



# Time and the otherwise: Plantations, garrisons and being human in the Caribbean

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## Abstract

In this essay, I will argue that one of the insights we can glean about ontology from the theoretico-ethnographic space of the Caribbean has to do with what its foundational histories can tell us about the relationships between time, temporality and sovereignty. Drawing from an ethnographically derived creative project I am currently developing in collaboration with musician Junior ‘Gabu’ Wedderburn and psychologist Deanne Bell, I will show that recurring moments of exceptional violence, themselves emerging from ongoing, everyday patterns of structural and symbolic violence, lead to an experience of time neither as linear nor cyclical, but as simultaneous, where the future, past, and present are mutually constitutive and have the potential to be coincidentally influential. This ontological alterity does not rely on a condition of being prior, outside or marginal, but instead is fully embedded within the violences of modernity. As a result, exploring the relationships among labor, race, politics and what it means to be human from the space of the Afro-Caribbean allows a critical reorientation of modern ideologies of temporality that are inexorably linked to linear teleologies of progress, development, and improvement, and which therefore require the erasure of the forms of racial prior-ness that have been central to the making of the Caribbean as a material and ideological space.

## Keywords

Caribbean, ontology, sovereignty, temporality, violence

## Introduction

The ontological turn across the disciplines has been oriented toward questioning the frameworks of modernity, and toward suggesting that the largely indigenous

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exceptions from those frameworks exist as alterities through which different political and social worlds come into being. This framing would seem to leave denizens of the Caribbean outside this new thinking about ontological potentialities since, as has been extensively argued, this is a region that has always-already been modern. Yet, questions of what it means to be human have been central to life where the foundational realities have been racialized and civilizational genocide, export-oriented capitalist exploitation, commodification through mining and plantation development, slavery, indentured labor, various forms of developmentalist nationalism, and neoliberal globalization.

In this essay, I will argue that one of the insights we can glean about ontology from the theoretico-ethnographic space of the Caribbean has to do with how these foundational histories can reorient our understanding of the relationships between temporality and sovereignty in ways that challenge both modern universals regarding time, and the idea that temporal alterities must exist outside modern frames. I will do so by thinking through the concept of prior-ness, a concept usually mobilized in relation to indigenous populations globally, populations that, within a western imagination of the world, have typically been positioned outside modern elaborations of economics and politics. Indeed, the forms of prior-ness associated with indigeneity have led some anthropologists to demonstrate how ontological alterities challenge the discipline's assumptions about the human/nature divide (De la Cadena, 2010; Kohn, 2013; Bessire and Bond, 2014). The argument I want to make here, however, has more specifically to do with alternative temporal reckonings that become legible in particular moments, and that disturb the hegemony of western linear notions of time.

Of course, anthropologists have been among those who have critiqued universal notions of time, arguing that ideas of linear temporality are rooted within western discourses of evolution and Christianity, and then used to classify hierarchies of personhood along evolutionary scales of development with western capitalist logics of time at the apogee. They have encouraged us instead to pay attention to multiple and co-existing socio-cultural constructions of time, and to the ways representations of time have been instruments of power, not only in relation to colonial (and nationalist) governmentality, but also in terms of anthropological epistemology.<sup>1</sup> Yet, while an earlier generation of anthropologists was committed to notions of temporal alternation (Leach, 1961) or multiplicity (Geertz, 1973), these notions were still bound ethnographically to non-western (and, ostensibly, non-capitalist) societies. Geertz's notion of the simultaneity of multiple reckonings of time, for example, was rooted in the sense that all people are contemporary, as reflected in Balinese naming systems, and that different measurements of time were applied to different aspects of human experience.

What I want to explore in this essay is the possibility that such simultaneity might stand as an ontological alterity that, while non-linear, is also unmoored from a cyclical temporality of harvests and rituals, generations and ancestry. Moreover, this alterity would not presuppose a condition of being prior, outside or marginal, but instead would be fully embedded within modernity, and indeed could lead us to

question the extent to which normative conceptualizations of being and becoming in western time are in fact undone and remade by exploring the pressures and inequalities of modern time within the context of 'plantation America'.<sup>2</sup> Doing so would help us to rethink our understanding of the relationships among labor, race, politics and what it means to be human. It would reveal that modern western political economy has been structured on the basis of a sovereign violence – grounded in the plantation – which works through racialized categories of personhood. While this, in itself, is not news to Caribbeanists or other Americanists, it is critical to a more general reorientation of modern ideological notions of temporality that are inexorably linked to linear teleologies of progress, development, and improvement, and which therefore require the erasure of the forms of racial prior-ness that have been central to the making of the Caribbean as a material and ideological space.

### **Prior-ness in plantation economies**

Contemporary claims and complaints regarding humanness in the Caribbean are, of course, being made within a modernity generated through the movement of Europe (with Africa, conscripted) toward the Americas and the establishment of new forms of genocidal violence as the basis of a changing transnational capitalist political economy. Mercantilism inaugurated material, religious, political, philosophical, scientific, and ideological processes that indelibly linked the 'New World' and the 'Old' in a common project of defining modern subjectivity in racial terms. We know, for instance, that the effect of the 1550 debate between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda was a delineation of racial hierarchy in the language of the potentiality for Christian conversion, a delineation that then became institutionalized during the 16th and 17th centuries by Inquisition tribunals (Wynter, 2003; Silverblatt, 2004). We also know that the 'settling' of the New World also saw the twin transformative processes of racial fixing (of diverse African peoples into *negros* and diverse indigenous New World populations into *indios*) and racial flexibility (the various configurations of creolization, transculturation, and hybridity), and that these were processes that became institutionalized through particular extractive labor regimes and constellations of citizenship that excluded non-European groups (Whitten, 2007).

These initial elaborations of racialized notions of difference would be subsequently mobilized to serve the late 19th-century British project of indirect imperial rule throughout Africa and South Asia, as well as the new imperialist project of the United States. They would also shape the emergence of 'modern time', a notion Laura Bear uses to refer to 'the abstract time-reckoning of capitalism, which acts as the basis for the universal measure of value in labour, debt, and exchange relationships' (Bear, 2014: 7). Here, Bear is drawing from Marx's observations regarding industrial capitalism and the consolidation of a non-sovereign labor force, but if we push this back a bit to consider the time of mercantile capitalism and slave labor as also modern (but where the value of labor is not considered part of a human exchange), we see that what makes the economy of modern time is not strictly

the exchange relationship between capital and labor. Instead, the new labor relations that were generated by proto-industrial export-oriented mass production – by slaves – of primary products for consumption elsewhere (see Mintz, 1996; Trouillot, 1992; Best, 1968) produced a new hierarchy of humanity. Interrogating the relationships among modern configurations of value, labor, and exchange, therefore, requires a rethinking not only of the linear, universal time of both liberal humanism and progressive Marxism, what Benjamin would have called ‘homogenous empty time’ (2003: 394), but also, ultimately, a privileging of the prior-ness of the racialized category of blackness – and therefore black people – in the elaboration of both modern capitalist transnationalism, and modern notions of sovereignty, in this case generated in and through the processes of colonization and imperialism (Hanchard, 1999).

Within this nexus, indigeneity has been invoked in two different historical contexts, each shaped by colonization and nation-belonging claims. Where there have been significant pre-conquest indigenous populations, as in Guyana, they have been excluded from full nationalist recognition based on their non-industrial use of land. Indeed, their relationship to land has served to differentiate the claims to national belonging of both African former slaves and indentured workers brought from India who are said to have ‘contributed’ to the independent nation-state through their productive manipulation of land on plantations (Williams, 1991).<sup>3</sup> In this case, what it means to be ‘prior’ has had to do with how labor is manipulated and the extent of its relationship to land use.<sup>4</sup> The effect, as Shona Jackson (2012) has argued, is that the real and discursive disappearance of indigenous peoples has allowed ‘creole indigeneity’ to be asserted as the normative modality through which citizenship is reckoned in the New World. Here, blacks and Indians developed a different relationship to the land than did white settlers, but nonetheless also displaced and objectified indigenous people in similar ways. For Jackson, Creole subjects were created through the erasure of indigenous people, with territorially rooted indigenous persons remaining ontologically outside the modernity of capitalist development. More broadly throughout the British West Indies, it was through making this differentiation that Creole subjects defined themselves politically as labor (through organized worker protest) and inaugurated the movement toward modern political independence in the late 1930s. Labor (as work, and as specific kinds of disciplined work) thus ‘indigenizes modern subjects’ (Jackson, 2012: 26) within nationalist contexts, gives rights, makes citizens, and therefore makes human, even as it is what dehumanized during the period of plantation-based slavery.

There is another genealogy of indigeneity, however, one that becomes entwined with claims to the nation where prior-ness remains situated within imbrications of territorialized violence. For example, Richard Price has famously identified ‘First Time’ people among Saramaka maroons in Suriname as old collectivities ‘that trace their ancestry matrilineally back to an original group of rebel slaves’ (2002 [1983]: 7):

It was the migratory movements of the First-Time people that established land rights for posterity; it is the details of how they held political office that provide the model on

which modern succession is based; and it is the particular alliances and rivalries among the wartime clans that shape the quality of their descendants' interaction today. (Price, 2002 [1983]: 7)

Here, indigeneity is not rooted in a pre-Conquest moment. This form of indigeneity resonates in Jamaica where maroons are recognized by the United Nations as an indigenous community, and where Rastafari seek to gain this recognition, based on their indigenous creation of a worldview linked to land use and production practices counter to that of the plantation.<sup>5</sup>

In both these genealogies, we see a different relationship between territoriality, native-ness, and nationalist governance from that which obtained in settler colonial societies, where nationalist governance has required that indigenous persons be positioned not only as temporally different from colonizers, but also as unrecconcilable to the terms of liberalism.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in Jamaica, as elsewhere in the British West Indies, the reckoning of land rights, norms regarding the organization of political authority, and conflicts among sub-groups developed not in relation to originary land rights but in relationship to a context, at least prior to the 19th century, in which the planter class wielded considerable political influence within Parliament. In these plantation contexts, a nexus of customary rights related to long-standing patterns of land use and heritability, as well as forms of patronage and clientelistic loyalty, forged the ground on which and mechanisms through which nationalist citizenship claims developed in the 20th century.<sup>7</sup> In other words, just as the plantation was foundational to modern production and labor organization, it was this phenomenon that also shaped the infrastructures, practices and processes of politics within post-colonial New World nation-states.

In Jamaica, this institution-shaping context included the development of trade unions, and it was the participation in the trade union movement and its ultimate politicization via the formation of oppositional parties, each connected to a union, that has defined the political economy of modern citizenship. From the earliest moments, conflicts between unions were also conflicts regarding the politicization of territory, especially in downtown Kingston, and these conflicts were typically violent. Allegiances to union leaders – and therefore political parties – were, after 1955, generally understood to be transmitted through the family, the community, and the workplace (Munroe, 1972).<sup>8</sup> Power, in this context, was personalized, ultimately grounded within the charisma and patronage of one or another leader. Clientelistic networks, however, were not limited to those operating strictly within the domains of organized political party activism but instead included those within the fields of education, business, journalism, and community development who could trade information, skills, and contacts with their counterparts in politics (Stone, 1980). Continued loyalty was the result of continued patronage, and this laid the groundwork for the system's more explicit manifestation through the construction of housing schemes that were – informally – made available to people on the basis of party membership.<sup>9</sup>

With this innovation, political ‘garrisons’ became territorially rooted homogenous voting communities where political support was exchanged for contracts and other social welfare benefits. These exchanges were institutionalized, and even codified as part of general procedures for the distribution of paid work among constituencies downtown.<sup>10</sup> Typically, the vote-benefits nexus has been mediated through the relationship between the politician and a local ‘don’. This relationship, however, has not been static. It became part of a more general ideological struggle during the 1970s, and it has subsequently transformed as the elaboration of the transnational trades in cocaine and weapons supplanted a previously smaller-scale trafficking in ganja. This has strengthened the role of the ‘don’ vis-à-vis the politician, and it is what has brought garrison ‘dons’ to the attention of the US government.<sup>11</sup>

While this is what garrison politics in Jamaica looked like by the end of the 20th century, what I am arguing here is that this contemporary manifestation was grounded in a system of political authority on sugar estates oriented toward loyalty to a powerful leader and reliance upon that leader for work, benefits, and protection. Garrisons, after all, don’t merely denote a physical space, but evoke the requirement of submission to a set of dictating norms and forms of violence that include the suspension of critical consciousness, the simultaneous denigration of blackness and its celebration in popular culture, the violent policing of movement, and the need to appeal to a ‘leader’ for the provision of basic requirements. This is why there was support for the garrison political arrangement, and why modalities of organizing political life and social development that are rooted in the cultivation of mass political consciousness (like Rastafari, or like the People’s Freedom Movement or the Black Power Movement) are seen and subdued as a threat, not only to Jamaican sovereignty and US hegemony, but also to the worldview that positions black bodies as the instruments of profit – both economic and political – for others.

Prior-ness in the Caribbean is thus grounded in the materiality and sociality of the modern plantation. And this prior-ness ideologically requires an adherence to hierarchies of personhood and subjectivity that are based on an appropriate temporal orientation to, and participation in, modernity. But this appropriate orientation and participation necessitates the erasure of their foundational violences, an erasure that is generated, in large part, through a constant insistence upon the supremacy of a concept of time rooted in linearity, progressive teleology, and a tendency toward perpetual improvement. This erasure also becomes the tool through which inequalities are reproduced and made to seem inevitable in the contemporary period, which in turn leads to the simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility of those who do not or cannot operate according to the criteria of teleological time, and of the social conditions that have generated this inability.<sup>12</sup> While for some, and in reality, increasingly few, the experience of modern time approximates the ideology of an evolutionary advance toward perpetual social mobility, for others, time seems to stand still. The critical racialized prior-ness that engendered this contemporary reality is relegated to the status of

epiphenomenon, a problem of the past that can be shed through the cultivation of an appropriately liberal moral disposition.

Yet this ideology of temporality, while popularly dominant, isn't seamless, and the impossibility of sustaining it, and therefore of infinitely perpetuating this arrangement of personhood, is made evident during moments of extreme, catastrophic violence. When people narrate their experiences of these moments, the foundations of western temporal regimes are made legible. Drawing from an ethnographically derived creative project I am currently developing in collaboration with musician Junior 'Gabu' Wedderburn and psychologist Deanne Bell, I will show that recurring moments of exceptional violence, themselves emerging from ongoing, everyday patterns of structural and symbolic violence, lead to an experience of time neither as linear nor cyclical, but as simultaneous, where the future, past, and present are mutually constitutive and have the potential to be coincidentally influential, thereby deconstructing the sense that prior-ness must be grounded outside modernity. In doing so, I will critique the idea that blackness is a specific variable within modern ontologies, instead arguing for the foundationality of blackness-as-ontological-abjection to modern notions of economy and politics. When people tell us about what sovereignty *feels like* in moments of exceptional violence, therefore, they are also telling us about how we must come to understand what it means to be human in the wake of the plantation.

## **Repetition, simultaneity, causality**

During the week of 24 May, members of the police force and the army entered the West Kingston community of Tivoli Gardens by force to apprehend Christopher 'Dudus' Coke, who had been ordered for extradition to stand trial in the United States on gun- and drug-running charges. In August 2009 when the US issued the extradition request for Coke, Bruce Golding, then Prime Minister, leader of the Jamaica Labour Party, *and* Member of Parliament for Tivoli Gardens, argued against the extradition on the procedural grounds that the evidence against Coke was obtained by wiretapping, which is illegal under Jamaican law. But by the third week in May 2010, under pressure from Parliament and the US government, Golding announced to the nation on television that he had authorized the Attorney General to sign the extradition order. This led to a standoff between the security forces that had to find Coke and many of Coke's supporters who were bent on protecting him at any cost. By the end of the week that began Monday, 24 May, Coke had not yet been found, and at least 75 civilians were officially recognized as having been killed (the number community members give is closer to 200). The government established a curfew for Tivoli Gardens, and residents were forced to show passes when leaving or entering. Most movement in or out of the demarcated zone was effectively stopped, which meant that many people were unable to work, to go to school, to shop for food, or to go about the ordinary routines of their lives. This continued until 22 June, when Coke was detained and subsequently extradited.<sup>13</sup> Despite the immediate activities of various civil society organizations, it

took almost three years for the Office of the Public Defender to submit an interim report to Parliament regarding the conduct of the security forces. When the Commission of Enquiry, which the Public Defender's Report of April 2014 had mandated, finally got underway in December of that year, a list of the dead had still not been released and community members still felt their stories hadn't been fully heard. Since 2012, therefore, we have been developing a film and multi-media installation called 'Tivoli Stories'. This project is meant to provide a platform through which Tivoli Gardens community residents, as well as some from nearby West Kingston communities, can recount their experiences during May and June 2010, and name and publicly memorialize loved ones they lost.

As anyone familiar with Jamaican state formation knows, the 2010 'Tivoli Incursion' was merely the most recent event in a long history of governmental struggle related to garrison communities. That residents of Tivoli Gardens experience the recurrence of state incursions into their community as part of the general fabric of existence is signaled by their use of the words 'norm' and 'normally' in their narratives. Take, for example, the following statement by Donald Reid, a man in his 60s who has lived in downtown Kingston his whole life, mostly in Tivoli Gardens. 'We have gone through a lot', he said. 'People have been dying by the security force for years, it's not new . . . it just come in like a *norm* right now to the people. But this one was worse, you understand?' Everton Morgan, a middle-aged family man who hosted 13 people under his dining room table during the four most intense days of gunfire, agreed:

What took place in May 2010 was far far more greater than what had happened before. We did not have that type of gunfire and aggression from the security force and it wasn't actually so deep into the community, it was more like on the outskirts of Tivoli Gardens. But this time everything actually took place inside of Tivoli Gardens, and that was something we were seeing for the very first time.

Everton's remarks were corroborated by his wife, Claudette, who said that in 2001 and 1997, the gunfire was mainly located on the edges of Tivoli Gardens, 'because they [the supporters of the don] *normally* would block the road . . . So this time, they thought that that they would, you know, overcome the cops by blocking the road, building a bigger barrier', she explained, 'but it was way different . . . so that is why we get it so hard'. What accounted for this difference, in their estimation? 'Remember this is an extradition case', Chineyman said, after having recounted how he found out his little brother was killed while he was being interrogated and harassed by members of the security forces. 'Dis is something between the US and Jamaica. Wha did go on back then', he continued, 'that is more like, me woulda say, politics'. Jacqueline Gordon, one of the women who spent those four days under Everton's table, expressed the same sense of causality:

I was one of the persons saying that this one would be different, cause my neighbor and I was talking and I tell her that this one is not going to be like *normal*. Cause the

US is involved in this one and they want the man . . . because *normally* we run outside and peep, and we look, and we run in and, understand? But this time we couldn't even move inside the house to go and have a bath, so I figure this one would be different . . . that's what I think at the time.

The usage of 'norm' and 'normally' in these community members' statements indexes two related issues. The first of these has to do with the constancy of violence in their lives. This constancy produces a sense of simultaneity regarding their experiences of events in the past and the present, as well as their expectations of the future. As an example, hear Nadine Sutherland, who was born in Kingston in June 1968 and moved at the age of 13 to live in Tivoli Gardens with her grandmother, where she has been ever since. The first question we asked her was: 'What do you remember about the days surrounding the 24th of May 2010?' She began her story with her son's killing during an incident in 2008:

I remember 2008, the 13th of January, I remember I was at 34 Sunset Crescent, down [at] my godmother's house, when I hear a lot of noise and when I looked through the door I saw a lot of soldiers coming . . . About 3:30 going to 4:00, I get a phone call and said five man died at Keith Avenue, [and] to my surprise when I look, them say my son was in it, at the age of 18 year old, just graduated from the Denham Town high school. I went to Kingston Public Hospital, just to identify my son, when [I saw] the [police] jeep coming round with the five man. [I only saw his] shoes, because he had on a Gap crepe and an Old Navy plaid blue short set and a sky blue gansy, and I remember a lady turned to me and said 'Don't go over there.' And I said 'see mi son there.' And she say 'how you can identify a person by the feet alone?' And I start to describe the clothes and tell her seh him have on a chain round him neck, and I wouldn't mind if she could take it off for me, and she turned and said she would gwaan [and] identify him for me. And when she look, she say 'yes, that's your son for true.' Come back again 2010, on the 24th of May, I lose my two nephew.

Nadine wove these two moments together *not* in the manner of providing background to current events – a causal progression from one to another – but instead in a way that suggests a simultaneity of time, with all killings bleeding into each other, all becoming part of one immediate story.

One way to interpret Nadine's narrative is to draw from the insights of theoretical quantum physics, a discipline that provides us with a non-linear approach to time and so allows us to appreciate situations in which pressure (in this case, catastrophic violence) produces the potentiality of simultaneous time, with the past and the future acting on the present, necessarily transforming our understandings of the relationship between causality and temporality. Entanglement, for quantum physicists, refers to the notion that two sub-atomic particles, having been initially entangled, will affect each other even when far apart in space and time. It suggests that instantaneous communication across distance is possible, and that therefore there is no evidential basis for an understanding of temporality that

suggests that the present supersedes the past, and is in turn superseded by the future. With linearity thus dispensed, moreover, it is possible for an intervention into one entangled particle to affect what happens to another particle *earlier* in time. This is the notion of retrocausality, where the future has the ability to influence the past.<sup>14</sup> Of course, within the macroscopic world, these notions seem counter-intuitive, as they disturb modernist understandings of the world. Yet the attempt to apply the principles of particles to macro-level analysis has inspired creative interrogations of the relationships among meaning and matter, materiality and sociality, mediation and infrastructure.

Perhaps because of its interrogative possibilities for explorations of temporality in Black Atlantic worlds, the physics of quantum mechanics has a history of having appealed to Caribbean philosophers. Antonio Benítez-Rojo, for example, was drawn to chaos theory for its proposal that tiny actions were not random but were instead related to meta-phenomena, for its privileging of dynamism and differential repetition, and for its insistence on multiplicity and non-linearity. For Benítez-Rojo (1992), chaos theory in particle physics provided a model for his concept of repeating time, which sought to identify the patterns underlying complex historical processes. He sought to connect these processes without tying them to linear genealogies in order to disturb the centrality of the binaries often mobilized to understand the Europe-Africa encounter in the New World.<sup>15</sup>

More recently, Michelle Wright (2015) has also drawn from the contributions of quantum physics to re-imagine the relationships among blackness, space, and time. Her interest is to dislodge the centrality of what she calls the Middle Passage Epistemology, one that locates blackness historically primarily within the oppressive narratives of enslavement and colonization, and spatially within the linear movement from Africa to the 'New World', an epistemology that neither accounts for blacknesses arising as the result of other origin stories, nor for a reading of black agency as anything other than reactive. Wright uses quantum physics to advocate for a conceptualization of history that refuses a linear formulation of causal analyses of why things are the way they are. She advocates the view that 'the "now" is always in process – that is, the present and future are not discrete moments but rather are conflated into the one moment that is the now' (Wright, 2015: 41). Time, in this framework, can be experienced as sometimes overlapping and sometimes disconnected, but with a sense of possibility that outstrips the kind of black liberatory time Fanon would have seen as possible in the mid-20th century, or the kind of utopian future envisioned by 1970s revolutionaries that David Scott (2014) has so eloquently considered.

Envisioning reconfigurations of time through the quantum is useful because when people are speaking about the constancy of violence inflicted by representatives of the state, they are also evoking the broader entanglements of forms of rule, trade, and labor that make these 'incursions' possible. That is, their experiences of simultaneity with respect to state violence also suggest a more general sense of continuity between the past and the present, between the slavery and post-emancipation periods, between colonial and independent governance. We see

echoes of this, for example, when Shawn Bowen tells us about a policemen taunting them, saying that since 'passa passa' – a popular street dance formerly held every Wednesday on the main road bordering Tivoli Gardens – would not be held that evening, the men would have to enact it for the police, right then and there. Shawn continued:

So right now we had to fall in with some clapping. Cause is like a stage show we have to provide for these guys now. The humiliation that we under right now, we had to perform a stage show for them, clapping, singing, falling in, who a DJ a go DJ and all dem ting there.

Statements like this suggest that time moves but nothing changes; the men tied to each other and moved from place to place under threat of the gun in 2010 were not affectively different from the slaves brought on deck during the Middle Passage to play music, dance, and be 'exercised', or those on plantations who were ordered to entertain whites. These are the same forms of humiliation, the same connotations regarding the value of their personhood.

Quantum physics, therefore, encourages us to rethink time, dispensing with the notion that modern temporality is linear, and that therefore we shed foundational relations of expropriation and displacement as time moves progressively forward. Yet quantum physics is not the only frame through which we might interpret the lessons of narratives like Nadine's. We might also think about them in relation to the concepts of trauma and mediation. Here, moments of exceptional violence produce a kind of recurrence and repetition – of places, of phenomena, of loss – temporal ruptures that have been discussed at length by scholars of trauma.

For example, Shawn also told us that he was removed from his home with all the other men in his tenement yard, and conscripted to move sandbags at roadblocks. The men's hands were tied behind their backs as they were loaded into trucks and taken to a school, where they stayed for three hours crowded together into a bathroom. From there, they were taken to an open lot where soldiers made them kneel down in rows while they taunted the men with their guns; Shawn's sense was they were all going to be executed. Finally, he said, they were carried to 'one white house', and he remembered that this was the same house that was shown years before on the television, 'one time in July, when the incident happened with Adams, policeman Adams, that place right across [from] the market'. Here, he was invoking the events of July 2001 when, under the leadership of then Police Commissioner Renato Adams, security forces attempted to enter Tivoli Gardens in search of guns and fugitives. That time, 27 civilians were killed. This building's presence in Shawn's narrative about 2010 creates a repetition in relation to the two 'incursions'.

Other community members, including Chineyman, whose little brother was killed execution style with his arms around his stepfather during the state of emergency, talked about the 'flashbacks' he experienced when thinking about that period. We asked him what the days leading up to the beginning of the state of

emergency were like after former Prime Minister Golding announced that the extradition order would be signed:

Everybody was just inna this rush you know. It was like you know when the count-down go on for the New Year, it's like a countdown, which, we know the danger when did a go happen still, a nuh something where is the first time we see it. Is not the first time. The only thing is this one, the one is more it's coming like them rip out the people dem heart.

Trauma scholars have tended to frame the temporal ruptures and recurrences we hear in these narratives primarily in psychoanalytic terms, in which the sense of urgency and immediacy reflects a trauma neither processed nor fully buried, and therefore always prone to resurfacing in relation to new provocations (Caruth, 1995; Felman and Laub, 1992). I am interested, however, in framing this kind of narrative as a social, rather than individual, expression (Puri, 2014). This kind of framing would not merely encourage attention to the specific contexts or histories that produce the sense of simultaneity, a past living in the present via the palimpsestual repetition of events and experiences that, as they layer on top of each other, create the conditions for the kind of haunting Avery Gordon has written about.<sup>16</sup> Framing these narratives socially would also lend insights into the process of mediation that 'links an institution and an individual, a social structure and a subject, and history and a biography' (Gordon, 2008: 19), and therefore the kinds of 'co-relation' that temporal simultaneities bring to light. I have used the term 'co-relation' here not only to invoke correlation, but also to bring attention to the dynamic relational articulations among the scales, spheres, and processes under consideration.

I am also using co-relation to lead us to the second issue indexed by community members' use of the terms 'norm' and 'normally'. When community members speak of something being out of the 'norm' they are articulating a sense that something in their usual experience of state violence has shifted, and moreover that they are attributing particular causalities to this shifting. This returns us to the concern with prior-ness, and with the entanglements that have produced the material and affective conditions of the contemporary political economy. It also raises the question of how particular entanglements become legible in certain moments, and how this changes over time. Remember that Chineyman told us it was not only the Jamaican state that was involved – politics, and in this case, institutionalized garrison politics – but also the US government. Indeed, there was a US drone overhead on 24 May 2010, providing surveillance support to the Jamaican government. There is no way, however, to construe this as the first time the United States had become involved with one or another aspect of Jamaica's garrison politics.

We know that US engagements within Jamaica have taken many forms since the late 19th century – from the United Fruit Company and the development of a global banana and tourism industry; through the Bases for Destroyers Act during

the Second World War; through post-war guest worker programs; through the various agreements and initiatives related to trade and security after independence; and through the myriad circulations of people, money, products, and ideas that characterize the post-1965 period. But it was the anti-communist labor agitation supported by the North American branches of United Steelworkers that violently split the progressive arm of the trade union movement and helped to solidify clientelism as the hegemonic modality of political participation. It was also the United States that provided extensive support to the police force and military, both financially and in terms of training and personnel, and that established a CIA presence within their embassy. And it was the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) that engaged in continued intervention in Jamaican labor organizing, as it also did throughout Latin America. These developments entangled Jamaican politics with the material and affective dimensions of the Cold War, and the US War on Drugs has consistently also worked to co-relate Jamaican futures, pasts and presents. These processes have, of course, occurred in tandem with the intensification of pressures on the part of multi-lateral lending institutions, aid programs, and development banks, since the late-1970s, to shrink the size of local government and to privatize the social programs and benefits formerly conceptualized as part of the rights of citizenship.

The 'normal', thus, has to do with a shifting awareness of the ordinary and everyday ways violence has been organized at various scales – within the garrison, between the garrison and the state, between the garrison and the transnational processes within which it is embedded and from which it profits, and between the state and the multi-lateral institutions to which it is held accountable. What is being made legible in 2010, then, is not only the fuller fleshing out of the specter of US influence, but also of the various scales at which and through which the garrison operates. The 'normal', therefore, has to do with the prior-ness of transnational black subordination, with the foundationality of blackness as ontological abjection in relation to modern notions of both economy *and* politics as this has been expressed in dynamic ways over time (Ferreira da Silva, 2007).

Let me now bring in one last frame through which we might interpret this claim in relation to the narratives we are hearing – the frame of digitality. Just as post-colonial political philosophers have recently been preoccupied by what has been seen as a 'crisis' of the nation-state, some cinema studies theorists have worried over an 'identity crisis' in relation to the indexicality of film, one that has been wrought by the turn to the digital. Kara Keeling (2005) reframes this worry in her analysis of Spike Lee's *Bamboozled*, and it is through her concept of 'non-chronological time' – at which she arrives via a re-reading of Hegel through philosopher James Snead – that I believe we can glean additional insights about the relations among past, present, and future as these are related to modern Black Atlantic subjectivity, historicity, and ontology.

Hegel argued that 'Black culture' and the 'Negro' occupy the space and time of the non-human against which European progressive humanity can be realized. The 'Negro' and 'Africa', for Hegel, represent absolute alterity, existing in a space of

atemporality, outside of history and outside of culture. Reworking the ‘historylessness’ and ‘immediacy’ of ‘Black culture’ in Hegel, Snead notes that immediacy can also suggest the following: ‘being there, the African is also always already there, or perhaps always there before, whereas the European is headed there or, better, not yet there’ (1981: 148). For Keeling, this reworking raises the possibility that ‘the African might be understood as that from which the movement of the European (the human) derives and black culture might be understood as the crucible for a European progressive culture that ultimately arrives at that which was already there before, black culture’.<sup>17</sup> ‘The human unfolds in time’, she continues, ‘while the Black is internal to time – the Black haunts the human’s past, present, and future’ (2005: 242). Black subjectivity, therefore, exists in non-chronological time and, moreover, she states: ‘European subjectivity arrives at black subjectivity under the pressure of post-structuralism’ (2005: 242). Here is how Keeling sums this up:

Today, the temporalities of culture in general have begun to conform to the temporalities previously posited as particular to black culture, and the extant political potentials of ‘the human’ have started to parallel those available through an examination of the historical relationship between the logics of commodification and ‘the Black.’ The saturation of culture by the logics of Capital, the temporal rearrangements that accompany that process, and the philosophical implications of deconstruction . . . present us with an historical constellation in which black cultural insights and innovations are especially important to a general exploration of the possibilities for a cultural politics that might offer support to innovative and egalitarian alternatives to existing hegemonic relationships. (Keeling, 2005: 240)

In other words, the conjoining of humanness with blackness – even under the terms of abjection – is what generates modern subjectivity in relation to the emergence of global capitalism in the 15th and 16th centuries. Therefore blackness is foundational to modern temporality, at the same time that a sense of non-capitalist Africanness outside of Europe – which actually cannot exist as ‘blackness’ because race is a modern category – stands as simultaneously past and immanent in human experience in the west. Further, and crucially, the struggles, insights, and strategies derived from blackness, having been prior, are those most likely to provide interventions into contemporary neoliberal capitalist relations of domination.

Keeling’s non-chronological time, rooted in the processes engendering capitalist modernity, and in particular a new racialized commodification of labor under conditions of plantation slavery, echoes what Sylvia Wynter (2003) called the overrepresentation of a western bourgeois ethnoclass as ‘Man’, and indexes as well the repetition of capitalist accumulation through the dispossession of racialized bodies. This orientation to time opens the possibility of unforeseeable and unpredictable futures that are rooted in a global historical prior-ness that centers non-European bodies in relation to modern processes whose entanglements are still felt today. The simultaneity of past, present, and future opens new directions for the elaboration of

multiple scales of causality for shifts in the arrangements and experiences of violence, and calls into question the directionality of European progress narratives.

Let me now return to the particularities of Jamaica to make the argument that just as slavery was foundational to the development of modern capitalism in the New World, as well as to liberal notions of governance and private property (Buck Morss, 2000, 2009; Fischer, 2015; Wynter, 2003), the garrison is foundational to institutionalized political modernity. If racial slavery within the context of mercantile, and later industrial, capitalism is what transformed notions of personhood, value, and time reckoning in the Americas, then garrison politics is what has transformed the experience of temporality and citizenship in postcolonial Jamaica. If the European arrives at blackness under conditions of post-structuralism, then the national citizenry as a whole arrives at the garrison under the pressure of neoliberalism. This last point might seem paradoxical to readers familiar with Jamaica, as the most usual analysis is that Tivoli Gardens, having been more or less protected from the normal processes of state contraction and structural adjustment, is now subject to the same structurally adjusted deprivations that have plagued the experiences of ordinary Jamaicans over the past three decades. However, the point I am trying to make is more Benjaminian, that the exceptionality of the garrison is actually constitutive of politics in Jamaica, not just in downtown Kingston – though residents there might feel it the most keenly – but everywhere.

Indeed, if we were to think about the 2010 State of Emergency as a kind of ‘revolution’, it would be one to end politics as usual (Lewis, 2012). Indeed, in many ways, the ‘incursion’ was seen by many – including some who live in Tivoli Gardens – as a necessary response to a revolution that had already happened. The scaffolding of patron-clientelism had already been significantly bent not only by the general climate of neoliberalism, but also by ‘Dudus’ Coke himself who, more than any don before him, operated independently of politicians, united dons across Jamaica and transnationally (even in some cases across political parties), and created opportunities within *private* enterprise for himself and others. This is decidedly *not* the revolution imagined by mid-20th-century nationalists or post-independence leftists. This revolution, instead, instantiates the contemporary reorganization of sovereignty, and brings to light the new mechanisms through which governance occurs. It indexes what Wendy Brown (2015) has called the ‘stealth revolution’ of neoliberalism, the converting of every dimension of political, juridical, educational, and socio-cultural activity – the foundations of democracy itself – into economic metrics. If sovereign state formation in the British West Indies was originally built on a developmentalist alliance between peasants, political parties, and unions, who channeled (coopted, for some observers) the energy of the region-wide workers’ strikes during the late 1930s into a legible anti-colonial struggle, and if this alliance was eventually destabilized in places like Jamaica by the adoption of economic development policies – at the behest of multi-lateral institutions – that ultimately maintained dependency, and by the emergence of garrison politics writ large, where the emphasis was on loyalty not to party or principle but to individual leaders (both politicians and strongmen), what we are now seeing is

an attempt to dismantle the latter without truly exposing the transnational entanglements and geopolitical machinations that have facilitated the wealth, privileges, and protections that have made this kind of system possible over the many years.

## Futurity

After the state of emergency, many Tivoli Gardens residents who had left the community prior to the incursion did not immediately return. For some of the young men, this was because they had been warned that those who returned were being killed by police (and possibly also by gunmen supporting Coke). For others, their reluctance to return was due to an overwhelming sense of grief for those who died, and traumatic realization that their community would never be the same again. As one young woman told us, 'I was really scared, because of how the . . . -place looked, I thought it was really like a ghost town, because I thought a lot of people died'. This grief was coupled by a sense of uncertainty that was articulated by Everton, who reflected: 'I gather that there are people who are still missing now and nobody can say whether they're alive or they're dead, or what has happened to them, so there are some persons that are still to be accounted for'. Jacqueline Gordon also questioned the government's official tally of the dead: 'At one point in time the place was stink, burning, and that burning wasn't normal smoke, it was really smelling bad. People lose loved ones that still are not accounted for', she continued, 'it's not the total'. What is the effect of this uncertainty? Shawn told us that 'when you dohn used to a ting, you know, and something happen to you . . . it just continue, continue, continue bugging you, bugging you, bugging you. Whesh [what] you gonna think, or how you gonna pray?' This is what sovereignty feels like. It haunts. But remember, Avery Gordon tells us haunting also produces a 'something-to-be-done' which, for her, requires 'not a return to the past but a reckoning with its repression in the present' (Gordon, 2008: 183).

One of the most striking patterns within the narratives we have been archiving is the fact that, with few exceptions, when we ask community residents what they think could and should happen to change their situations, beyond the Commission of Enquiry that has finally begun and about which most community members are skeptical, they seem unable to articulate any kind of transformative program. Instead they leave it obliquely up to the next generation or make vague mention of education or jobs programs.<sup>18</sup> This is not striking because we are looking to them for the next emancipatory political vision, or because we are seeing in them the potential vanguard of 'resistance' that will finally transform the organization of the state. It is striking because it constructs a future evacuated of what Anthony Bogues has called the '*prophetic redemptive tradition*' (2002: 20), a tradition that has long undergirded radical black politics in Jamaica and the Americas more generally.

Within a prophetic redemptive tradition, liberation, like life, is rooted in an ontological alterity that does not rely on a condition of being prior, outside or

marginal but instead is grounded *in* the violences of modernity, and in this way it also authorizes an understanding of co-relation that is multi-directional and multi-temporal. It focuses on the future, but cannot be detached from the past. The current inability to imagine enacting this future is reflected in many ways, one of which is how community residents reminisced about Tivoli's heyday, when things were 'bustling, bubbly and full of activities'. As one teenager lamented, 'it's not fun anymore. Nighttime usually we can stay out and go to parties', she continued. 'But now, it come like you haffi be inside your house, you can't walk on the road. If you walk you remember, you see the house burned down and you think, inna the incursion that happened'. That we are not currently seeing forms of imaginative agency in Tivoli Gardens forces us to think through how the complex garrison calculus between loyalty and benefits (both financial and juridical) has generated a socio-political sphere in which imagination beyond the localities of the here and now is exceedingly difficult, and how the dismantling of this calculus has left subjects 'stalled' (Scott, 2014), at least for the time being, with the future suspended, incapable (for the moment) of acting on the present or past.

While the West Kingston Commission of Enquiry is critical to a national discussion of how sovereign violence is generated, the institutions through which it is enacted, and the extent to which we are all complicit in its reproduction, it will not ultimately transform the lives of those who lost loved ones or were themselves injured within Tivoli Gardens, even if people are compensated monetarily for damage to property, as some community members hope. It will not suddenly enable Annette Irving, whose sister was killed during the state of emergency, to revel in the company of her nephews, whom she currently avoids because they remind her of her own loss. Nor will it stop Shawn Bowen, who prior to the incursion did not drink alcohol, from beginning his morning with white rum. It will not, as community members say, 'bring back life', either literally or metaphorically.

In part, this is because this Commission, and others like it, offer a juridical solution that, as many have critiqued within other contexts, relies on a liberal humanist conception of rights and morality that merely produces the juridical and economic subjects it presupposes without fundamentally transforming their material, social, or symbolic circumstances (McAllister, 2013; Ross, 2003; Feldman, 2004). It is also because truth commissions and other enquiries require for their realization that we imagine ourselves to exist in a post-violence, post-conflict moment rather than encouraging us to interrogate the forms of historical and everyday violence that co-relate to create the conditions for spectacular enactments.

If an ontological reconfiguration of temporality from the sphere of 'plantation America' rescues us from the hegemonic teleologies of progressive time, while also untethering anthropological conceptions of 'otherness' from the temporal relegation to the past, it must also foreground a sense of ethics that releases us from the hegemony of juridical resolution, itself grounded in the violence of law, particularly for those defined by law as something less than human. How, then, do we address

the question of what it means to be a human capable of acting in and on a world that hides the ontological entanglements of the violences that have been foundational to its formation? How do we mobilize a transformed apprehension of temporality and prior-ness toward the project of repair? As we have seen, the distance between past, present, and future is not essentially linear but 'co-related', with 'co-relation' here evoking temporal entanglements without demarcating the causal chains through which they occur. My proposal, thus, is that the effects of violence must be measured not merely in terms of numbers (of persons dead, or of dwellings razed), but *vis-à-vis* qualitative and affective dimensions of experience in order to challenge our ontological notions of temporality, causality, and mutual responsibility.

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### **Notes**

1. For foundational works on time as multiple and socially constructed see Durkheim (1915); Leach (1961); Bloch (1977); Geertz (1973); Gell (1992); Munn (1992). For the relationship of temporal hierarchies to imperialism and anthropological epistemologies see Boellstorff (2007); Fabian (1983); Greenhouse (1996); Clifford and Marcus (1986).
2. Charles Wagley (1957) first used this term in order to demarcate a broad circum-Caribbean 'culture sphere' by a similar history of imperialism, plantation slavery, and subsequent racialized labor migration.
3. See also Munasinghe (2001) for a parallel discussion of how 'contributions' are reckoned in relation to nationalist belonging, with Indo-Trinidadians expressing their understand that they 'saved' Trinidad by working in the cane fields when Afro-Trinidadians turned away from this kind of labor. Kevin Birth (1999) has linked notions of time to these sorts of emic understandings of ethnic difference, but my sense is that he doesn't do enough to historicize these notions of difference in relation to modalities of governance after emancipation.
4. The persistence of (and sometime governmental support for) peasant production complicates this picture a bit, as this mode of production has largely been seen (by peasants as well as missionaries) as the motor of respectable personhood and the basis for an independently-minded and responsible citizenry (for example, see Slocum, 2006).
5. See Thomas (2011: ch. 5) for a more extensive discussion on Rastafari claims to indigeneity.
6. Working in an Australian context, Beth Povinelli has fleshed this out in the following way: 'This division of tense within the social fabric of emerging settler nationalism bifurcated the sources and grounds of social belonging in such a way that the

relationship between settler and Native/Indigenous was transformed from a mutual implication in the problem of prior occupation to a hierarchical relationship between two modes of prior occupation, one oriented to the future, the other to the past. As the governance of the prior crossed the truth-value of the future anterior and past perfect, the priority of the human as ultimate signature of liberal democratic sovereignty was detached from the priority of the descent of persons even as the priority of certain persons, colonizers, was safeguarded against the priority of others, the colonized. And this division became available to be applied to other grounds within the nation and against the nation' (Povinelli, 2011: 36).

7. See Carnegie (1987) and Besson (2002) for discussions of land tenure and inheritance; see Thomas (2011) and Burnard (2004) on the relationship of land during slavery and patterns of political authority; and see Singham (1968) and Munroe (1972) on authoritarianism and patronage.
8. Also see Singham (1968) on the relationships between charisma and clientelism, and Hart (1989) for the ways in which this prevented a continued emphasis on mass political education.
9. See Clarke (2006: esp. p. 253) for more on the ways urban renewal projects also contributed to the territorial garrisonization of politics.
10. See Munroe (1972: 92) for a discussion of an unemployed woman who was seeking a ticket for seasonal farm work in the United States from her local ministry of labor, and who was told that her ability to get a job was dependent upon her political affiliation. Munroe also cites a pamphlet from the PNP Party Group Leaders Training Course that clarified the proportionate numbers of PNP and JLP supporters who should receive benefits from the government party.
11. There is a robust (and growing) body of literature on transformations in the ongoing process of garrisonization and 'tribal politics' in Jamaica. See, for example, Munroe (1972); Stone (1980); Harriott (2004); Gray (2004); Gunst (1995); Charles (2002); Jaffe (2013); Sives (2010).
12. This is additionally how people become increasingly blamed for their own marginalization through such means as the ever-recurring 'culture of poverty' discourse (Stack, 1974; Waterston, 1999).
13. At his trial, Coke pled guilty to charges of racketeering and distribution of marijuana and cocaine on 30 August 2011, and he was sentenced in June 2012 to 23 years, which he is currently serving in a medium-security prison in South Carolina.
14. Certainly, there is a critical history within philosophy that has also argued these points, and quantum physics would therefore seem to give some experimental legitimacy to Bergson's notion of duration, among other conceptual innovations. One of the biggest proponents of retrocausality is, indeed, the philosopher Huw Price (see Price, 2012, Price and Wharton, 2016), and he works closely with theoretical physicists like Ken Wharton at San Jose State University. See also the work of Mark van Raamsdonk at the University of British Columbia, and Sean Carroll at the California Institute of Technology. A familiarity with quantum physics is useful when reading their publications, but Karen Barad's recent book (2007) provides important background understanding for many of the experiments that are used to buttress the quantum view of the world. See also Carroll (2010). I thank Larry Gladney for pointing out many of these references and scholars, and encouraging me to delve into both popular and scholarly variants of their work.

15. Wilson Harris and Edouard Glissant were, like Benítez-Rojo, drawn to quantum physics during the 1970s. In it, they found a way to talk about the transnational relations that forged and reproduced the Caribbean, and came to feel that 'the tenets of chaos theory, specifically nonlinear change and the coexistence of order the disorder, best explain[ed] the formation of Caribbean spaces and culture' (Murray-Román, 2015: 21).
16. See also Derrida (1994); Mbembe (2001); Alexander (2005).
17. This notion repositions the arguments about prior-ness that appear in a number of texts including Ivan Van Sertima's *They Came Before Columbus* (1976), or George James's *Stolen Legacy* (1954), texts that are rooted in a pre-capitalist pattern of mobility and that present Europeans as sticky-fingered 'Johnny-Come-Latelys' to African civilization, skill, and discovery.
18. While this may be a hegemonic position within Tivoli Gardens c. 2012, 2013, 2014, we also know it is subject to change and, moreover, that there are institutionalized spaces within the community (such as churches) that are encouraging alternative stances by, for instance, supporting the development of youth and women's leadership (personal communication with Kijan Bloomfield, 27 May 2015, a PhD student in the Department of Religious Studies at Princeton University who is conducting important research on the ways spirituality operates within conditions of violence).

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