against Thistlewood.

Another reason why Thistlewood's slaves did not rebel was their desire to retain control over their own property. The problem with a slave rebellion, from a wavering slave's point of view, was the immense destruction of property involved. Long estimated that the damage caused in the 1760 rebellion amounted to over £100,000. In the great Baptist War of 1831, the damage to white property was estimated at over £1,000,000.[92] These figures related only to white property, but much slave property was also destroyed in the conflagration. The major weapon that rebel slaves employed against whites was fire. In 1831, the "whole surrounding country was illuminated" by "distant houses in flames."[93] But fire destroyed slave provision grounds as well as cane pieces and great houses. Rebels also took supplies from estates they had overrun and slaves who did not join their rebellion. Thistlewood, for example, was told by Thomas Reid, who had fled to him, that a slave had informed him that "one of their Coromantees was expected to come in the night, with a party of the rebellious Negroes to take all they could with them." Reid had escaped, along with "Many of the well-affected Negroes," who had left "lest they should be forced to join the rebels."[94] These slaves may have been "well-affected" because they feared losing all they had worked for in order to support a rebellion that was uncertain of success. Slaves' commitment to their individual patches of land blunted some of the harshness of slavery by allowing them a measure of economic autonomy: it also

blunted the edge of resistance by making slaves hesitate before committing to rebellions with revolutionary implications. Slaves feared what would happen if the consequences of revolution were the destruction of existing property rights. That hesitation to commit fully to the implementation of slaves' long-term objective to extirpate whites from the island may have preserved white rule in a society where, by rights, that rule should have been vanquished. Slaves were "certainly very ready if they durst" to overcome white rule. It was becoming "durst" that proved the stumbling block.[95]

chapter six

Cooperation and Contestation, Intimacy and Distance

Thistlewood and His Male Slaves

Their master's character and repute casts, they think, a kind of secondary light upon themselves, as the moon derives her lustre from the sun; and the importance he acquires, in his station of life, adds, they imagine, to their own estimation among their neighbour Negroes on the adjacent estates. Their attachment to the descendants of old families, the ancestors of which were the masters and friends of their own progenitors, is remarkably strong and affectionate. This veneration appears hereditary, like clanships in the Scottish Highlands; it is imbibed in their infancy, or founded perhaps in the idea of the relation which subsisted between, and connected them in, the bond of fatherly love and authority on the one side, and a filial reverence and obedience on the other.—Edward Long, *History of Jamaica*

Whoever considers the Negroes Superiority in Number, the sullen, deceitfull, Refractory Temper of most of them, that some are Careless, others Treacherous or Idle, and apt to Run away; and how much their Masters Interest depends on the Care, and Diligence of His Slaves must needs be Convinced, that there is an Absolute necessity of keeping a Vigilant Eye, and Strict hand over them.—James Knight, "The Natural, Moral and Political History of Jamaica and the Territories thereon depending"