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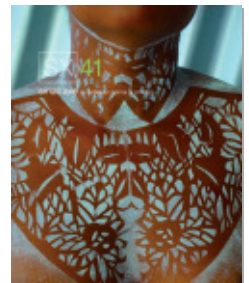
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Violence

Deborah A. Thomas

Small Axe, Volume 17, Number 2, July 2013 (No. 41), pp. 27-42 (Article)

Published by Duke University Press



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# Caribbean Studies, Archive Building, and the Problem of Violence

**Deborah A. Thomas**

One of the agendas of Caribbean studies has been to create archives—or, more accurately, counterarchives—in order to make claims about the modern world and the significance of the region to the global processes that have shaped it over the past five centuries. Scholars have been inspired by historical, literary, and ethnographic evidence to generate arguments about the region’s centrality to the development of mercantile, and later industrial, capitalism; to a system of racialized labor management and contemporary class and cultural stratifications; to ideologies and practices linking gendered and racialized subjectivities to patterns of state formation and imperialism; to the development of “new” and creatively creolized social and expressive cultural practices; to revolutions and modern social movements; and to contemporary processes of transnationalism. If, as David Scott has argued, an “archive is not merely a collection; rather, it is a *generative* system . . . that governs the production and appearance of statements,” then we must think about the process of developing archives as one that creates new possibilities, possibilities for seeing connections previously unexamined and for reordering our ontological taken-for-granted.<sup>1</sup>

Some have seen the process of archive creation as simultaneously a process of black memory making (memories, in this case, of things not directly experienced). Black memory, it is claimed,

<sup>1</sup> David Scott, “The Archaeology of Black Memory: An Interview with Robert A. Hill,” *Small Axe*, no. 5 (March 1999): 82 (italics in original).

and more specifically New World black memory, constitutes something of a special case because it is produced and reproduced within a context often characterized by “an absence of ruins.” This phrase, which is the title of Orlando Patterson’s second novel, is meant to foreground experiences of rupture, pastlessness, and fragmentation—legacies of the transatlantic slave trade—that are often seen as constituting the historical and discursive context for the majority of New World African populations. Indeed, three generations of writers and literary critics have attempted, in different ways, to reconstruct the lives of those who were or would become slaves, to glean insight into their aspirations, their imaginations, and their day-to-day movements by putting together a mention in a diary here, a list in a log there.<sup>2</sup> These acts of reconstruction are oriented toward the creation of an historical consciousness, one that often stands in opposition to forms of state memory, and this is why they constitute a counterarchive, or what Anthony Bogues calls a “dread history.” This is a history of radical utopian desire that “attempts to excavate from the practices and ideas of the subaltern resistance movements in the Caribbean a worldview in which hope is rooted in a conception of the bourgeois colonial world turned upside down.”<sup>3</sup> Of course, the project of mining diverse spaces in order to generate this kind of historical consciousness not only counters dominant tropes about the region and the people who have inhabited it, it also potentially provides the basis for claims “about the *relationship* between present inequalities and past injustices.”<sup>4</sup> As this is the structural-historical framework used by reparations activists, we might also profitably consider the impetus for archive creation in relation to projects of reparative justice.

Because we know that knowledge is never disinterested, that the questions we ask are always shaped by a broader sociocultural, economic, and geopolitical framework, we must also recognize that archives created within different geopolitical and historical moments by necessity serve different purposes. In this essay, I want to explore some of the archives that have been created within Caribbean studies by tracing some possible connections between the context of knowledge production and the relationship between vindication and reparation. I want to argue that when we move, in the creation of archives, to privilege a national analytic frame within the postindependence context of developmentalism, we often seem to lose the global geopolitical and structural historical macroperspective that undergirds a reparations logic. This is a logic, after all, that privileges the *interplay* of geopolitical scales rather than limiting analysis to the space of the nation-state, and that draws lines between unlikely bedfellows, between far-flung constituencies and interests, and between then and now. The postindependence project of state formation, in contrast, produced a concern with development, a phenomenon that was to be measured by various statistical indicators that would allow links to be made between cause and effect, policies and populations. While in the first instance, the vindicationist ethos encouraged a focus on how current structural inequalities have

2 See Orlando Patterson, *An Absence of Ruins* (London: Hutchinson, 1967); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

3 Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 179. For a similar, though earlier, take on “dread history,” see Robert Hill, “Leonard P. Howell and Millenarian Visions in Early Rastafari,” *Jamaica Journal* 16, no. 1 (1983): 24–39.

4 Michael Hanchard, “Black Memory versus State Memory: Notes toward a Method,” *Small Axe*, no. 12 (July 2008): 48 (emphasis mine).

emerged and persist as a result of real and codified institutional discrimination with the ultimate reparative goal being the dismantling of imperialism, in the second instance we are often left with a sense that current social ills are the result of cultural “deviations” and “dysfunctions,” failures and lacks that are passed from generation to generation because the achievement of independence was itself unable to undo almost five centuries of violence.

Violence, in fact, serves as a limit point here. While many of the early archives that were created were explicitly mobilized toward the projects of political and cultural nationalism, one archive in particular—the emergent archive of violence—cannot be effortlessly rallied toward these ends. Instead, archives of violence bring into relief the limits of the anti- and immediately postcolonial focus on the nation-state as the primary locus of vindication and encourage us to return our vision more pointedly to the transnational geopolitical spheres that constituted the frame of reference for earlier internationalists and Pan-Africanists and that infuse the social and political worlds of contemporary Caribbean people.

### Vindicating the Caribbean through the Production of Archives

Two of the earliest classics of Caribbean history—Eric Williams’s *Capitalism and Slavery* and C. L. R. James’s *The Black Jacobins*—were designed as antidotes to European notions of legitimacy and governance.<sup>5</sup> Williams himself saw his project as one of reworking and reevaluating “our conceptions of history and economic and political development.” He set out to do what we would now call a transnational historical exegesis of “the role of Negro slavery and the slave trade in providing the capital which financed the Industrial Revolution in England and of mature industrial capitalism in destroying the slave system.”<sup>6</sup> His was primarily a study of British economic history (chronicling the rise and fall of mercantilism and of monopoly), and therefore he positioned it as a corrective to approaches to slavery and its dissolution that foregrounded then contemporary notions of racism (and, therefore, its correlate, antiracist activism). Indeed, his short foray into “the inhumanity of the slave system and the humanitarianism which destroyed that system” in the last thirty pages of the book demonstrates that abolitionists did not advocate for emancipation until 1823, and then only due to “persecution of the missionaries in the colonies.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, Williams goes to great lengths to demonstrate abolitionists’ contradictory sensibilities by showing their support of East Indian and Brazilian sugar after emancipation in the West Indies.<sup>8</sup> And famously, it is only with the last ten pages of the book that he addresses actual slave resistance. Williams’s text, therefore, is geared toward arguing that the primary forces responsible for emancipation were economic, thus demonstrating the bankruptcy of European claims to moral superiority and legitimate governance and making a critical argument for independence.<sup>9</sup> His concern did not lie primarily with vindicating the agency,

5 See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); and C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; repr., New York: Vintage, 1989).

6 Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, v.

7 *Ibid.*, 178, 182.

8 *Ibid.*, 185–96.

9 See Harvey Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees: Trinidad and the United States Occupation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 19–50.

organizational skills, or revolutionary leadership of those deemed incapable of such traits, though (in a footnote) Williams does direct readers to James's *The Black Jacobins*, a text that for him corrected the historical "distortion" of not addressing the role of slaves in the abolition of slavery.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, by showcasing Toussaint Louverture's skills as a strategist and leader, James's agenda in this other classic historical text was to argue against the prevailing idea that black people were not competent to govern themselves. Much has been written about the contexts for James's ideological formation and, therefore, for his elaboration of this tale in *The Black Jacobins*.<sup>11</sup> A Trotskyite, James, like many other black communists during the interwar period, was disgruntled by Stalin's turn away from internationalism and the growing focus on expanding socialist bureaucracy within nation-states. For James, the collapse of internationalism coupled with the rise of fascism in Europe exposed the bankruptcy both of liberal democratic western states and of the communist international. Moreover, a growing Pan-Africanism after Italy's two attempts at colonizing Ethiopia (in 1895 and 1935) had many intellectuals galvanized toward anti-imperialist agitation and critical discussions of race and empire.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, within Trinidad itself this was the period of the establishment of labor unions and more general heightened political activity. *The Black Jacobins*, then, was part of a more general vindicationist struggle to tell the history of Haiti (and more broadly that of the West Indies) from the point of view of Haiti rather than that of France.<sup>13</sup> One of the incidental effects of this focus correlates with Williams's project; that is to say, it gives some context for the argument that Britain's abolition of the slave trade in 1807 was the direct result of economic and social fallout caused by the Haitian Revolution and not primarily due to the work of abolitionists.

James was also interested in the nature of revolution itself—how it happens, what drives people to participate, how people make (and break) fragile alliances—and this preoccupation reveals his own agenda. If James's view of colonial plantation development was that of "a system of degradation and dehumanization,"<sup>14</sup> one that broke an idyllic precolonial African life, then anticolonial revolution had to be conceptualized as restoring humanity through the achievement of sovereignty. Demonstrating that this particular revolution was waged by slaves who constructed a revolutionary consciousness by drawing from their own cultural heritage, with plantations here newly conceptualized as protocapitalist forms of socioeconomic organization, allowed James both to reformulate critical aspects of Marx's theories of revolution and historical materialism and to counter racist ideas about African culture as backward.<sup>15</sup> By the time the Vintage edition of *The Black Jacobins* was released in 1963, the real-world problem for James would have become explicitly the problem of development in the newly independent nation-states of the Caribbean, which would also explain his addition of the famous appendix, "From Toussaint L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro." For David

10 Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 258n1.

11 See David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); and Neptune, *Caliban and the Yankees*.

12 Kevin Yelvington, "The War in Ethiopia and Trinidad, 1935–1936," in Bridget Brereton and Kevin A. Yelvington, eds., *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition: Essays on Postemancipation Social and Cultural History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 189–225.

13 James, *Black Jacobins*, x–xi.

14 *Ibid.*, 92.

15 This is a point toward which W. E. B. Du Bois also gestures in *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Free Press, 1998) and is one that has been taken up by several succeeding generations of Marxist scholars within the Caribbean.

Scott, this shift represents a generic transition in frame from “romance,” which is his sense of the 1938 Jamesian perspective on revolution, to “tragedy,” his assessment of immanently faltering nationalist projects.<sup>16</sup> Yet it is also true that throughout the original edition of *The Black Jacobins* James grapples in complex ways with the questions of how national identity is to be produced, how sovereignty is to be gained and what it will mean, how freedom can be envisioned and taken, what sacrifices and alliances must be made, and how leadership is to be cultivated. Toussaint’s tragic flaws seem to emerge about halfway through the original text, when James begins to emphasize his strategic miscalculations. Ultimately, James shows us, the people never forgave him these. They left Toussaint to be captured and killed by Napoleon’s army.

Of course, these questions regarding leadership, sovereignty, freedom, and autonomy still urgently confront us today, but Williams and James were part of a more general historiographic trend throughout the black Atlantic (to use a contemporary spatial delineation), a trend that was concerned to vindicate New World Africans’ cultural heritage and political potential.<sup>17</sup> While we might understand this project as one that James shared, however, it might also be productive to read both Williams and James less in the vein of vindication and more within the realm of deconstruction. Williams, especially, is concerned to dismantle European claims to superiority and to being the sole inheritors of modernity; he argues persuasively and passionately that the West Indies, and the Americas more broadly, are nothing if not quintessentially modern. James, as well, in adding Haiti to the modern revolutionary canon, argues that black West Indians “from the very start lived a life that was in its essence a modern life.”<sup>18</sup> For both, the New World geopolitical and structural historical frame of analysis allows them not only to vindicate the humanity of slaves and former slaves but also to advocate for a reparative solution, the achievement of West Indian “national identity,” about which I will say more shortly.<sup>19</sup>

These two foundational historical texts dismantle prevalent ideas about civilization, humanity, and democracy, and so provide the fertile ground out of which post–World War II scholars grew other sorts of archives. However, though foundational, their interventions are not actually the earliest examples of Caribbean archive building. This designation would go to the folklorists and anthropologists who, in the first instance, collected songs, stories, dances, and texts designed to answer questions about “the exact relationship between the ‘Negro’ [in Jamaica] and Bantu races,” seeing this as part of a broader creole cultural complex that built on work being done at the time within the US South (and particularly the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia), and that sought to develop a program of study that would be geared toward identifying these sorts of “Africanisms” throughout the circum-Caribbean more generally.<sup>20</sup> These scholars were attempting to understand the expressive cultural practices of, in this case, Jamaican society as elements of an

16 See Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*.

17 *Ibid.*, 104–5.

18 James, *Black Jacobins*, 392. This is a point elaborated in other works of the time as well, and I am thinking here most particularly of Fernando Ortiz’s *Cuban Counterpoint*, originally published in 1940. See Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940; repr., Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

19 James, *Black Jacobins*, 402.

20 Walter Jekyll, introduction to *Jamaican Song and Story* (1907; repr., New York: Dover, 1966), xxiii. See also Martha Beckwith, *Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaican Folk-Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929).

African cultural heritage and, ultimately, as part of what we might now understand to be a repertoire of traditions transplanted to, and transformed by, the New World context. While the early folklorists of Jamaica offered catalogs of Anancy stories and work songs, funerary rituals and dances, there was an agenda to Melville Herskovits's 1930 provocation to study "the Negro in the New World," which was to chart culture change over time and space with the intention of vindicating a cultural past living in the present.<sup>21</sup>

These sorts of projects seem to stand in almost direct opposition to the work of Williams and James, whose primary aim was to demonstrate the *modernity* of African descendants in the Americas, not to place them in relation to some sort of *tradition*. Even James's assertion that after the revolution, "the Haitian peasantry resuscitated to a remarkable degree the lives they had lived in Africa," is less a validation of specific African-derived practices (or a nod to some sort of diasporic memory) and more an indication of his more general perspective—that in order to achieve real and true independence, West Indians (and particularly educational or political elites) "*had to clear from minds the stigma that anything African was inherently inferior and degraded*. The road to West Indian national identity lay through Africa."<sup>22</sup> The New World analytic framework of early-twentieth-century folklorists, however, places them in a structurally sympathetic relationship with James's and Williams's projects.

Later observers of folklore would move to approximate a more Jamesian position in their elaboration of a more general postcolonial intellectual and political revisionism of the place of black West Indians in the modern world. Scholars such as Kamau Brathwaite and Sylvia Wynter, building on Jean Price-Mars's reevaluation and affirmation of African-derived folklore in Haiti as the necessary foundation for nationalist development and cultural self-esteem within the context of US occupation, argued against the notion that a process of acculturation is what characterized Caribbean societies.<sup>23</sup> Their view instead was that the dominant European sector, often absent, did not provide a cultural and social scaffolding to which dominated Africans had to acclimatize, but that Afro–West Indians, in maintaining, reconstructing, and transforming their own cultural practices (especially those having to do with land use and religious expression) underwent a cultural process of indigenization that rooted them in the New World. For these scholars, it was the African heritage embedded within the folk culture of West Indian slaves that should be seen as the basis for Caribbean cultural creativity, and thus developed as a modern *national* culture. The tension between the perspectives of James and Williams and these later folk-based nationalisms, then, is one ultimately rooted in a vision of what constitutes the appropriate space for political action. For scholars like James, and later Frantz Fanon and E. Franklin Frazier, in usurping the struggle for self-determination from the working classes who rose up to challenge colonialism, the nationalist

21 People like Garvey, of course, promoted the idea that New World blacks had an African past of which they should be proud, but Herskovits's work sought to demonstrate the cultural and sociological lineages of particular sociocultural practices. See, for example, Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941); "The Negro in the New World: The Statement of a Problem," *American Anthropologist* 32, no. 1 (1930): 145–55; *Trinidad Village* (New York: Octagon, 1947); and *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1937).

22 James, *Black Jacobins*, 394, 402 (italics in original).

23 See Jean Price-Mars, *So Spoke the Uncle* (1928; repr, Washington DC: Three Continents, 1983); Edward [Kamau] Brathwaite, *Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica* (London: New Beacon, 1971); and Sylvia Wynter, "Jonkonnu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as a Cultural Process," *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34–48.

bourgeoisie reasserted colonial paradigms and hierarchies while dressing up nationalism in the clothing of “culture.”<sup>24</sup> It was, nevertheless, this project that dominated the immediate postindependence period, and with a number of extraordinary exceptions, both scholars and activists turned their attention to the space of the nation-state. This meant that scholarly archiving within Caribbean studies began to primarily serve the purpose of validating the particularities of national histories and cultural practices rooted in specific places rather than maintaining a focus on the *space* of the region in relation to the complexities of global processes.

Of course, historians and folklorists have not been the only scholars to set themselves the task of rethinking and recreating archives.<sup>25</sup> James himself ends the 1963 appendix to *The Black Jacobins* with a nod toward novelists, chroniclers of “the West Indian”—again, as above, notably not Jamaican, Trinidadian, or Guyanese—“*national identity*.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, literary scholars have been concerned to both excavate and challenge canons of national and regional literatures throughout the Caribbean, as well as to reconsider what constitutes literature in the first place. Anthropologists have also played a significant role in how we archive our sociocultural realities and our political rationalities. For these scholars, as for Brathwaite and Wynter above, it has been critical to demonstrate (both to an imperial reading public and to an incipient national one) that the cultural “stuff” related to religious ideology, ritual practice, dance, movement, and folktales was *not*, as Europeans would have it, a remnant of backward heathen thinking (and therefore evidence that former slaves were unsophisticated, uncivilized, and ultimately incapable of self-governance and modernity) but should instead be thought of as the foundation of national cultures throughout the region. The African derivation of a number of ritual and social practices has continued to be of critical interest to ethnographers, and especially to those working on issues related to religious and spiritual practice and, to a degree, music. Many of these scholars, however, have sought to move beyond the frameworks of acculturation and tracking “Africanisms” and toward an analysis of the ways notions of “Africa” and “slavery” are constructed to serve particular narratives of (up)rootedness, belonging, identity, and legitimacy.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the extensive anthropological literature regarding family formation that developed after the West Indies-wide labor riots in the late 1930s created an archive that ended up, on some level, countering the West India Royal Commission’s claims that West Indian family structure was dysfunctional—characterized by high rates of illegitimate births, “loose” family organization, and the “careless” upbringing of children. For the authors of the Moyne Report, dysfunctional families had generated a lack of economic productivity and motivation, and therefore also a lack of ability

24 I have placed the word *culture* in scare-quotes to indicate that I am not here invoking the holistic anthropological sense of culture but instead the more popular view that sees “culture” as something that is epiphenomenal.

25 Limits of space prevent a comprehensive cataloging of this work here, but an additional corollary to this sort of epistemologically transformative historical scholarship was the attempt to reconstruct intellectual histories, not only through an excavation of important “indigenous” theorists of Caribbean sociopolitical and historical realities but also through a valorization of what Antonio Gramsci would have called “organic intellectuals,” individuals such as Marcus Garvey or Claudius Henry, and later Bob Marley or Abu Bakr. Additional relevant projects are the ever growing body of literature on Rastafari, the conferences and volumes that have been sponsored by the Center for Caribbean Thought at the University of the West Indies, and *Small Axe*’s own attempts to document the Caribbean Left through the publication of extended interviews.

26 James, *Black Jacobins*, 413 (emphasis mine).

27 David Scott, “That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World,” *Diaspora* 1, no. 3 (1991): 261–84.



to participate politically in an engaged and thoughtful way. The report ultimately recommended a movement toward independence for the West Indian colonies, as well as the establishment of an Office of Colonial Development and Welfare to be led by Thomas Simey, appointed in 1945 as the social welfare advisor for Jamaica. This office was charged not only with seeing to improvements in housing, education, public health, and land resettlement but also with fostering what the authors of the report saw as more responsible parenting and sexual restraint.

Simey's own survey of social conditions in Jamaica—*Welfare and Planning in the West Indies*—set the pattern for future family studies by delineating types of mating practices and by arguing that there seemed to be a close correlation between color, occupation or economic level, and family type.<sup>28</sup> These findings were echoed, though modified in various ways, by scholars whom Simey invited to study social conditions in the region, including Edith Clarke and Madeline Kerr (whose 1952 study was also influenced by the functionalist psychologically oriented studies of family life in the United States).<sup>29</sup> These studies were conducted in a context of increasing interest in both the possibilities and challenges offered up by impending political independence. And though many of these early scholars reproduced the ideology that the most appropriate family form was a cohabitational nuclear unit, they also ended up creating an archive of additional forms—for them linked to socioeconomic underdevelopment—that vindicated lower-class West Indian actors because the latter were recognized as having an underlying organization and utility rather than merely standing as examples of failure to achieve hegemonic middle-class norms. The cataloging of family structures therefore provided evidence to make a claim that West Indians were, indeed, ready for independence because they had a number of systematic ways to organize the economic and political lives of their communities. The corollary to this anthropological archive is the more recent body of scholarship from sociology, anthropology, literature, and, to a degree, history that has sought to challenge European claims regarding black West Indians' hyper- (and therefore nonnormative) sexuality.<sup>30</sup> These researchers have attempted to do this by creating an archive of sexual practices as well as a critical understanding of their biopolitical management over time, thus historicizing this discursive construction and the various forms of exclusion that have arisen from it.

After independence, additional archives emerged that, like the history and anthropology of the preindependence era, were sometimes also vindicationist but moved beyond a critique of colonialism and its legacies to also implicate the nationalist state. I am thinking here especially of the immediately postindependence emergence of an archive of women's lives generated by feminist

28 Thomas Simey, *Welfare and Planning in the West Indies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946).

29 See Edith Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me: A Study of the Family in Three Selected Communities in Jamaica* (1957; repr., London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966); Judith Blake, *Family Structure in Jamaica: The Social Context of Reproduction* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1961); Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1953); and Madeline Kerr, *Personality and Conflict in Jamaica* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1952).

30 Again, space limitations prevent a cataloging of these seminal literatures, but for a cogent review of the literature on the theoretical shifts within studies of West Indian family and kinship practices, see Christine Barrow, *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996), and "Introduction and Overview: Caribbean Gender Ideologies," in Christine Barrow, ed., *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1998), xi–xviii. A few key contemporary texts on Caribbean sexualities include Faith Smith, ed., *Sex and the Citizen* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Kamala Kempadoo, *Sexing the Caribbean: Gender, Race, and Sexual Labor* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

scholars located within (and beyond) the University of the West Indies system. The Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP) and the volumes that emerged from it were designed, on the one hand, to counter popular perceptions of Caribbean women as overbearing matriarchs and, on the other, to debunk the lingering concerns about Caribbean familial dysfunction.<sup>31</sup> In a similar vein, Sistren Theatre Collective's *Lionheart Gal*, a collection of life stories, was published to demonstrate the gendered effects of "development."<sup>32</sup> Both of these projects counter dominant images of women and illuminate the ways more general economic and political processes have redounded to women's lives and, therefore, to the well-being of entire communities.

These archival bodies were designed to contend with the present by historicizing it, by generating evidence that could both counter the old, racist epistemologies and serve as the foundations for new, more liberatory claims. This has had the effect—across the disciplines—of dismantling enduring tropes: black people are unfit to lead; black people create dysfunctional families (because they are hypersexual); black people do not have a valuable cultural legacy. Initially, the impetus for much of this archive creation was nationalist in scope, even as its analytic lens was rooted in a more global systems approach. That is, it has had to do with assembling evidence in order to make a claim for the strength and validity of Caribbean societies as autonomous and legitimately sovereign, seeing the achievement of national independence as a form of reparative justice. The feminist critique of development literature, in contrast, began to highlight the extent to which the inequalities that were foundational to the imperial era persisted after independence during a period when development economists were lauding the growth being generated by the tourism and bauxite industries in the 1960s. The WICP and Sistren archives, therefore, alongside a longer popular tradition of Ethiopianism and Black Power, called into question the extent to which the vindication of British West Indian people through the achievement of independence, in and of itself, could be a kind of reparations.

More generally as well, due to the expansion of data-gathering agencies as a result of the new national bureaucratic machinery, scholarship in the immediate postindependence period, and continuing through the 1980s and 1990s, became more narrowly framed in terms of its analytic scope. In a brilliant 1992 article published in the *New West Indian Guide*, Charles V. Carnegie attributes this to the explosive growth of economics at the University of the West Indies and the concurrent marginalization of ethnographic methods, which had, incidentally, been central to research during the decade and a half immediately following the establishment of the Institute of Social and Economic Research in 1948. For Carnegie, both the development economics focus and the later growth of Marxist perspectives emphasized "the manipulation of economic forces from the center" rather than the identification of diverse processes on the ground, under the assumption that "the nation-state ought to be the operative unit for measuring economic activity and for effecting policy."<sup>33</sup> This led

31 See Joycelin Massiah, *Women and Politics* (Cave Hill, Barbados: ISER Publications, 1983), and "Women in the Caribbean Project: An Overview," *Social and Economic Studies* 35, no. 2 (1986): 1–29; Joycelin Massiah and Margaret Gill, *Women, Work, and Development* (Cave Hill, Barbados: ISER Publications, 1984); and Olive Senior, *Working Miracles: Women's Lives in the English-Speaking Caribbean* (Cave Hill, Barbados: ISER Publications, 1991).

32 Sistren Theatre Collective, *Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women* (Kingston: Women's Press, 2005).

33 Charles V. Carnegie, "The Fate of Ethnography: Native Social Science in the English-Speaking Caribbean," *New West Indian Guide* 66, nos. 1–2 (1992): 13, 18.

to a narrow nationalist focus that could not sufficiently account for the aspects of economic activity that transcended national boundaries, activities that were regularly and increasingly engaged by ordinary people. While the scholarship emerging during this period may perhaps have been vindicationist, without the global geopolitical analytic frame it could not be reparative. It could not challenge a popular (and sometimes academic) assertion that the solutions to macroeconomic problems should be pursued through transformations in people's cultural practices and beliefs and therefore could not deconstruct the enduring tropes about black people globally, to which I will now add one more: black people are violent, or, more specifically, black people have a culture of violence.

### Archiving Violence

It is clear that violence has, in recent years, become the number one preoccupation of both Caribbean governments and citizens. The region as a whole has a murder rate higher than any other in the world, and instances of assault throughout the Caribbean are significantly above the world average. Violent crime statistics for the Caribbean are so high, in fact, that in 2007 the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime issued a joint report identifying crime and violence as development issues, documenting how violence undermines growth, threatens human welfare, and impedes social development.<sup>34</sup> Jamaica, with a per capita murder rate that is rivaled only by Colombia and South Africa, is usually singled out within the region as an exceptional case.<sup>35</sup> However, the recent state of emergency in Trinidad, the growing phenomenon of kidnapping in Guyana, and the intensifying political violence in Haiti should make clear that actual, structural, and symbolic forms of violence, both historically and in the present, are foundational to Caribbean realities and indeed to the New World more broadly.

Postindependence violence is an unwieldy research topic, and its archives do not lend themselves easily to a vindicationist nationalist position. First, violence tends to be transnational in scope, *even if it is often analyzed as a national phenomenon*. It is tricky, therefore, to pinpoint the ways violence could serve a nationalist goal (although the jeremiads against violence—at least in Jamaica—have consistently called for the dissolution of the political patron-client relationships that work against practices of parliamentary democracy and are therefore geared toward the development of a more perfect democratic nationalist state). Second, it is difficult to identify the body to which to present evidence and make claims and also difficult to determine the sorts of vindication sought after and the kinds of repair envisioned. And finally, the daily experience of living with violence (or the threat of violence) is, needless to say, demoralizing and devastating. But what if we applied the same impetus (evidence generation, claim making, vindication, and, perhaps ultimately, repair) to the study of violence that we have applied to the study of slavery, governance, family formation, and expressive cultural practices? How might an archive of violence help us to understand

34 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Latin American and Caribbean Region of the World Bank, *Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean*, Report No. 37820 (Washington DC: United Nations, 2007).

35 See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Intentional Homicide, Count and Rate per 100,000 Population (1995–2011)," 2012, [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Homicide\\_statistics2012.xls](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/Homicide_statistics2012.xls).

our present, our past, our potential futures, and the relationships among them? How might it serve as a counterpoint for racist assessments of violent behaviors, actions, and discourses? And finally, would a comprehensive archive of violence prevent us from reproducing the sorts of imperialist and nationalist myopia that led scholars to exclude particular populations from both cultural and political citizenship during and beyond the nationalist period?

While James's *The Black Jacobins* gives us one of the most iconic and detailed accounts of violence during slavery, recent historical work has addressed the topic of violence in a number of innovative ways: Diana Paton's *No Bond but the Law* foregrounds a legal perspective; Vincent Brown's *The Reaper's Garden* takes death as its organizing rubric; Trevor Burnard engages Thomas Thistlewood's diaries in order to gain insight into the complexities of terror and dependence during slavery; and Doris Garraway's *The Libertine Colony* addresses violence through a focus on desire and sexuality.<sup>36</sup> Novels such as Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Merle Collins's *Angel*, Marlon James's *The Book of Night Women*, Margaret Cezair-Thompson's *The True History of Paradise*, and Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker*, *The Farming of Bones*, and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*—to name only a very few examples—compel us to viscerally engage with the omnipresence of violence, and the threat of violence, on Caribbean bodies.<sup>37</sup> And the literary theorists who engage these works mine them for how they represent various dimensions of violence as foundational to Caribbean experience across time and space, even as they also appreciate the particularities related to immediate context.<sup>38</sup>

There has also been a proliferation of popular novels about (especially) Jamaican drug and crime organizations, largely inspired by Victor Headley's *Yardie* trilogy, and this proliferation was paralleled in nonfiction throughout the 1990s with the publication of a number of memoirs and journalistic accounts of the transnational circuits of Jamaican drug posses. Popular films, too, chronicle the exploits of dons and their movement through a global underground of drugs and crime. These films, novels, and nonfiction accounts veer toward the sensational, and while some tend to reproduce the idea that Jamaicans in particular and West Indians in general possess a "culture of violence,"<sup>39</sup> at the same time they demonstrate (to a greater or lesser extent) the ways violence in Jamaica and its diasporas is rooted in unequal social and economic conditions that are perpetuated by political clientelism and geopolitical marginalization. Sociologists, criminologists, and other so-called hard

36 Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Doris Garraway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

37 Michelle Cliff, *No Telephone to Heaven* (London: Plume, 1996); Merle Collins, *Angel* (London: Women's Press, 1987); Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (New York: Riverhead, 2009); Margaret Cezair-Thompson, *The True History of Paradise* (New York: Random House, 1999); Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (New York: Vintage, 2005), *The Farming of Bones* (New York: Penguin, 1999), and *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (New York: Soho, 1994).

38 See, for example, Donette Francis, *Fictions of Feminine Citizenship: Sexuality and the Nation in Contemporary Caribbean Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Jana Evans Braziel, *Duvalier's Ghosts: Race, Diaspora, and US Imperialism in Haitian Literatures* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); and Shalini Puri, *The Grenada Revolution in the Caribbean Present: Operation Urgent Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

39 For a critique of this position, see David Scott, "The 'Culture of Violence' Fallacy," *Small Axe*, no. 2 (September 1997): 140–47; and Tracey Skelton, "Doing Violence/Doing Harm: British Media Representations of Jamaican Yardies," *Small Axe*, no. 3 (March 1998): 27–48.

social scientists, however, have tended to detail the ins and outs of the development of political violence in Jamaica, largely from a national—rather than a regional or transnational—perspective.<sup>40</sup> Other social scientists have also examined the various forms of structural and symbolic violence directed at poorer sectors of Caribbean populations and sexual minorities, and this is one area in which anthropologists and ethnographic sociologists have had much to contribute.<sup>41</sup>

I believe it is important to think about the production of these archives of violence in order to understand the types of evidence that are being generated across disciplines and the uses to which this evidence might be put. What kinds of claims are being made, and how are different disciplinary approaches particularly well suited to make them? What are the limits and contributions of each of these approaches to dismantling the “black people are violent” trope? How is the past used in these different accounts to explain, vindicate, or lament the present? In other words, can we deconstruct the trope by historicizing it, as we have done with the others? And why have there been so few ethnographic accounts of state violence or gang violence in the Caribbean? What particular sorts of insights might be generated by an ethnographic approach to the topic of violence, and to what extent might these insights be used as evidence in a process of claim making to envision some kind of repair from institutional bodies?

The dearth of ethnographic accounts of violence has to do, in part, with the difficulty of conducting anthropological fieldwork in the midst of violent conflict or within situations characterized by gang wars that are often transnational in scope. In fact, though violence has been an implicit theme within anthropology from its establishment as a discipline, it has only in the past two or three decades become a topic of explicit concern.<sup>42</sup> This is, to some degree, because the early twentieth century was dominated by psychological and functionalist paradigms that theorized violence either as a natural inclination of human beings or a product of social conditions, and cultural anthropologists might have been inclined to write about “violent” societies, counterposing these with “peaceful” ones. To a degree, this sort of categorization was grounded in biological explanations (both psychological and genetic), though for the most part biology has been seen as only one of many causal factors interacting with ecology, history, and material resource acquisition and maintenance. Early ethnographic work on feuding, however, drew largely from functionalist perspectives to explain violent conflict in relation to the expectations and goals of particular societies.

40 See Obika Gray, *Demeaned but Empowered: The Social Power of the Urban Poor in Jamaica* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004); Christopher Charles, “Garrison Communities as Counter Societies: The Case of the 1998 Zeeks’ Riot in Jamaica,” *Ideaz* 1, no. 1 (2002): 29–43; Amanda Sives, *Elections, Violence, and the Democratic Process in Jamaica, 1944–2007* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2010); Carl Stone, *Democracy and Clientelism in Jamaica* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1980); and Anthony Harriott, *Understanding Crime in Jamaica: New Challenges for Public Policy* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004). For a perspective that historicizes violence and its transformations in Jamaica somewhat differently, see Anthony Bogues, “Power, Violence, and the Jamaican ‘Shotta Don,’” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39, no. 6 (2006): 21–26, 62.

41 For example, M. Jacqui Alexander, “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” *Feminist Review*, no. 48 (November 1994): 5–23; Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron, *Georges Woke Up Laughing: Long Distance Nationalism and the Search for Home* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Haiti, State Against Nation: Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (New York: Monthly Review, 1990); Jennie Smith, *When the Hands Are Many: Community Organization and Social Change in Haiti* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Imani Tafari-Ama, *Blood, Bullets, and Bodies: Sexual Politics below Jamaica’s Poverty Line* (Kingston: MultiMedia Communications, 2006).

42 For an elaboration of violence as a theme in anthropology, see Deborah A. Thomas, “Violence,” *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, 2011, [oxfordbibliographiesonline.com](http://oxfordbibliographiesonline.com).

In other words, because early political anthropologists tended to be preoccupied with acephalous or “weak-state” societies, they were more often concerned with how violence operated as a mode through which social reproduction was achieved than with the ways state institutions and histories of colonialism structured both acute conflict and everyday experiences of subject formation. More recent anthropological research has moved away from both evolutionary-biological and functionalist arguments and has sought to situate violence within the context of regional, state, and global economic and political systems. Ethnographers have taken inspiration from Enlightenment social theory, examining the social contract and the question of the monopoly of violence by the state, and post-1970s analyses of nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism have therefore been heavily influenced by continental political and philosophical scholarship. These contemporary explorations of violence have tended to emphasize not only overt and spectacular forms of violence but also the structural and symbolic dimensions of violence in everyday life. And while they have attempted to show, in a variety of contexts, how the patterns of ethnic and genocidal violence that have characterized twentieth-century conflicts have been linked to patterns of colonial conquest and governance, they have also effectively demonstrated the violent effects of contemporary neoliberal projects and the ways this violence shapes the symbolic, domestic, and intimate worlds for poor folk around the globe while at the same time publicly legitimizing social inequalities by obscuring their origination.

Recent ethnographic approaches to violence in the Caribbean have attempted to complicate some of our familiar narratives, and as a result, they implicitly open up venues through which we might broaden our analytic frame in ways that make claims for reparative justice possible. I am thinking here about explorations of political violence, primarily from the vantage point of Jamaica, that have interrogated the concepts of rights and obligations, participation and accountability, sovereignty and autonomy, displacement and trauma.<sup>43</sup> My own ethnographic work on the gang war that developed in Jacks Hill in 2004 was geared toward understanding how hegemonic patterns of violence move into new spaces and the extent to which the growth of these patterns is allowed, facilitated, or curtailed.<sup>44</sup> My analysis of the unprecedented war—one that was ultimately reckoned through the political oppositionalities that characterize violent conflict in other neighbor-

43 I am thinking here, for example, of Anthony Bogue's insights regarding radical masculinity. See Anthony Bogue, “The Politics of Power and Violence: Rethinking the Political in the Caribbean” (paper presented at Yale University, 11 November 2005), and “Power, Violence, and the Jamaican ‘Shotta Don.’” See also Rivke Jaffe, “The Hybrid State: Crime and Citizenship in Urban Jamaica” (unpublished manuscript), and “The Popular Culture of Illegality: Crime and the Politics of Aesthetics in Urban Jamaica,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2012): 79–102; and Tafari-Ama, *Blood, Bullets, and Bodies*. Also important here is Honor Ford Smith's work on violence in Jamaica, as well as the Sistren Theatre Collective's popular theater production *Letters from the Dead*, which, through a process of the embodiment of social memories, commemorates those killed in urban violence and parses the geopolitical and nationalist relations that produce, sustain, and resist this violence. For the Jamaican case, this work is predated by the important research conducted during the 1970s by Faye Harrison and Lynn Bolles. See Faye Harrison, “Semiproletarianization and the Structure of Socioeconomic and Political Relations in a Jamaican Slum” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1982), “The Politics of Social Outlawry in Urban Jamaica,” *Urban Anthropology* 17, nos. 2–3 (1988): 259–77, and “The Gendered Politics and Violence of Structural Adjustment: A View from Jamaica,” in L. Lamphere, H. Ragona, and P. Zavella, eds., *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Lynn Bolles, *Sister Jamaica: A Study of Women, Work, and Households in Kingston* (New York: University Press of America, 1996). Finally, Alissa Trotz has been doing ethnographic work in Linden in Guyana, examining the ethnic and political strife that had developed during the early 1960s within a transnational sociopolitical and historical framework.

44 Deborah A. Thomas, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

hoods throughout Kingston, despite the fact that it began as a personal dispute framed through the institutionalized status distinctions that had emerged during the post-1970s period within the community—demonstrates that the most regularly circulating modalities of violence are always accessible and might be mobilized to express other forms of conflict and to draw new places into dominant modes of conflict. This is not because community members were socialized into politically partisan violence from birth (as many accounts of so-called garrison communities have rightly suggested) but because they felt unable to resolve their own local disputes in any other way. These channels for problem solving, in other words, were the ones that were most readily available, and these vectors for nationalist incorporation were the most immediately recognizable. Jacks Hill, in essence, became a violent frontier through the redirection of an already-existing circulation of power, influence, and illegality that proliferates in Jamaica through the development and splintering of formerly politically affiliated, and now turf-related, gangs—gangs that are intimately integrated within global informal economies.

In my own and others' ethnographic work, we see subjects struggling with forms of violence that have accompanied other important societal transformations—in these cases, nationalism and the increasing dominance of the neoliberal agenda over the last two decades. The latter context, especially, has occasioned a significant structural transformation in which people have been able to reject the forms of class deference and paternalism they were previously (implicitly and customarily) forced to perform. Within my own research context, I have identified this phenomenon as “modern blackness,” an intensified public power for lower-class black Jamaicans that has been generated in large part by migration and the negotiation of American popular cultural production, and that has been experienced by many Jamaicans across class lines, mainly in terms of an intensification of violence and incivility, as has also been the case in other sites around the world.<sup>45</sup> I am inclined to view these sorts of shifts as instantiations of what James Holston has called “insurgent citizenships,” forms of action that explicitly or implicitly challenge dominant paradigms of belonging that were rooted in colonial hierarchies and inequalities.<sup>46</sup> Analyzing these modalities of power and autonomy requires a commitment to profoundly *seeing*—rather than merely evaluating (usually in cultural terms)—the complex and sometimes uncomfortable ways people on the ground express, indeed grab, their citizenship within both local and transnational spheres. It also requires a commitment to understanding, over a *longue durée*, the articulation of nationalism, state making, and violence and their relationships to cultural practice, cultural production, representation, and the realm of the imagination. It is precisely this articulation that must concern us when we think through the relationships between building archives, nationalist aspirations, notions of vindication, and possibilities for reparations.

45 I am thinking here especially of James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), and “Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries,” *City and Society* 21, no. 2 (2009): 245–67; and Keshia Fikes, *Managing African Portugal: The Citizen-Migrant Distinction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). My own rendering of this phenomenon appears in Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Production of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

46 See Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*.

While nationalist vindication is no doubt a critical endeavor, in terms of both scholarly and political interventions, it is often unable to reflect either the complex and creative ways in which people are generating their own critiques of the past and the present or the visions they are developing for a better future. This is because, like developmental economics, it tends to be a top-down project rather than one that is spawned from the ground up. Reparations, in contrast, imagines a project that by necessity involves multiple interlocking scales. As a result, ethnographic research should be central to this project.

By arguing for ethnographically derived analyses of contemporary violence, I am not advocating a romanticization of “the folk,” nor am I attempting to generate a homogenous notion of popular spheres of social and political action. I am, however, suggesting that ethnographic work can generate a sense of how people produce themselves as citizens and develop mechanisms to deal with the various forms of violence with which they are confronted. Careful ethnographic attention, combined with a deeply historicized contextualization, can help us take these expressions seriously and map them as part of a more general postcolonial critique, rather than as a phenomenon that *feels* to many like little more than either intensified slackness or political hopelessness. It also might open avenues for thinking about projects of repair since it challenges the “culture of violence” trope through nuanced, engaged, and embodied structural historical and transnational accounts of the contemporary situation rather than through a strictly vindicationist perspective privileging the governmental realm of the state and the body of the nation.

### Toward an Ethnographic Archive of Global Process

Sociologists and criminologists who research violence draw our attention to the relationships among the development and transformation of nationalist politics, the emergence of “garrison communities,” and Jamaica’s involvement in the transnational drugs and arms trades, but they do not tend to link these forms of violence to patterns of authority, discipline, land use, and space during the periods of slavery and colonial rule. Historians address these latter themes, but, due to methodological and epistemological conventions, they tend to stop short of reading them forward to the present context, the very context that likely provoked their interest in violence in the first place. Novelists evoke the spectacularity and viscosity of violence and, to greater or lesser degrees, link the violence of slavery to patterns of contemporary political violence, and the literary critics who read these novels for us often tie these excavations to analyses of gender and race and questions of agency and voice in the postcolonial, transnational, and diasporic Caribbean. Novelists also come closest to making inroads to the ways people imagine alternative futures, albeit fictionally rendered.

These various forms of engagement with violence explicitly or implicitly address themselves to the popular perception of violence as an inevitable pathology of Afro-Caribbean societies by demonstrating that violence generally is *not* a cultural phenomenon but an effect of class formation over time and space, and that this process is not only immanently racialized and gendered but also transnational in scope. However, without competent ethnographic interrogation of the actual futures people are attempting to bring into being, they run the risk of being read as historical, sociological,



and literary exegeses of the roots of our pathology rather than as eviscerations of the notion in the first place. An ethnography of the present, to borrow from Michel Foucault, must inform both our knowledge production and our political imaginations today. What ethnographic research and writing makes possible, as Charles Carnegie argues, is “the initiation of policy options that are at once more informed and more creative for having been grounded in a richer understanding of the historical and cultural processes of the people for whom they are designed.”<sup>47</sup> The archives that we develop as a result of ethnographic engagement, therefore, might provide us with a different register through which to make visible actual processes of social change, as well as the creative and dynamic ways people make new worlds out of their own “bare lives.”

For example, instead of thinking about citizenship in relation to rights and obligations vis-à-vis a state, we might be moved to apprehend it as a set of performances and practices that is grounded in specific historical circulations and that is directed at various state and nonstate institutions and extra-territorial or extra-legal networks. This reformulation of citizenship would also require that we demonstrate the various ways the regulatory, disciplinary, biopolitical, and distributional practices of governments throughout the Americas (and beyond) have always been suffused with and enacted by extra-state, nonstate, or quasi-legal entities. In other words, we need to be able to show how both governance and citizenship have been practiced and performed historically and in the present in relation to a context in which national sovereignty is not necessarily the only or even primary organizing principle for people’s social, economic, political, and imagined worlds. In this way, we could draw clearer lines connecting the past and the present, not to create linear patterns of causation but to show the ways past practices, legislations, and experiences are always available for circulation in the present.

Archiving thus becomes less the development of a list of bounded traits, practices, and statistical indicators that make us who we are and more an articulation of *processes* that both constrain and open up the range of futures that are possible at any given moment, both within and beyond the space of the nation-state. It is this sort of framework that can ultimately dismantle the popular view that violence is a cultural phenomenon reproduced and passed from generation to generation, and that can promote instead the recognition that it is a complicated effect of the imbrication of the various structural legacies of colonialism, underdevelopment, and neoliberalism. This is the perspective that a reparations framework would encourage, and it is the only one that can help us see what violence produces rather than only what it destroys.

### Acknowledgements

My thanks to David Scott, Alissa Trotz, Harvey Neptune, Shalini Puri, the participants in the international symposium “What Is Caribbean Studies? Prisms, Paradigms, and Practices” (1–2 April 2011, Yale University), the participants in CUNY’s Caribbean Epistemologies series, and especially Jennifer Morgan and the anonymous reviewer from *Small Axe* for exceptionally helpful engagement with the ideas presented in this essay.

47 Carnegie, “The Fate of Ethnography,” 18.