

chapter 1

THE HYBRID PRODUCTION  
OF EMPIRE

Since the publication of Homi K. Bhabha's essay "Signs Taken for Wonders," hybridity is generally taken as the subversive product of colonial systems. This process of heterogeneous mixture, also referred to as creolization or tropicalization, is often taken to embody the potential to destabilize or undo the very colonial systems of which they are a result. Bhabha's reformulation of hybridization or creolization as the double-voiced ambivalence of the colonial text holds out the possibility of reading colonial representation against itself.

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the *production* of hybridization . . . then an important change of perspective occurs. The ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority enables a form of subversion, founded on the undecidability that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.<sup>1</sup>

This formulation may be a seductive and enabling one for contemporary cultural production. Seen historically, however, hybridization is not so easily disentangled from its colonial legacy in the founding discourses of botany and race. As a caution, I take up the aesthetic and material discourses of colonial relandscaping. If one looks at the British and French colonial plantation systems of the Caribbean in the eighteenth century and the relandscapings of the British West Indies and the French Antilles effected through material transplantation of plants, enslaved African people, and machines, the production of hybridization stands out, rather, as a technique for symbolic, material, and geopolitical colonization. The production of hybridization should be understood not merely as an effect of colonial power but rather as one of the main technologies by which colonial power was produced as discursive and material effect.

The plantation machine imposed on the islands of the Caribbean by the Spanish and then the French and British was a system of signs as much as a mechanism of economic production and exploitation.<sup>2</sup> The technologies of what I term colonial intermixing and imperial picturesque in the case of the British West Indies and colonial grafting and

drafting in the case of the French Antilles hybridized and radically transformed the environments of the Caribbean islands. The material practices of transplantation and grafting were part of the ordering and articulation of the Plantation as discourse, that is, these technologies were also codes that reworked these island terrains, endeavoring to resignify marks of transplantation, clearing, deforestation, disindigenation, private property, enclosure, discipline, and monoculture (i.e., the sugar plantation). Just as the "New World" was invented before it was "discovered," the colonial landscape was planted and replanted not only through successive eras of colonial plantation but through forms of reproductive print, visual and textual, that were to serve as prototypical models of colonial re-landscaping. The prospect of colonial landscaping was also always prospective. The colonial landscape of imperial print culture represented not merely what was supposed to have been done but what might or, from the perspective of those invested in the plantation system, should be. As such, the printed views, diagrams, maps, and plans I discuss in this chapter acted primarily as vehicles for the dissemination and production of imperial power, whether in the beneficent guise of an intermixed and hybridized landscape or the abstracted geometry of machinic drafting.

#### THE CULTIVATION OF EMPIRE: TRANSPLANTATION, PICTURESQUE AESTHETICS, AND THE BRITISH WEST INDIES

Although *hybrid* may be, in terms of its sheer obsessive reiteration, "the nineteenth-century's word,"<sup>3</sup> the adjective *hybridous* and the noun *hybrid* emerged in the eighteenth century as specifically technical terms in the discourse of economic botany and were used to mark the "cutting edge" of scientific rationalism and experimentation in the service of empire. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that the word *hybrid* was scarcely in use until the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> However, the experiments in the crossbreeding of plants from various parts of the world undertaken in the latter part of the eighteenth century became the subjects of fascination in such popular texts as Erasmus Darwin's "Loves of the Plants," an extended poetic analogy between plants and human sexuality made possible by the Linnaean sexual system of botanical classification. Published as part of *The Botanic Garden* (1789), Darwin's poem assembles plants from diverse terrains all over the globe and especially the British colonies into one vast, diverse, but poetically unified landscape.<sup>5</sup> The British imperium is thereby represented as a global botanical garden that becomes the scene of torrid romance, particularly of those sexual practices disavowed at home.

The sexual language of plants adapted by Darwin from the works of the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus provided a way to speak of what was considered taboo interracial sex, but it also endeavored to displace and confine the romance of the Other to plant life. "The Loves of the Plants" makes an impassioned plea against slavery, reimagining the biblical parable of Moses in the bull rushes as a young cassia fruit of the Americas sent to float to freedom along the Gulf Stream.<sup>6</sup> However, in Darwin's vegetable empire, sentimental outpourings against the slave trade are one thing and crossbreeding another.

The lines dedicated to hybrid plants term such mixed produce botanical "mules." The notes to the poem declare that "vegetable mules supply an irrefragable argument in favour of the sexual system of botany. They are said to be numerous and like the mules of the animal kingdom not always to continue their species by seed."<sup>7</sup> The supposed infertility of hybrids was one linchpin of the argument that different so-called races constituted distinct species. Linnaeus's "system of nature" not only categorized plants but also animals and within the general category animal, "homo sapiens." However, Linnaeus continued making distinctions not merely of "type" but also of value, breaking down the unit "homo" into not just *Homo sapiens* and *Homo monstrosus* but six varieties: wild man, American, European, Asiatic, African, and monsters including "man-made" ones.<sup>8</sup> Lest one mistake the analogy between the sex life of plants and miscegenation, "Fairchild's mule," the *Dianthus caryophyllus*, the clove pink, or the now familiar carnation—created by crossbreeding the *Dianthus superbus*, or superb pink, from France with the *Caryophyllus aromaticus*, or clove tree, from the Moluccas in the East Indies—changes, in Darwin's poem, into the offspring of an "illicit love" that produces a "monster":

Caryo's sweet smile Dianthus proud admires,  
and gazing burns with unallow'd desires;  
With sighs and sorrows her compassion moves,  
And wins the damsel to illicit loves.  
The Monster—offspring heirs the father's pride,  
Mask'd in the damask beauties of the bride.<sup>9</sup>

Although this "Monster-offspring" is subsequently described as a "beauteous" one, its form in Darwin's poem is not half-rose, half-clove, or half-French, half-East Indian, but to make the contrast yet stronger, "half-rose, half-bird," that is, a heteroclitic mix from different orders.<sup>10</sup> In the eighteenth century, such language of plant hybridization began to be used as a discourse to naturalize claims that there were not only distinct races but that these "races" constituted separable and unmixable species.<sup>11</sup> Darwin's poem is highly ambivalent. The sex discourse of the birds and the bees or, rather, in this case, that of the carnal carnation (from the Latin *carnis* for flesh) or the hybrid half-rose, half-bird titillates readers with illicit loves that produce prodigal marvels and yet may at the same time be read as an endeavor to ground as natural law the fantastic claim that because crossbreeds were supposedly infertile they were against nature and, therefore, immoral.

At the same time, plant crossbreeding, transfer, and reclamation were at the center of British efforts to control world markets in highly valuable vegetable commodities. The clove had become by the seventeenth century a Dutch imperial monopoly grown exclusively on the Dutch-controlled Moluccas, or Spice Islands. To break the Dutch monopoly, the British and French used their island possessions in the East and West Indies as potential laboratories for the introduction of such hotly contested spices as the clove.<sup>12</sup> The superb pink from France, the clove from the East Indies, and the hybrid *Dianthus caryophyllus*, or Darwin's "vegetable mule" (here referred to as the clove July

flower), are featured among the transplants to the West Indies in the *Hortus Eastensis*. This lengthy table (Figure 1), compiled by a British physician, Arthur Broughton, catalogs the approximately 527 "exotic plants" transplanted from various parts of the globe to the garden of Hinton East located at Spring Garden in the cool mountains of Liguanea on the island of Jamaica.<sup>13</sup> Published in the oft-reissued *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (which first appeared in 1793), by the Jamaican planter and historian Bryan Edwards, the *Hortus Eastensis* advertises the colonial government of Jamaica's recent purchase of East's botanical garden as a site for acclimatizing plants economically useful to the maintenance of the sugar-plantation machine. While the *Hortus Eastensis* stands for a particular botanical garden, the catalog's publication, celebrating the garden's new civic role with its pithy introduction ("This garden is now the property of the public"), also represents the ideal version of the colonial landscape of Jamaica as a vast and various table.

The *Hortus Eastensis* bears none of the dense description characteristic of the natural histories of Jamaica from the physician Sir Hans Sloane (the first volume of which was published in 1707 and the second in 1725),<sup>14</sup> through Patrick Browne (1756) and Edward Long (1774). However, the *Hortus Eastensis* catalog shares with the colonial natural history book a basic strategic structure. These texts gather plants from all over the globe into one space and yet label and divide the landscape they represent as assemblage into distinct parts. The exotic transplants of the *Hortus Eastensis*, grouped according to class, are further separated out by name, place of origin, date of first introduction to Jamaica, and the colonial planter or gardener credited with the labor. The botanical garden as catalog table positions Darwin's offspring of "illicit love" not as a hybrid plant but as a successful colonial graft introduced from England to Jamaica by Matthew Wallen in 1772, signaling British ingenuity in the areas of farming and botany. Interleaved between the "Historical Account of the Constitution of Jamaica," a self-congratulatory narrative of the civil government of Jamaica from its formation in 1661, and a lamenting survey of the state of the French colony of Saint-Domingue after slave uprising and armed insurrection, the *Hortus Eastensis* extends a seemingly scientifically neutral version of the imposed structure of colonial government into and over the Jamaican landscape as a defensive palisade of plants against internal disorder displaced outside and onto Saint-Domingue in the wake of revolt.

While the botanical garden served a specific symbolic function in the 1790s, the mythic image of the plantation landscape dominated by sugarcane as, instead, a prodigious variety of introduced flora held in place by an ordering system of careful segmentation spanned the century as a means to justify colonization and as a discursive and material field in which to work out anxieties about mixture, particularly racial mixture. Throughout the early modern period, the aesthetic principle of variety was understood to endow a garden or land in general with visual interest and value, that is, to make it a "landscape." But to be a landscape, this "variety" was to be apprehended through or physically organized by the application of an ordering plan or what was often called "unity." It may be tempting to subsume the discourse of colonial landscaping and its

Classis XIII.				
P O L Y A N D R I A.				
M O N O G Y N I A.				
CAPPARIS	<i>Spinosa</i>	Caper Shrub	Italy	H. East, Esq. 1774
PAPAYER	<i>Rhœas</i>	Red Poppy	Britain	H. East, Esq. 1773
THEA	<i>viridis</i>	Green Tea-Tree	China	Dr. Tho. Clarke, 1775
	<i>Bohea</i>	Bohea Tea-Tree	China	Mr. Baker, 1771
CARYOPHYLLUS	<i>aromaticus</i> *	Clove Tree	Molucca Islands	Dr. Tho. Clarke, 1789
CISTUS	<i>populifolius</i>	Poplar-leav'd Cistus	Portugal	H. East, Esq. 1779
	<i>incanus</i>	Hoary-leav'd Cistus	Portugal	H. East, Esq. 1779
	<i>crispus</i>	Curled-leav'd Cistus	Portugal	H. East, Esq. 1779
	<i>Tuberaria</i>	Plantain-leav'd Cistus	Portugal	H. East, Esq. 1779
DELPHINIUM	<i>grandiflorum</i>	Great-flower'd Larksp.	Siberia	H. East, Esq. 1774
	<i>Consolida</i>	Branching Larkspur	England	M. Wallen, Esq. 1772
	<i>elatum</i>	Bee Larkspur	Siberia	M. Wallen, Esq. 1773
ACONITUM	<i>Napellus</i>	Chinese Larkspur	China	H. East, Esq. 1773
		Wolfsbane	France	
P E N T A G Y N I A.				
AQUILEGIA	<i>vulgaris</i>	Columbine Flower	Britain	M. Wallen, Esq. 1772
NIGELLA	<i>damaicensis</i>	Fennel Flower	Spain	M. Wallen, Esq. 1772
P O L Y G Y N I A.				
ILLICIUM	<i>floridanum</i>	Aniseed Tree	Florida	H. East, Esq. 1787
LIRIODENDRON	<i>Tulipifera</i>	Tulip Tree	N. America	H. East, Esq. 1776.
MAGNOLIA	<i>grandiflora</i>	Laurel-leav'd Magnol.	Carolina	Mr. Gale, 1772
	<i>glauca</i>	Swamp Magnolia	N. America	Mr. Gale, 1772
	<i>acuminata</i>	Blue Magnolia	N. America	H. East, Esq. 1788
ANNONA		Cherimoya	S. America	H. East, Esq. 1786
ANEMONE	<i>hortensis</i>	Garden Anemone	Italy	M. Wallen, Esq. 1773
ATRAGENE	<i>indica</i>		S. America	H. East, Esq. 1788
CLEMATIS	<i>Flammula</i>	Virgin's Bower	S. of France	
ADONIS	<i>autumnalis</i>	Flos Adonis	England	M. Wallen, Esq.
RANUNCULUS	<i>auricomus</i>	Wood Crowfoot	Britain	M. Wallen, Esq. 1773
Classis XIV.				
D I D Y N A M I A.				
G Y M N O S P E R M I A.				
SATUREJA	<i>hortensis</i>	Garden Savory	Italy	
HYSSOPUS	<i>officinalis</i>	Hyssop	S. of Europe	
NEPETA	<i>Cataria</i>	Catmint	Britain	H. East, Esq.
LAVANDULA	<i>Spica</i>	Common Lavender	S. of Europe	M. Wallen, Esq. 1774

\* Two of these Plants were presented to Doctor Clarke by Monsieur Nectoux, from the King's Garden at Port au Prince; they appeared in a very luxuriant State of Growth on their Arrival, but have since died.

Figure 1. Plate from Arthur Broughton, *Hortus Eastensis: or A Catalogue of Exotic Plants, in the Garden of Hinton East, Esq. in the Mountains of Liguanea* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1792), in Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (London: John Stockdale, 1801), 3:388–89. Courtesy of the Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.

concerns about hybridity under the still familiar natural or physicotheological principle of "unity in variety" that finds in or imposes over the diversity of nature an order that confirms some higher being or law.<sup>15</sup>

In his famous essay "Classifying" in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Michel Foucault references the transfer and reacclimatization of exotic plants, but subsumes this traffic of empire and technology of colonization under a shift in the form of metropolitan representation or natural history discourse from the "circular procession of the 'show'" or spectacle to the "arrangement of things on a table" in the new natural history rooms and botanical gardens of the European metropolises.<sup>16</sup> Foucault argues that the key to the epistemological precedence of botany as the privileged site of natural history discourse lies in the visible surface of plants or their capacity to immediately show more than animals. According to the logic of early modern natural history, one need not dissect the plant to demonstrate similarity or difference. If we place Foucault's thesis about botany in the contact zones of empire, if we put on scene the contact between people and animals in imperial trafficking, then the botanical table takes on a different "character" and resonance.<sup>17</sup> The demonstrative aim of the botanical table and the cataloged garden may have been, as Foucault argues, the visual display of continuity or unity in nature. However, the "threat" the table managed was not simply that general nouns would fail to sustain an illusion of continuity.<sup>18</sup> Rather, I would argue, the "threat" was also that in the demonstrated unity of nature, in the analogy of animals, people, and plants, distinctions would not hold, that the assumed differences not only between human, animal, and vegetable but moreover between humans as morphological types would blur to the point of being visibly untenable. The plant table and catalog unified by placing heterogeneous things in the same space and depended on a show of continuity between plants and humans. At the same time, by its principle of division, the botanical table also worked within this analogical relationship to manage fears about racial mixture, "amalgamation," and "intermarriage" in the less charged field of plants.<sup>19</sup>

Sir Hans Sloane, president of the Royal Society and founder of the Chelsea Physic Garden in London, traveled to Jamaica as personal physician to the Duke of Albemarle when the new governor voyaged to the island to assume his post in 1687. Returning to England the following year with around eight hundred plant specimens and drawings, produced by a Reverend Moore, of flora that could not be transported, Sloane published a natural history, the first volume of which appeared twenty years later. The introduction opens with an appeal to the physicotheological assertion that knowledge of natural history leads one to find evidence of God in nature, which serves to support the contention that the colonized environments of the Caribbean islands have remained unchanged and preserved by a guiding higher order of divinity:

These are things we are sure of, so far as our Senses are not fallible; and which, in probability, have been ever since the Creation, and will remain to the End of the World, in the same Condition we now find them: They afford great Matter of Admiring the Power, Wisdom and Providence of Almighty God, in Creating, and Preserving the things he has created.<sup>20</sup>

However, on the ground, the landscape is opened to reveal what the preface announces are its remaining indigenous secrets or the landscape as it always was. But what even the mountains disclose is colonial transformation as at once a future horizon, the agriculturalist justification for intervention as a goal to be reached, and an already happened, an always already there:

When I was at Liguanea, I was inform'd that there was a Plantation in the Mountains belonging to Captain Harrison, where was a Garden the best furnished of any in the Island with European Garden Plants; such as are either used for Physick, for the Kitchen, or for Ornament. The high situation of the place made it fitter for the Production of these Vegetables, because the higher the cooler, and that generally there are more Rains and Showers on Mountains than in the Valleys. Here follows a list of the European plants I met with in this Garden, and of those which I observ'd to grow in other parts of the Island. They all thrive almost as well as in Europe, save wheat, oats, and apples.<sup>21</sup>

Though Sloane finds and celebrates the incorporation of "European Garden Plants" into a landscape that he distinguishes from "Europe," the "garden," which here represents the colony, becomes a list that works to demarcate the "European" from the "Jamaican."

Ideologically and discursively, *plantation* was often used as a synonym for *colony*. The dedication of Sloane's natural history of Jamaica to the queen, for example, refers to the colony as "one of the largest and most considerable of her Majesty's Plantations in America." Materially, the construction of the sugar plantations, on which the economy of the British Caribbean islands was based, involved vast deforestation, the clearing of all undergrowth, and the burning of any remaining roots. This process termed both simply "clearing" and "plantation" made of an overwhelming percentage of the island of Jamaica, for example, the virtual tabula rasa required by the British agriculturalist argument for the right of possession taken from the Roman legal principle of *res nullius*. According to Roman imperial law, "All empty things," which included unoccupied lands, remained the common property of all until they were put to some, generally agricultural use. The first person to use this land became its owner.<sup>22</sup> Plantation and colony were interchangeable precisely because effective colonization with "justification" depended on disindigenating, transplanting, and relandscaping the British West Indian island such that the land was made empty and then (re)possessed by its ostentatious cultivation, its agri-culture. Not only were the main cash crops of the plantation system—sugarcane, coffee, and indigo—transplants, but plant transfers to the Caribbean from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the South Pacific so radically transformed the landscapes of the Caribbean islands that those species of flora most symbolically associated with the "tropics" were precisely those plants by which the British grafted one idea of island paradise onto another. Bamboo, logwood, cashew, casuarina, royal palm, imortelle, coconut palm, citrus, mango, tamarind, breadfruit, banana, bougainvillea, hibiscus, oleander, poinsettia, thunbergia, and even pasture grass (guinea grass from West Africa) were all colonial transplants.<sup>23</sup>

One may argue that tropical landscape was an aesthetic and material invention of eighteenth-century colonization in the Caribbean. The British colonial plantation system in the Caribbean is crucial to an understanding of the importance of landscaping as a discursive and material practice linking the first British Empire with the second. In *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830*, the historian C. A. Bayly argues that the distinction usually drawn between the first and second phases of British Empire on the basis of a supposed shift between the stated aim of agricultural colonization prior to the revolt of the North American colonies and, after 1780, an emphasis on commercial trading mischaracterizes the development of British Empire. Such a model ignores the ideological and material practices of the metropole, the imperial “unification” or internal colonization of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland under English rule, as the basis for British colonization and trade abroad. Instead of a dramatic difference, then, between the first and second British Empires, Bayly asserts that agrarian improvement within the imagined boundaries of the imperial nation “was a moral crusade, the inner heart of English expansion; indeed, it was seen as the domestic precondition of overseas enterprise. . . . Agrarianism was to become the dominant discourse of the Second British Empire, with the fostering of foreign trade as a dependent second.”<sup>24</sup> It was in the British Caribbean islands and particularly Jamaica that the British put into practice a mix of the Roman imperial model and an idea of “enlightened scientific rationalism” based on the political, economic, and aesthetic transformative exploitation of land. It was there that the British attempted to structure a hybridized or intermixed colonial landscape, as both the sign and tool of a colonial power bound to its site, as merely the natural features of the place, improved by farming. The idea of colony as plantation and the plantation as farm mythicized empire as anticonquest by making empire as rooted and natural as rural England was supposed to be.

In this section I discuss two interrelated technologies for the production of British imperial power: (1) plantation and transplantation, or what I call *colonial intermixing*; and (2) the discursive and material application of naturalizing aesthetics, or what I refer to as *imperial picturesque*. These technologies were engines of material transformation and resignification. The large-scale relandscapings of the British colonies in the Caribbean effected through the transfer and reclamation of plants from Africa, Europe, Asia, and different parts of the Americas articulated an imperial discourse of hybridization. In this discourse the plantation took the form of the picturesque intermixed landscape. This landscape was to be both the producer and the emblem of imperial power as natural possession through the mythic reimagining of the plantation machine turned homely farm, bringing in its wake not destruction of the indigenous environment but rather agricultural improvement and an effect of pleasing “variety.” The engraved views and descriptive and natural histories that claimed to represent the Caribbean to local, metropolitan, and international audiences convey the impression that sugarcane formed only one small fraction of the plants introduced to the Caribbean islands. Through the discourse of colonial intermixing, the landscape machine of the sugar plantation becomes instead a paragon of managed diversification. The intermixed landscape was based on

two types of transposition: transplantation, or the introduction of exotic plants, and a kind of displacement whereby anxieties about racial mixing are registered on a different field, soil rather than bodies. However, to manage fears about racial mixing, intermixing, or what we might like to call “unity in variety” also required segmentation, distinction, and separation. The application of devices of picturesque aesthetics re-presents transplantation not as violent relandscaping but as an organic outgrowth in harmony with the place. Around and over the monocultural machine of the sugar plantation, colonial print culture elaborated a dazzling and mouthwatering cornucopia of seemingly endless multiplicity. Colonial intermixing and imperial picturesque labored to transmute the monocultural plantation machine from an engine of impoverishment and devastation into an organic agent of enrichment.

#### *Picturesque Intermixture*

The instruments of colonial relandscaping were not limited to the plow, the hoe, the mill, and the sugar refinery. The reproductive and disseminatory technologies of print and their artifacts—the descriptive and natural histories, topographical maps, drafts of plantation terrain, illustrations of botanical cuttings, and scenic landscape views—worked to produce imperial power as colonial landscaping and were in turn critical instruments in the conversion of the colonial landscape machine into a vision of picturesque intermixture. The *View of Roaring River Estate* (Figure 2) engraved by Thomas Vivares was one of three picturesque landscape scenes of the sugar plantations on Jamaica owned by William Beckford of Somerley. This bucolic version of the plantation landscape was published in 1778, a year after Beckford of Somerley left Jamaica for debtor’s prison in England.<sup>25</sup> The engraving’s carefully composed prospect of Beckford’s plantation is based on one of several paintings of the colonial relandscaping in Jamaica that Beckford commissioned from his protégé the British painter George Robertson (1748–88). Robertson was a London-based landscapist and engraver who, in addition to the requisite tour of Italy, made a trip to Jamaica where he produced paintings and drawings that he displayed for a metropolitan London audience at the exhibitions sponsored by the Society of Artists.<sup>26</sup> Back in London, Beckford of Somerley published *A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica* in 1790. The initial release of Robertson’s view of the Beckford estate of Roaring River preceded the publication of Beckford’s *Descriptive Account* by twelve years. None of Robertson’s views were reprinted for the edition. However, Beckford’s book opens with a lamentation over the missing Robertson views, which serves to rebind Robertson’s views with the Beckford textual landscape. The lament is repeated at crucial junctures, conjuring the prints as an absent presence that might serve to verify the purported authenticity of Beckford’s colonial relandscaping: “It was my wish, as a confirmation of the fidelity of the scenes which I have attempted to delineate, to have introduced engravings from some particular views of the Island that were taken on the spot; and their accuracy cannot surely be doubted when I quote, as the artist, the respectable name of Mr. Robertson.”<sup>27</sup>

Evocation of Robertson’s views—six were claimed to have been publicly circulated as

aquatints—is used to clinch the critical scene in the *Descriptive Account* in which transplantation is made over to seem like natural “intermixture” harmoniously integrated into the features of the place such that the landscape becomes a picturesque spectacle of “variety” and “brilliancy,” a perfect scene of art, painted and planted with “tints” and “shadows”:

The variety and brilliancy of the verdure in Jamaica are particularly striking; and the trees and shrubs that adorn the face of the country are singular for the richness of their tints, the depths of their shadows, and the picturesque appearance they make. It is hardly possible to conceive any vegetation more beautiful, and more congenial to a painter’s eye, than that which universally prevails throughout every part of that romantic Island.

At the center of this landscaped scene are the colonial grafts:

The palm, the cocoa-nut, the mountain-cabbage, and the plantain, when *associated with* the tamarind, the orange, and other trees of beautiful growth and vivid dyes, and these *commixed* with the waving plumes of the bamboo-cane, the singular appearance of the Jerusalem thorn, the bushy richness of the oleander and African rose, the glowing red of the scarlet cordium, the verdant bowers of the jessamine and Grenadilla vines, the tufted plumes of the lilac, the silver-white

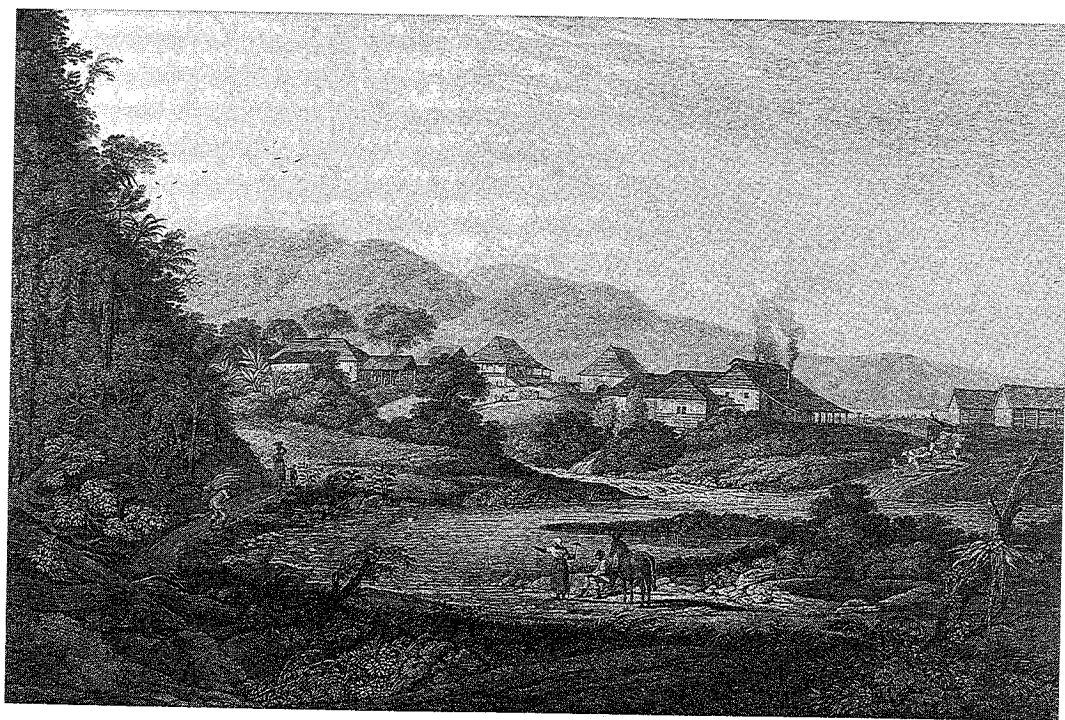


Figure 2. Thomas Vivares after George Robertson, *View of Roaring River Estate, Westmoreland, 1778*, engraving. Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.

and silky leaves of the portlandia, together with that prodigious variety of minor fruits and lowly shrubs, *all together compose* an embroidery of colors which few regions can rival, and which none can perhaps surpass. (emphases mine)

The phrase “compose an embroidery of colors which few regions can rival” makes this inventory of plant names a picture of cohesion. A woven fabric of flora characterizes Jamaica regionally, that is, as a place typified by its plant life. Working against the grain of this “weaving” are the particular names—“Jerusalem” and “African”—that introduce geographical difference. Following these references outward, a global map of transplantation unfolds. Already with the first plant name in this scenic catalog—the palm—this “regional” fabric unravels on a worldwide itinerary of colonial transplantation. The palm, the veritable emblem of the tropics, was commonly transplanted from one island to another or from one part of an island terrain to another deforested part in order to mark the boundaries of estates and to ceremonially line avenues and squares. Varieties like the royal palm were not indigenous to Jamaica but were transplanted from Florida and Cuba; the coconut palm was not even native to the Caribbean but rather brought over from the East Indies. The mountain-cabbage transferred from Barbados and the Jerusalem thorn were cultivated for use in fencing enclosed estates. Citrus fruits like the orange, planted by the Spanish in the early sixteenth century, were some of the first introductions to the Caribbean. Other plant specimens like the plantain and the tamarind were brought over from Africa principally as food for slaves, the plantain in the sixteenth century and the tamarind in the seventeenth.<sup>28</sup> Bamboo was shipped from the East Indies in the eighteenth century for use in fencing enclosures. The sugarcane introduced to Jamaica in the second half of the eighteenth century from the East Indies (Java) and the South Pacific (Otaheite) was also known as “bamboo cane.” Flowers such as the oleander from the South Pacific, the African rose, and the jessamine (which included indigenous as well as introduced varieties from North America and Europe) were used for decorative purposes in the gardens of plantation estates.<sup>29</sup> The language of poetic analogy binds these transplants from Asia, Africa, the Indian Ocean area, parts of Europe, the Americas, and from one Caribbean island or from one part of Jamaica to another into a tapestry of what we are to take at face value as ultimately “local color.”

The words “commixed” and “associated” make of this list of colonial grafts a unified landscape. They also appropriate the language of another kind of association—miscegenation. Note that the colonial landscape of Jamaica is immediately anthropomorphized. The compendium of colonial grafts, that “embroidery of colors,” is carefully prefixed by phrasing that makes of these transplants an organic body, the natural, “picturesque,” features that “adorn the face of the country.” Colonial intermixing and imperial picturesque landscaping aesthetics endeavored to transvalue and redirect the discourse of hybridization onto the anthropomorphized landscape in which the various introduced and rearranged plants are formally brought “all together” as the features on the “face” of Jamaica and yet enumeratively kept distinct and separable. The discourse strives to interweave the colors and yet make of the transplanted elements distinguishable shades.

Following the figurative index of colonial grafts come the other features of colonial landscaping—the marks of enclosure, private property, fortification, and confinement. In the idiom of picturesque landscaping, these lines and incisions, barriers and blocks become merely little intermittent dots and things of beauty. The cane fields produced by disindigenation and lethal labor are not regimental rows, the end and cause of slave life, but agents of pleasure and refreshment. The fields become little “cane-pieces” that are broken in intervals, suggesting that these sites of toil are punctuated by shady trees and the salubrious cheer of lime-bushes. The sugar plantation becomes a scene of refreshment, a place of rest and relaxation: “The young logwood-sets make beautiful fences; the bastard cedar trees, that are dotted over the pastures, afford a pleasing shade; the lime-bushes have a cheerful appearance; the intervals between the cane-pieces in some measure break the formality of their growth.” Here, too, are colonial transplants: sugarcane, bastard cedar moved from the mountains to the cane fields, and limes first introduced by Spanish planters, and logwood, a tree native to Mexico and Central America but introduced to Jamaica around 1715 from Honduras.<sup>30</sup> These grafts contain and structure the life of transplanted slave labor as a landscape of contentment. Beyond this concealing vegetation, in lieu of the actual sight of slave labor are, instead, places of rest. The slave huts, though called “lowly hovels,” are transformed by the fairy dust of picturesque relandscaping into something analogous to the British vogue for garden follies in the style of rusticated cottages. The plantation architecture of confinement is turned into a decorative element, picturesque in its own right and essential to an overall “picturesque” effect:

The lowly hovels of the negroes, huddled together in the form of a town, with their picturesque appearance, render it still more so by the clumps of vegetation that often surround them; and the numerous herds of cattle, sheep, or goats that browse upon the plains, or frolic upon the hills, all together contribute to make a landscape. (emphasis mine)<sup>31</sup>

Critical to the claim of rightful possession is the passage’s transferal of agency. It is not black slave labor but the plantation system’s ordering and arrangement of the forcibly relocated and “intermixed” plants and people that “all together contribute to make a landscape” out of the colonial sugar plantation.

Beckford’s *Descriptive Account* elaborates a painting of words that makes of the colonial landscape of Jamaica a harmonious picture of the place. This lengthy description moves from the establishment of point of view, that of the “eye” of the planter as painter, to the listing of colonial grafts as features on the terrain of Jamaica as a face, and then to marks of possession and force as signs of beauty and refreshment. Finally, the text makes an appeal to painting, specifically the works of Robertson, to support the representational claim for the colonial landscape machine as picturesque, that is, at once like a picture in its artfulness and yet natural in its claimed fidelity to place. The final paragraph reads:

Of these scenes I have seen but few copies, and fewer imitations; and I cannot help lamenting, in this place, the early end of one [George Robertson] who was well acquainted with the picturesque varieties of the Island, and whose truth in their representation could be only equalled by his taste, his judgement, and his execution. . . . It is a pity that not more of his drawings are engraved: of the numerous and interesting views he took in Jamaica, only six have yet met the public eye, although there are many that richly deserve to be removed from dust and oblivion. As his talents were various, and exhibition of almost everything that Nature produces, may be found in his works; and these are executed with equal beauty and precision in colors, and in chalks.<sup>32</sup>

The device of intersplicing the missing Robertson views endeavors to bring together several contradictory senses. The fiction is that the painter and the planter are only producing faithful copies of what is already there. The colonial landscape is to be understood as always already like a painting or like a painting composition rendered in an engraved form. The device intimates further that colonial relandscaping may rival nature, that the emblem of anticonquest, the intermixed landscape, is nature improved by art. However, the scene of colonial transformation, the “picturesque varieties of the Island,” are to be taken as what “Nature produces” and “art” imitates.

Robertson’s actual composition of the *View of Roaring River Estate* deploys the conventions of picturesque composition—contrasts of light and shade, a serpentine path leading the eye lazily from the foregrounded vegetation to the main plantation buildings set gently on a slight hill over the gushing river—to envelop the signs of transplantation such that the machinery and architecture, the plantation fields and clearings, and slave labor seem to merge organically with the vegetation rendered as overgrowth. The killing labor of black slaves is abstracted to the almost imperceptible far distance. The tiny suggestion of slaves working in the cleared field between the buildings is dominated by the sign of the fruits of their labor being transported by oxcart down the path toward the river. At the center of the composition is the notorious fiction that slave life was easy, not fatal, and that births among slaves did or might outnumber deaths. In the exact midpoint of the scene is a black male slave seated at rest and a black woman slave pointing dramatically across the river to a black man carrying a load on his back and another black woman walking freely along the path with a child holding onto her skirt. The myth scenically presented here is that the colonial plantation system of slave labor could not only produce but reproduce itself.

The visual and textual discourse of the picturesque intermixed landscape distinguished by its purported variety and yet harmony attempted to naturalize slavery as part of a georgic plantation Eden of slave labor, “peace and plenty.” For example, the “landschape [*sic*]” of the parish of Clarendon on the island of Jamaica drawn by Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica* (1774) is arranged from the “commanding” and “reigning” vantage point of the “seat” of a sugar plantation owner Mr. F——n, formerly chief justice of Jamaica. The view is oriented from above, that is, from the master’s house on a