

Towards the arboreal side-effects of marronage: Black geographies and ecologies of the Jamaican forest

EPE: Nature and Space

1–21

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DOI: 10.1177/25148486221103757

journals.sagepub.com/home/ene**Alex A Moulton** 

University of Tennessee, USA

Abstract

The English colonial plan of converting Jamaica into a settler colony was challenged by the Maroons who established communities in the interior of the island. Living in the forests at the edge of the expanding plantation system, Maroons were feared by aspiring white settlercolonists. The zone where the plantation and white settlements met the Maroon de-facto territory became a frontier zone, where race, belonging, and freedom were contested. The Maroons inspired Black revolt and dreams of freedom, but after signing treaties ending their war against the English in the mid-18th century, the Maroons became dreaded by non-Maroon Blacks in Jamaica. Fear of the Maroons had productive and protective effects on the physical environment; the conservation of much of Jamaica's interior was one of these effects. The paper uses colonial era admissions of this fear as openings for showing how Jamaican conservation was shaped by the Maroons as spatial actors. The paper proposes conceptualizing the afforesting outcomes of marronage as arboreal side-effects, geographical and ecological consequences that are denied in foremost accounts of colonial forest conservation. The paper illustrates the importance of considering Black spatial thought, race and the geographic imaginary (Black Geographies) alongside the connections between antiblackness, the exploitation of nature, and the imperatives of ecological justice (Black ecologies). Reading Maroon practices and histories through and as Black geographies, the paper argues for a subaltern environmental history of Jamaica that affirms Black spatial agency and epistemologies. Consequently, the paper helps clarify marronage as a material-ecological as well as social-political process that is always shaped by the morphology of power and the landscape.

Keywords

Black ecology, colonial forestry, conservation, political ecology, race

Corresponding author:

Alex A Moulton, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA.

Email: amoulto3@utk.edu

Introduction

The ‘*Report upon the forests of Jamaica*’ (1886) by E.D.M. Hooper is among the most consequential of Jamaica’s colonial-era environmental management documents. The report was “the earliest forest policy statement in Jamaica” and marked the beginning of formal forest conservation efforts on the island leading to passage of forest protection laws and government land purchase for afforestation programs (Forestry Department, 2015; Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, 2011; Wimbush, 1935). Hooper observed that highlands of the Blue and John Crow Mountains had been “untouched by *ordinary negroes*,” because they “had hitherto, a traditional dread of the Maroons” (Hooper, 1886: 13). Hooper’s comments on the role of the Maroons in the conservation of Jamaican forests offer a rare concession of the productive natures of Black agency in colonial environmental management discourse. This concession comes begrudgingly though, as Hooper elsewhere in his report calls for a check on the Maroons’ rights. Among what he did not say was that the “general terror” (Hooper, 1886: 17) of the Maroons was also a deterrent to would-be white settlers. Indeed, the alleviation of this terror was a primary objective of the British colonial government from the late 17th to early 18th centuries. The Maroons were not only an existential threat to individual white settlers, but to the plantation system. The Maroons had not simply hindered the expansion of settler-colonialism, they curtailed the expropriation of “good land” and took possession of good land for themselves.

In focusing on the arboreal side-effects of marronage, this paper departs from the bulk of scholarship on Maroons and marronage which has tended to be two-fold: work celebrating the significance and effectiveness of Maroon anticolonial resistance, and work critiquing the Maroons’ pacts with the British that helped dampen wider Black revolution (Bilby, 2005; Campbell, 1988; Carey, 1997; Zips, 1999). In such works, the ways that the Maroons affected the social, political, and economic development of Jamaica has attracted much analysis. Moving away from a debate of the Maroons’ heroism or racial betrayal, I follow scholars who argue for studies of marronage that examine the internal politics of Maroon communities and the impacts of the Maroons on the real and imagined geographies and ecologies of empire (Besson, 2002; Chopra, 2018; Diouf, 2016; Kopytoff, 1976, 1978; Reeder, 2017). This paper considers the ecologies and geographies that can be clarified by plotting the Maroons into the narratives of forest change, forest management, and general environmental discourse.

Reading the Maroons into environmental history, clarifies what I call the arboreal side-effects of marronage as central to the Black ecologies of Jamaica. The anticolonial ecologies cultivated by the Maroons in resistance to colonialism have been little examined (Besson, 2002; Connell, 2020; Favini, 2018). This is part of a broader gap in the literature on Caribbean conservation and environmental history where Black Caribbean people are concerned. There are some exceptions; primarily a corpus of ecocritical Caribbean literature. Notably, analyses and descriptions of Black ecological agency, geographical activity, and social-spatial history are imbricated in the works of Caribbean commentators such as Erna Brodber, Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, Jamaica Kincaid, V. S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott, and Sylvia Wynter (DeLoughrey and Handley, 2011; DeLoughrey et al., 2005; McKittrick, 2015; Wynter, 1971, 1990). This work has seen renewed interest from scholars in the environmental humanities.

The Caribbean ecocritical scholarship has situated the literary and material environments of the region in global geographies of power, and colonial, post- and neo-colonial political ecologies. This paper places this ecocritical scholarship in conversation with *Black Geographies*. Combined, these literatures show that the Maroons’ spatial effects can be mapped through an annotational reading of the archives (Sharpe, 2016). That is, a reading showing how Maroons are both central to and present throughout the post-contact environmental history of Jamaica, but simultaneously rendered absent or obscure by colonial historiography. As a mode of reading, *Black Geographies* clarifies these

presences and absences and their epistemological value (McKittrick, 2006). It is worth noting that the paper is not intended to vindicate Maroons or Black Caribbean people where deforestation is concerned (see Evelyn and Camirand, 2003; Eyre, 1987, 1989; Timms et al., 2013; Weis, 2001), nor weigh in on the persistence of debates about yam sticks and deforestation in contemporary conservation (see Barker, 1998; Barker and Beckford, 2006; Beckford and Barker, 2003; Beckford et al., 2011). The argument the paper takes up is in another domain; the paper centers the arboreal effects of marronage as a way of historically situating the spatial effects of Maroon and Black place-making and ecologies.

The paper proceeds with a precis of the Black Geographies literature. This is followed by an overview of the history of the Maroons, highlighting how their relationships to plantation complex and state changed over time. The paper then centers Hooper's report which inaugurates and exemplifies the colonial discursive and material geographical–ecological attempts to foreclose Black ecological and geographical spaces.

The black arboreal: locating black agency, ecologies, and geographies

While Black Geographies as has developed out of North American critical human geography, sociology, history, and African American studies, the conceptualizations of the relationship between race, nature, and space in this scholarship gives it broad relevance for African diaspora studies. Moreover, much of Black Geographies draw on the criticisms of colonialism, capitalism, and race proffered by Caribbean thinkers. Black Geographies grapples not only with how race as a social axis of difference shapes environmental governance, geographical histories, and transformations, but how racialized socio-spatial positions are disrupted by counter-cultural and counter-hegemonic place-making, and space-taking practices (Madera, 2015; McKittrick, 2006; McKittrick and Woods, 2007; Woods, 1998). Black Geographies clarifies geographical and ecological sensibilities and experiences that shape Black epistemologies by moving away from spatial metaphors that fail to locate the materiality of Black creative production and contestations. As McKittrick and Woods (2007: 6) argued, geographical examinations of Black Atlantic cultures often “bring into focus empirical evidence based on ethnographic, demographic, or quantitative research.” Such studies, they argued, “locate where black people live,” but risk “naturalizing racial difference in place” even as it does the valuable work of situating the spatial materiality of race and racism. Which is to say that “identifying the ‘where’ of blackness in positivist terms can reduce black lives to essential measurable ‘facts’, rather than presenting communities that have struggled, resisted, and significantly contributed to the production of space” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007).

Black Geographies and politics of place map the “*spatial desires*” of Black communities (Ruffin, 2007: 142), making it both an epistemology and a methodology for charting the physical and symbolic sites of Black life and struggle (Allen et al., 2019; Hawthorne, 2019; Lewis, 2018). Black Geographies is a counter-mapping of symbolic and material sites of Black life in the Atlantic world in the aftermath of European ‘New World’ contact. Black Geographies are the very sites that constitute an archipelago of Black spaces in the Atlantic world and beyond (Gilroy, 1993; Madera, 2015; McKittrick, 2006). These sites challenge the abstract conception of space, and of space as transparent. As McKittrick (2006: 5) notes, “transparent space assumes that geography—specifically, physical and material geographies—is readily knowable, bound up with ideologies and activities that work to maintain a safe socioeconomic clarity.” But as McKittrick goes on to explain, “While the power of transparent space works to hierarchically position individuals, communities, regions, and nations, it is also contestable—the subject interprets, and ruptures, the knowability of our surroundings.” (2006: 6).

In this paper, I am centering marronage as a Black geographical practice that reproduces material Black geographies and ecologies (Bledsoe, 2017; Winston, 2021; Wright, 2020). I am using the term arboreal side-effects to designate the material spaces produced out of and enabling acts of Black subversion of space and production of nature. Arboreal side-effects center and affirm Black arboreal agency, especially anonymized and obscured Black arboricultural acts. We can read the reproduction of Maroon spaces not simply regarding the success of state making practices to eliminate or govern them per se, but as spaces reproduced as elusive targets of state power. They motivate the very forms of regulation that define the state (Scott, 2009). Side-effects are not pre-given, but consequent to conjunctures of social, ecological, and political relations. They are outcomes of contestation. Side-effects are not just reactions to direct actions, but the heterogeneous effects resulting from relational struggles over the relationship between political actors and the making of places for action. In this way, we can understand marronage itself to be a side-effect of colonial state-making and plantation socio-economic disciplining; Maroons constituted an oppositional group and spaces as spatial-political responses to colonialism. Resisting the colonial logics of captured land as territory, the Maroons challenged racist spatial and resource expropriation by posing a threat to land surveying as the precursor to the reproduction of land as property and attendant plantation expansion. The arboreal side-effects of marronage are, therefore, the unintended but inexorable afforesting outcomes of the colonial attempts to displace the Maroons. Put another way, the arboreal side-effects of marronage are the spatial-ecological effects of the formation and reproduction of Maroon communities. By examining the arboreal side-effects of marronage we can map Black agency and epistemologies onto “the competing ordering, reordering, and disordering of the Caribbean landscape, and the social struggles that came to be materialized in that landscape.” (Sheller, 2007: 207).

The colonial effort to produce space as non-Maroon controlled territory and space as a colonially managed suite of environmental resources is provoked by marronage. Thus, the geographies of marronage are not only symbolic sites of resistance but material sites that instantiate a counter-hegemonic spatial-ecological logic to the colonial order. Maroon arboreal side-effects name the sites that challenged the inscription of geographical and ecological power and orders of the colonial government. This challenge resulted in the protection of land and forest resources from wholesale appropriation and extraction as reservoirs of resources—timber, minerals, etc.—to support imperial state-making. Maroon arboreal effects designate an early Black “conservation” of resources against the unremitting relations of extractive capitalism and the “relational, immersive forms of (environmental) care exercised by Maroons” in the reproduction of more-than-human socio-ecologies (Favini, 2008: 9). To the extent that this Maroon conservation prevented spaces from being seized as sites for accumulation, the Maroons ensured that some spaces and Black people were spared the instantiation of violated life and forced labor. Therefore, Maroon arboricultural activities and strategic use of nature make the forest “an ecologically materialized archive of revolt” (Favini, 2008: 24). Even if Maroon or Black arboreal assemblages or ecologies share some species with plantation and post-emancipation governmental arboreal assemblages, the ways in which ecological space and species are appropriated imbue these Maroon and Black ecologies with significance. The Black rationalities around the reproduction of these ecologies, use of spaces for meaning making, and use of space for reproduction of counter-hegemonic survival gave rise to distinct arboreal ecologies (Sheller, 2007). The colonial, especially post-treaty, Maroon ecologies were certainly not perfect models for Black ecologies, but they modeled Black environmental place-making.

Insurgent ecologies, spatial transformations, and landscapes of power

Not long after their invasion of Jamaica and routing of the Spanish, the British decided that the new outpost should become a settler-colony, populated by a white yeomanry that would also defend

against a recapture of the island by the Spanish. Anticipating the English assault on the island, the Spanish allied with already existing autonomous Black communities and enslaved Africans, promising freedom to Black people who would join the defensive efforts. However, the English forced the Spanish to retreat into the woods. Edward Long recounts that the invading British became contented with cultivation of only “small spots of ground near the sea-side” and killing their horses and dogs for food (Long, 1774b: Vol 2: 251). According to Long, the “*skulking Negroes and Spaniards*” multiplied in the woods through extensive cultivation and wild hog hunting. Rivalries between the administrators of the other Spanish Caribbean territories, and prioritization of local defense in those territories meant that the Spanish never retook Jamaica (Schmitt, 2019, I. Wright, 1930). With the final retreat of the Spanish, the forest-dwelling Africans became the most significant obstacle to English colonization, second only perhaps to environmental factors. Environmental factors which had made Jamaica a “*sickly island*” that caused “distempers” in settlers, Long argued, were ameliorated by “the more extensive cultivation of the country, the cutting down its thick woods in several parts” (Long, 1774b: Vol. 2: 554).

But the Maroons continued to stymie English colonization, even as plantation cultivation expanded under these agreeable atmospheres for settlers. Long provides glimpses of the competing logics of the arboreal landscapes being produced. The British were enrolling spaces that could be transformed easily for monoculture, while the Maroons were establishing spaces for communal life and fugitive subsistence. The Maroons’ subsistence spaces were not insignificant. As early as the 1660s, Juan de Bolas, a leader of the Spanish era Maroons who subsequently made peace with the British, was noted as having a palenque with 200 acres of cultivated land, the most significant source of domestically produced food (Buisseret and Taylor, 2008; Patterson, 1970). Later, at the beginning of the 19th century, Robert C. Dallas (1803: 106–107) reported what such provision grounds contained.

Their provision grounds consisted of a considerable tract of unequal land from which was produced a stock not only sufficient for their own use, but so superabundant as to enable them to supply the neighbouring settlements. Plantain, Indian corn or maize, yams, cocoas, toyaus, and in short, all the nutritious roots that thrive in tropic soils, were cultivated in their grounds... In their gardens grew most of the culinary vegetables, and they were not without some fine fruits... the soil of their mountains was unfavourable, being either moist or clayey, yet they had some valuable fruit-trees, among which the Avocado, or Alligator-pear, ranked foremost... and pine-apples grew in their hedges. They had cattle and hogs, and raised a great quantity of fowls. When to this domestic provision of good and wholesome food, we add the luxuries afforded by the woods, the wild boar, ring-tail pigeons, and other wild birds, and the land-crab... we may doubt whether the palate of Apicius would not have received higher gratification in Trelawny Town than at Rome.

The extension of these multi-tiered, polyculture, configurations from small plots into forested areas created food forests; a Black commons for long-term wild food harvesting (Barker and Spence, 1988; Besson, 2002; Campbell et. al, 2021). The agrobiodiversity of provisions informs Judith Carney’s description of African American provisions grounds as botanical gardens of the dispossessed (Carney, 2009; Carney and Rosomoff, 2009). In exchange for recognition as the governor of his own settlement, de Bolas agreed to rout and destroy the two other organized Maroon groups. One of these other groups, led by Juan de Serras eventually killed Juan de Bolas. Pursued by the British, these other Maroons retreated into the mountains. The withdrawal of the Maroons motivated a transition from military rule of the island to civil government. Relative peace also meant increasing numbers of Africans were brought to the island to be enslaved, but as the plantation system intensified tensions between the Maroons and the English increased.

Consequently, by 1700, many prospective white settlers started choosing North American over Jamaica, preferring to avoid a life of constant fear of the Maroons (Sheridan, 1965; Watts, 1990).

This fear was especially pronounced among the poorest potential settlers, who because of the cost and availability of relatively flat and desirable land, would have to venture ever closer to the hillsides on the fringes of the forests to establish their homesteads. At this zone of contact where white settlers would be exposed to the Maroons, the supposed natural order—a system of white domination and white property control—was upended by insurgent practices that placed whiteness and white possessions at risk. Unable to catch the Maroons themselves, the destruction of the Maroons' settlements and provisions grounds became central to the Maroon suppression strategy. The ecologies of white supremacy, therefore, were realized not simply through the expansion of plantations, but through the destruction of Black residential infrastructures, food systems, and botanical heritages (Carney, 2021; Kopytoff, 1978). But the Maroons repeatedly raided plantations and traded with the enslaved to supplement their provisioning, and enslaved people frequently revolted and fled to join the ranks of the Maroons. The complaints about the Maroons as a menace between 1700 and 1738—the *First Maroon War*—are too frequent to rehearse here, but a few are sufficient to illustrate the stakes of marronage as the colonial authorities saw them.

In 1730, Governor Robert Hunter lamented that because of recent “desertions from several settlements, or from the bad success of common parties, [the Maroons] are grown to that height of insolence... [and the] frontiers... are no longer in any sort of security, must be deserted” (cited in Patterson, 1970: 304). Governor Edward Trelawny in 1739 opined that “the chief reason of this island being so thinly inhabited is because there is hardly any good land which has been hitherto safe from the incursions of those rebels... and many who have begun plantations [exposed] to that danger have been forced to abandon them on that account” (cited in Pitman, 1917: 117). Robert Charles Dallas (1803: 27) lamented that, the Maroons' “predatory excursions greatly distressed the back settlers, by plundering their houses, destroying their cattle, and carrying away off their slaves by force.” Maroons hindered effective settlement “and obliged the planters who had made some progress in their estates, to live in a continual state of alarm and preparation for defense” (Dallas, 1803).

By 1738 weary from fighting the Maroons, the English concluded formal treaties with leaders of the Maroons that had reorganized into two main regional polities: the Windward Maroons resided in the Blue and John Crow Mountains in the islands east while the Leeward Maroons resided in settlements in the rugged Cockpit Country in north-central Jamaica (see Figure 1). The Leeward Maroon treaty immediately caused tensions with the Windward Maroons who had been less convinced of the sincerity of the peace offering from the English. The prospect that the Leeward Maroons could be mobilized against them, and their comparatively smaller numbers, meant that the Windwards hesitantly signed a similar treaty shortly after the Leewards. The English recognized Maroon territory and autonomy, with the Maroons agreeing to support English colonization, including by suppressing revolts and returning runaways.

The treaties facilitated white access to the lands around the Maroon controlled regions and offered security of life and tenure to “young beginners in remote parts, even against any machinations of their own slaves” so much so that Long reasoned that “that we may date the flourishing state of [the colony] from the ratification of the treaty” after which “the island has been increasing in plantations and opulence.” (Long, 1774a: 343). The fourth clause of the treaty agreed to by Cudjoe of the Leeward Maroons, further betrays how crucial curtailment of Maroon ecologies were to colonial plantation and arboreal landscapes. The clause dictates that while the Maroons have the liberty to cultivate their lands “with coffee, cocoa, ginger, tobacco, and cotton, and to breed cattle, hogs, goats, or any other flock and dispose of the produce or increase of the said commodities to the inhabitants of this island,” it stipulated that “when they bring the said commodities to market, they shall apply first to the Custos, or any other magistrate of the respective parishes where they expose their goods to sale, for a license to vend the same.”

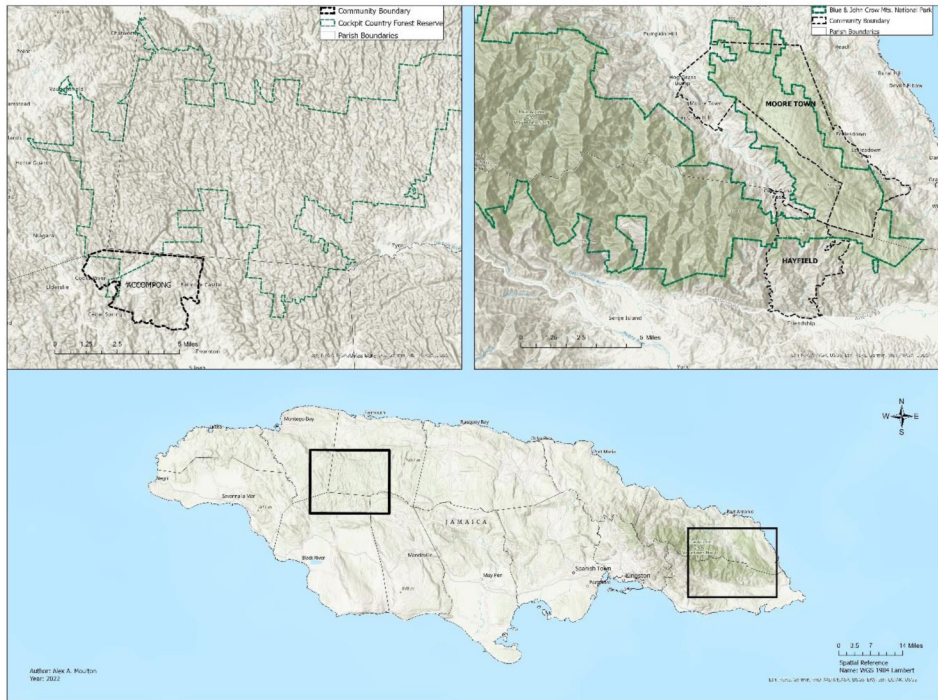


Figure 1. Map of Jamaica, Cockpit Country forest reserve (with Accompong Maroon town) and Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (with Moore Town and Hayfield—mentioned by Hooper).

The regulatory regime organized around a Custos (Custos rotulorum, a parish-level administrative position) and licenses was effectively an infant industry protection regime that the ecologies of white supremacy required to thrive. The fact that the custos, a civic office staffed by white colonial officials, comes into the mix regulating the Maroons' crop sales also highlights the intensions to regulate Maroon socio-ecological life and undermine the Maroons' status at the same time the Maroons are being formally included into colonial society. The extension of the plantation system was eventually a sore point for the Maroons, whose populations had increased, but who were restricted by terms of their treaty to their land grants. Passage of laws such as the Law for the Better Ordering of Negro Towns (1791) also sought to restructure Maroon governance. Discontent among younger Maroons about the erosion of Maroon autonomy, evidenced by having white supervisors in the communities as stipulated by the treaties, was not helped by the public flogging of a Maroon by a Black overseer in Montego Bay for predial larceny. To add insult to injury, the overseer was enslaved had previously been captured as a runaway and returned by Maroons. The flogging sent younger Maroon men of Trelawney (Cudjoe's) Town into revolt, precipitating the Second Maroon War of 1795–1796 (Chopra, 2018; Wilson, 2009). The war ended when the Maroons surrendered to the English, in part because of their fear of ferocious bloodhounds that had been brought in to track them, and in part because they were promised they would not be deported.

On their surrender, however, both the 150 Maroons who had revolted and others from Trelawney Town, totaling over 500 were deported to Halifax, Nova Scotia. These Maroons would eventually be resettled in Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1800. Both in Halifax and in Freetown the Maroons helped the British with public works projects, and in Freetown they

staffed the civil and military services in support of colonization. The other Maroon groups which had stayed in compliance with the treaties remained allies with the English, notwithstanding tensions and persistent English efforts to erode the Maroons' status. The Maroon Land Allotment Act (1842), and the Maroon Townships Land Allotment Act (1856), for example, were intended to rollback and then deny Maroon autonomy and land rights. Perhaps performatively asserting their view that the treaties were inviolable, the Maroons violently helped put down the 1865 Morant Bay rebellion and captured and arrested its leader Paul Bogle, a Black freedman and Baptist deacon.

Marronage, Morant Bay, and the landscape of post-Emancipation Jamaica

During slavery, planters had encouraged slave cultivation of provision plots, intending to reduce the plantations' operational costs. This slave-time plot system made the enslaved proto-peasants as sale of excess production became common—much like the Maroons provisions grounds. Domestic food production grew out of these Black provisioning efforts. Indeed, slave owner and historian Edward Long (1774a: 537) estimated that as early as 1774, about 20% of the coin in circulation was in the hands of enslaved agrarians gained from selling produce to plantations. And marketing was almost exclusively to the credit of enslaved Black women itinerant traders, or higglers. Black food production and marketing, therefore, created an important “breach in the slave system” (Mintz, 1983:113). What was meant to be a system of added exploitation became one of Black economic agency, especially for Black women, an unintended effect (Besson, 2003; Craton, 1994; Soluri, 2006; Sweeney, 2019).

While slavery was abolished in 1834 and full Emancipation came in 1838, conditions had little improved for the majority of Black Jamaicans. The freedom to leave the plantation resulted in a mass migration of the formerly enslaved to the interior of the island, distancing themselves from the plantations, and the wage labor being offered by their former enslavers. Freed people established communities or free villages, relying on agriculture as their main economic activity (Beckford & Barker, 2007). These efforts were resisted by the plantation bloc, who influenced the legislature to pass such laws as the Ejectment Act (1839) and Trespass Act (1851) to limit the survey, partition, and sale of land to former slaves, and create repressive land taxation regime (Besson, 1995; Paget, 1964; Satchell, 1990). These antiblack strategies of land control limited the formation of a peasantry and created “an agro-proletariat” instead (Weis, 2007). Notwithstanding this, Black Jamaicans gained access to land surreptitiously. Missionaries would purchase large tracts of land for free villages and farm plots for their Black congregants. Other non-church sponsored free villages would later emerge from collective Black land purchases, rental, and squatting (Hills, 1965; Mintz, 1989). These communities and farming plots enabled the (re)constitution of a commons and were sites of repair; spaces where African identities were reformed into new World Black identities.

Protesting the continued limited access to land, high poll taxes, and hardships related to drought and crop failure, a group led by Bogle marched to a courthouse in St Thomas-in-the-East parish on October 11, 1865. While only some in the group were armed with sticks and stones, the parish's volunteer militia opened fire on the crowd killing 25 people. The next day the protest became a full-scale rebellion. In the wake of the rebellion, Governor John Eyre dismissed the House of Assembly which, like other aspects of Jamaican life had become increasingly influenced by free Black people and the mixed-race population after Emancipation. Eyre deployed government troops and the Maroons who violently squashed the rebellion, killing 439 Black Jamaicans and arresting 354 others, including Bogle and George William Gordon, a mixed-race Jamaican businessman and a

St Thomas-in-the-East representative to the Assembly. Gordon, who had been critical of Eyre and was an ally of Bogle, was executed a day before Bogle.

In response to the ruthless actions of Governor Eyre, Jamaica was made a Crown Colony, with political administration shifting to The Crown from the local assembly (Augier, 1966; Sheller, 2011). Like the post-Civil War period in the US, there was a reconstruction. The post-Morant Bay Rebellion period was one of a second wave of marronage driven by the Black peasantry on a reorganizing landscape of environmental and political power (Besson, 1992, 2002). Some investments were made in agriculture and infrastructure, along with limited land reform. Along with earlier arrangements of missionary supported free villages, the post-Morant Bay land reforms led to greater land possession by Black people (Besson, 1995; Paton, 2018). These reforms, however, did not bring about a dramatic rise of the Black peasantry, and the plantation economy was reorganized around banana production for export. The new agrarian formation was dominated by Tate and Lyle and then United Fruit Company. Black Jamaicans were forced to lease lands or pushed onto marginal lands as upland plantations for coffee, ginger, and banana expanded. Both contributed to forest degradation and soil erosion. At the same time work on the Panama Canal, and on railroads in Cuba, Central and South America started to attract scores of Jamaicans overseas (Hudson, 2017; Watts, 1990). As Thomas Holt (1992: 317) observed, at this time, Jamaican peasants once “defamed as indolent savages by the racial ideologists of at mid-century, were apparently reclaimed as self-interested economic actors by the new imperialists of the late nineteenth century.” It was “an era in which racist ideology was becoming more virulent and practically unchallenged, official policy was grounded paradoxically on the entrepreneurship of Black Jamaicans” (Holt, 1992).

It should be clear from the foregoing that the creation and reorganization of colonial ecologies and exercise of domination have always been mediated by competing projects and resistance of the Maroons and Black Jamaican peasants. In a straightforward way then, fear of the Maroons, and their control of upland areas, effectively conserved the forests well before formal state-conservation efforts. Beyond this though, the conceptualization of arboreal effects reads the state’s conservation effects as a political response whereby changing agrarian formations spur changing regimes of property and concern with nature, textured by white imperatives. The Maroons—a runaway peasantry that gained legal freehold by the treaty—provided an example of the power of Black land holding which became increasingly mirrored by the free Black peasantry. As Black Jamaicans became occupiers of vast swaths of upland areas they became a political ecological problem (Besson, 2002). As John Soluri (2006: 144) points out, “colonial officials ‘misread’ the island’s changing agro-landscapes by decoupling the actions of small settlers’ from the re-emergence of a plantation economy and ascribing environmental decline to the static “customs” of Afro-Jamaicans.” Conservation seems to have provided, for the state, a resolution to the problems of Afro-Jamaican driven land degradation.

It is into this conjunctural moment that Hooper is invited by the colonial government to evaluate the forest problem. A period of second wave marronage, as the free Black peasantry challenge the colonial racial order, when the contours of the social and ecological terrain were being redrawn by the emergence of a new plantation order as sugar production declined. In the next section, I focus on Hooper’s Report to illustrate the presence–absence mode of narration that works to grudgingly admit the Maroons’ environmental effects and denigrates or denies the value of those effects. This is a mode that serves the reproduction of discursive and material colonial natures.

Hooper, Black peasants, Maroon arboreal effects

Hooper was recruited from the Indian Forest Department to survey Jamaica’s forest and while in the British West Indies also conducted surveys of forests in Antigua, British Honduras, Grenada, St

Lucia, St Vincent, Tobago, all within a ten-month period between September 1885 and July 1886. The fact of Hooper's recruitment from India is itself noteworthy; the degree of circulation of colonial officials across the British colonies facilitated the reproduction of a discursive and material terrain that connected the colonial landscape as an almost undifferentiated area (Nesbitt, 2018; Richardson, 2004; Grove, 1995). The monocropping of ideas, systems, and bureaucracies were crucial for the reproduction of empire. While I want to focus on Hooper's discussion of the Maroons throughout his report, aspects of the report itself are worth commenting on. In his introduction, for example, Hooper assures his reader that his account is based on extensive excursions and conversations with "the inhabitants of all classes on the subject of the forests and on the land question as it affects them" (Hooper, 1886: 10). The introduction cannot be understood outside of the colonial practices of survey to make territory legible. Through the act of surveying, and a survey of the whole island, conducted with extensive conversations with "inhabitants", actors like Hooper can render the complexities of space transparent and knowable. They can arrive at definitive statements on islands or a region in ten months.

As for the content of the report, early on Hooper argues that forest degradation was caused by Black people in general and the Maroons in particular. Hooper does also concede that upland plantations on the rise since the 1860s are also a source of degradation. This is in line with colonial foresters throughout the empire who were concerned with commercial and peasant use of the forests. But for Hooper,

The history of forest denudation may be described as the history of *negro cultivation*. In the early days of the colony it became a system that the vegetable diet of the enslaved labourers should be grown by the labourers themselves on certain lands distant from the scene of their labour... This I mention show that it gave a stimulus to the cultivation, so that by emancipation time it had become a most regular institution, and the people who from father to son had been cultivating their grounds assumed a prescriptive right to cultivate their familiar hill sides in much the same spirit as made them regard their old dwellings and surroundings as their home in which they held rights of occupancy, as they thought. (Hooper, 1886: 15).

He restates his assessment later, noting that, "the chief agents of destruction at work are the cultivators of ground provision...sacrificing the forest growth" (Hooper, 1886: 17). Hooper's declaration here is especially glaring given his own admission that the extension of upland plantations had been driven in significant part by government encouragement, and those upland plantations were major drivers of forest degradation. This state-driven forest transformation continued well into the 1990s (Berke and Beatley, 1995; Edwards, 2012, 2014; Soluri, 2006; Weis, 2000). Instead of a sustained discussion of the effects of silviculture and state encouraged large-scale farming in the Blue Mountains, Hooper instead focuses on "negro cultivation," particularly, yam cultivation. Such cultivation, according to Hooper, has "done much to kill out the hardwood forest," and the hardwoods are now being replaced by "a worthless growth of John Crow bush (*Baccharis*)" and "noxious weeds... [like] Pepper Elder (*Piperomia*)" (Hooper, 1886: 13). Here the Maroons are not specifically mentioned, but Hooper's claim that the "history of forest denudation is a history of 'negro cultivation'" is worth noting because of the invariable tension that is set up between non-Maroon Black cultivation and Maroon cultivation. It is this pattern of racially attributing forest denudation to "*negroes*" vis-a-vis the Maroons, celebrating Maroon-induced conservation, but then warning against unrestricted Maroon environmental rights that informs my critique of the presence-absence account of Maroons in Jamaica's environmental history. Moreover, the Maroons as the forerunners to the Black keepers of provision grounds are the first practitioners of the yam culture that Hooper blames for forest degradation (Carney, 2021; Castellano, 2021).

Some of the worthless growths and noxious weeds Hooper refers to were in fact valuable to forest dependent Black communities. The Pepper Elder (*Peperomia pellucida*) is used by the

Maroons for medicinal purposes (e.g. treatment of abdominal pains, colic, and hemorrhage) and culinary purposes (jerking of wild hogs). What Hooper identifies as John Crow bush could be *Baccharis scoparia* (to treat wounds) *Baccharis dioica* (used as an ornamental and ground cover to minimize soil erosion), or *Bocconia frutescens* (used medicinal to treat lice, treat wounds, and eye inflammations) (Acevedo-Rodríguez and Strong, 2012; Browne, 1756). The first is endemic to the Caribbean and the second and third are “native” to Jamaica. So, not only is it possible that Hooper is mixing up the names, but he also misses the value of the “worthless bushes and weeds” because their uses fall outside of the gaze of white utility. Only through viewing the forest with an attention to Black ethnobotanical knowledge, would Hooper have been able to see the ethnomedical values of the emancipation ecologies (Campbell et al., 2021; DeLoughrey and Handley, 2011).

Hooper (1886: 15) regarded Black shifting cultivation as “apparently the only operation in which the negro cheerfully expends exertion.” Indeed, provision plots served as important sites for the constitution of Black communal life and expressions of agency. We might read this cheerfulness that Hooper criticizes as an affect of plot kinship and plot work, since labor on the plot was “a form of biopolitical labor, an affirmative production of subjectivity and the common against the biopower of the colonial state” (Moulton and Popke, 2017: 720). A culture of sustainability and multispecies kinship allowed for the recuperation of physical and ontological relationship between the plot-makers and users and the more-than-human world (Davis et al., 2019; Wynter, 1971). But Hooper was not alone in his denunciation of yam culture, Daniel Morris who had been the director of public gardens and plantations in Jamaica, and whose advocacy had led to Hooper being recruited to the British West Indies, lamented Black clearance of timber not on the grounds of forest destruction per se, but the loss of potential value in the form of beautiful hardwoods (Nesbitt, 2018; Richardson, 2004). Hooper reiterated the system of value, advocating conservancy in the interest of preserving cedar (*Cedrela odorata*), a wood of “beautiful grain and a fragrant exaltation” and the Jamaican mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*), “much prized in the English market, where it fetched, when good, a higher price than the Central American timber” (Hooper, 1886: 19).

Acts of Black use bring about new ecological realities that not only transform the highlands but change the political-economic possibilities of space. Black people challenged the plantation-colonial pretense of socio-ecological order; challenges that forced the system to pay attention to Black habitation and use of space. To be sure, Hooper (1886: 19) dismisses the possibility of export-focused commercial forestry “for years to come even with rigid conservation,” but he reasoned that conservation could help meet local timber demand. He believed that “it can, however, be confidently asserted that forest conservancy is more than justified in the interest of climate generally, especially in tropical regions where it so often occurs that disastrous droughts are only divided or separated from each other by a torrential fall of rain which runs off to the sea without doing more than ephemeral good to the parched crops.” (Hooper, 1886: 22).

So, Hooper is motivated by real interest in conservation and is concerned with practical means for achieving this end. A major part of that includes the escheating of private, degraded, idle lands to constitute the forest reserves. My contention is that these means are hostile to Black forest use and ecological agency. If Hooper had foregrounded Black ethnobotanical heritage, he could have productively interrogated the tensions between colonial ecologies and Black ecologies. Rather than lamenting a forest degraded, such an interrogation would have allowed Hooper to better account for how Jamaica’s “*natural history*” had been thoroughly integrated into and shaped by historical processes of taxonomic classifications, ecological exchanges, and culture-building activities. Those processes had imposed orders not just on nonhuman fauna, but humans as well, based on organicist views of nature and society (DeLoughrey et al., 2005; Yusoff, 2018). In the absence of an eco-critical analysis, “yam growers” and their social-ecological spaces become the *raison d’être* of

colonial forestry, rather than state sanctioned and large-scale capitalist ecological destruction (Soluri, 2006). In this way, the “yam growing class of the population” become as unwelcome in the forest as the species that they depend on and for which their yam growing actions create an ecological niche. This is a tension between use value (yam, or creole culture) and exchange value (monoculture agriculture and silviculture) (Wynter, 1971).

Hooper’s discussion renders the places occupied and used by Black people, particularly the Maroons, as ecologically worthless and inconsequential except to the extent that they are a technical problem for colonial forest management. Bringing this discussion into conversation with Black Geographies valorization of Black ecological knowledge and socio-spatial agency, we might see these “*worthless growths*” as part of a Maroon ecology (Connell, 2020; Favini, 2018). The value of the yams, gingers, bushes, and fruit trees and the ecological labor that explains their proliferation, while dismissed by Hooper, provide an opening for grasping the expansive natures of Black arboreal activity. We can interpret Hooper’s acknowledgement of these *yam culture transformations*—their spatiality and temporality—as outcomes of a Black ecological agency that is inseparable from Maroon provisioning and forest protection. These are outcomes too of the post-emancipation mimetic-Maroon provisioning by the free Black peasantry.

It is not just that Hooper claims that Black peasants and Maroons are responsible for forest destruction, but he identifies these two groups as specifically and primarily responsible. His diagnosis does acknowledge the structural constraints imposed on Black agrarians by the plantation bloc during slavery, but he misses how important the persistent pressures of the plantation bloc and new commodity market forces in the post-emancipation period were to Black land use, or misuse as he saw it. While Hooper (1886: 17) bemoans Black provisions culture for destroying the “tropical luxuriance” without always differentiating between post-emancipation peasant cultivation and Maroon cultivation, he does pointedly identify the latter as “another element of forest destruction.” But only after noting the conservation effect of Maroon occupation of the forests and uplands. In this way, Hooper acknowledges the arboreal side-effects of marronage, even as he names the Maroons as perpetrators of forest denudation. For example, he reasons that

beyond a few patches of ground cultivation here and there, made by the slaves of owners, it is improbable that [much of the Blue and John Crow Mountains] have been visited except by the Maroons, who have at all times of our occupation held a sort of sway... the settlement of these men in this portion may probably be the cause of the forest lands north of the peaks remaining untouched by ordinary negroes, who have hitherto a traditional dread of the Maroons (Hooper, 1886:13).

Only in three instances does Hooper address the Maroons’ distinct political-cultural position: in the comment above, a sentence in the introduction, and a section noted below. In the introduction he had noted that the uplands of the Blue and Jon Crow Mountains and “the cockpit lands of Trelawny and St James” are the “important exception” to the “general system of patents” whereby lands were alienated from the Crown (Hooper, 1886: 3). He does not explain why the Maroons and Maroons spaces are the exception, eliding any discussion of the historical impacts of marronage. This even as he celebrates that “at the present time the Maroons are happily losing in some measure their identity and claims for considerations as a separate privileged body” (Hooper, 1886). The third and most direct treatment of the Maroons’ history comes when Hooper opines that,

Whatever truth there may be in their pretensions to be different in race origin to the other African immigrants, or whatever may be the precise nature of the arrangements, the Government of Jamaica have from time to time entered upon with them, I see no reason for their not being treated in a way someone similar to that adopted by the Government in India in dealing with Aboriginal tribes. With such people the Forest Department in India has much to do, and though, in some regions, it is with

them directly that our work in conserving the forest chiefly lies, it is found that they become with generous treatment firm supporters of our policy. These Maroons are adapted to open-air life and rely for their subsistence on hunting, fishing and growing forest crops rather than on the ordinary means of existence, and they in consequence learn to believe in the existence of certain exclusive prescriptive rights of user over ill-defined or undefined territory with the result, that permitted as they have been hitherto, to roam and cut at leisure all over the lands belonging to absentees or to the Crown, contiguous to their settlements, they now resent any suggestion to settle on their own lands. Compared with what would have happened to the forests of Portland from ordinary ground provision growing had the Maroons not been there to exercise a general terror, the damage done to these forests by the Maroons themselves is certainly slight, but still it amounts to something (Hooper, 1886: 17)

Hooper does not situate the Maroons as drivers of absenteeism, a factor which is quite central to the patterns of uncleared patented lands and woodlands reverting to forests because of abandonment. He also avoids any direct discussion of the Maroons' treaties and the extent of Maroon land grants. In his comments here and throughout the report, the fact of the Maroons' decisive anticolonial activities looms in the background as context to geographical and ecological realities but is not centered. The prescriptive rights that Hooper regards with skepticism are performative rights that spatialize challenges to the production of space and ecological order according to plantation logics. Moreover, positioning the Maroons' "*ill-defined or undefined territory*" against the ostensibly clear and organized Crown Land system according to which "the whole of the land has been at one point patented" exposes the tensions between the grounded experience and production of space and the abstract reproduction of space. The fact that by 1830, for example, more land had been patented than existed says something about the degree of abstraction (Hills, 1965). The colonial imagination conceived of a colony, never experienced by the monarch, but patented under their name.

Maroons' ill-defined and undefined territories are, therefore, important markers of the limits of the sovereign's dominion, demarcating the fuzziness of colonial geographies of power. These Maroon spaces testify to the permeability of the plantation order; the Maroons operate outside of the captive logics of the plantation and roam and transform spaces at their own leisure (Hartman, 1997; McKittrick, 2013). Through marronage the boundary lines of colonial control and Black freedom were contested and redrawn, in the process creating an archipelago of Black freedom and liberty in the Atlantic world (Bledsoe, 2017; Reeder, 2017). The Maroons' ill-defined and undefined territory is emblematic of the spatial outcomes of Black agency. This amorphous space is hard to grasp for Hooper, and indeed for colonial surveyors in general, because it is unmapable by the colonial cartographic practices and the spatial conceptualizations upon which colonial cartography relies (Madera, 2015; McKittrick, 2011).

Hooper's comments also say much about the colonial imaginaries operating empire wide. India was "the laboratory and proving ground for modern tropical forestry," and Hooper's reference to the practices used to secure the support of natives there provides a glimpse of the emerging bureaucratization of colonial forestry and the standardization of forestry knowledge. Often eliding the different historical-ecological trajectories, the bureaucracy and knowledge system reproduced an imaginary of the empire's landscape as unitary and undifferentiated (Grove, 1995; Nesbitt, 2018). The claims to forest rights by the natives in India and the Maroons in Jamaica amount to the same thing, an obstacle to imperial forestry. This imaginary informed circulation of staff, policies, and species. The traffic between India and Jamaica, for example, was not just exemplified by Hooper, but also the Jamaican mahogany. In 1872, a Scottish forester at the Nilambur Plantation started planting Jamaican mahogany among teak trees on an experimental basis. While that experiment and others were not always successful, the successes that were had with the array of species introduced from across the empire's network of botanical gardens, did spark the creation of experimental forestry agencies across the tropical British empire (Bennett, 2014; Richardson, 2004).

Admitting that his “experience of these people is limited to my acquaintance with the settlements of Moore-town in the parish of Portland, and of Hayfield in the parish of St Thomas-in-the-East,” Hooper goes on to propose a forestry policy that both disabuses the Maroons of special rights and privileges based on “their pretensions to be different in race origin to the other African immigrants” (Hooper, 1886) and mobilize the Maroons’ special position and knowledge of the forest for surveillance, fire deterrence, and environmental conservation. Just as important as Hooper’s question of the merits of Maroons’ sense of themselves as “a separate privileged body,” is his prescription that the Maroons be treated as the aboriginal tribes in India. Exactly how the Government of India has dealt with the *Aboriginal tribes* is not recapitulated by Hooper, though his paternalistic tone and later suggestions clarify the approach. Of the Blue Mountain Highland reserve, the forest reserve he argued would be the “most practical commencement for forest conservancy in Jamaica” he reasoned that,

In connection with this large reservation would come the settlement of the Maroons. If their lands form our boundary, they must be dealt with firmly, but generously; any forest privileges they are proved to enjoy being commuted by payment in land in much the same way as on the continent rights of user in forest are extinguished by handing over a portion of forest equal in value to the capital value of the rights involved, and as the establishment of some forest guards will be required for the protection of the reserve against trespassers off high roads and against fire, it will be found expedient to give such work to the more intelligent and trustworthy among these same Maroons (Hooper, 1886: 23).

So, while Hooper offers limited recognition of Maroon property rights, he wants those claims to be extinguished or curtailed according to a logic of imminent domain. While his arguments justified such a commutation of rights as a response to the inherently destructive actions of the Maroons, however minimal compared to the wider Black peasantry, extinguishing prescriptive rights was very much about social control and the preservation of colonial order (Sivaramakrishnan, 1995). Another component of Hooper’s proposal regarding the Maroons that should not be missed was the one that they be hired as paid forest guards. Here again is the contradiction, while he expresses skepticism of the Maroons’ social-cultural distinctiveness, Hooper wants to harness that distinctiveness—and the Black peasants fear of the Maroons that has resulted—to protect the reserve against trespassers and fires. Hooper misses how such appointments might reinvigorate the Maroons’ sense of themselves as special.

Hooper, intentionally or not, alludes to the role of the Maroons in the pre-emancipation state, the Maroons as a tool of the state. For the proposal to make sense, it must be assumed that the Maroons remain a sufficiently feared group, or at least distinguishable from the Black shifting cultivators against whom they are being mobilized. Also presumed is the Maroons extensive knowledge of the forests which would enable them to effectively monitor the reserve and travel between the guard outposts. The tensions between the Maroons and non-Maroon Blacks that are centered by Hooper’s comments is significant, but just as crucial are the tensions that are elided; the ones between white desires for space and the Maroons’ occupation of space in the Blue and John Crow Mountains, but also in or around the Cockpit Country, which receives very little attention in Hooper’s discussion. Indeed, the Cockpit Country’s forests remained intact, Hooper tells us, because the lands were unpatented not because of the formidable presence of the Maroons.

We might re-state Hooper’s conclusion about the Maroons: compared with what would have happened to the forests of Jamaica due to settlers (especially poorer white settlers desperate for land), had the Maroons not been there to exercise a general terror, the damage done to these forests by the Maroons themselves is insignificant. Such a reframing points to the ways that the production of space was in fact shaped by contradictory and uneven negotiations of space, time, and racial regimes of property. However little Hooper might have been willing to concede about the

Maroons' productive impacts on Jamaican political and environmental geography, the concession he does make is immensely important: the Maroons were a check on forest clearance and had comparatively minimal negative environmental impacts. The specific ecologies of the highland forests, the social and political liberties of residence in isolated geographies of the mountains, and fugitive blackness intersect for the production and protection of space. To be sure, the Maroons did not simply create these spaces, their practices were shaped by these spaces as well. Notwithstanding this, the spaces the Maroons did make in the inaccessible highlands, and the ecological afterlives of their place-making counter colonial valuations and desires regarding the forest.

The dislike for the yam growing populations' proliferating provisions grounds, use of fire, and the Maroons' roaming was tied to the geographical distance and relative inaccessibility of these actors and actions vis-a-vis the urban and administrative centers. Black forest use expressed Black sense of freedom and relative independence, and forest management offered a means of vigilance to prevent slippage into depravity (Richardson, 2004; Scott, 2009). In the post-emancipation period then, imperial forest policy was seen as a social-ecological technology by which colonial socio-racial, spatial, and economic orders could be maintained. The forestry policies were to be paired with rural development schemes with twin aims of rehabilitating forests and the mentality of Black forest users—both constituting a rural milieu to be improved by a post-emancipation colonial biopower (Moulton and Popke, 2017). Seemingly benign agricultural improvement schemes could be used to enable the reproduction or recuperation of the plantation, arresting the rise of Black agrarians, not just in the British West Indies, but also across the United States south (Van Sant, 2016; Williams et al., 2020; Woods, 1998).

I propose reading the spaces that result from the Maroons' roaming and leisure cutting as ecological clearings that, along with the arbored spaces of marronage, constitute a repertoire of Maroon ecology. As such, at these clearings, the Maroons' freedom and liberty, spatial rights, were performatively affirmed. These clearings, along with hunting and fishing grounds help locate the symbolic and tangible geographies of Black imagination and resistance which, while connected to systems of land marginalization and social domination, were not solely defined by those systems (McKittrick, 2006; Morrison, 1987; Roane, 2018; Wynter, 1971). Such a reading counters the way Hooper discusses the Maroons. To grasp the meaning of the Maroons' geographies and fully appreciate the arboreal side-effects of marronage, Hooper would have had to: historically situate how the Maroons came to hold sway over the "*whole of the land*," attend to how they could make life with just a "few patches," and outline what was the Maroons' sense of place he became familiar with during his interactions with them. Doing so would have meant not just surveying space but mapping the hierarchical workings of power that had been insufficient to contain and control Black life and had limited the prospects of would be small-holding white settlers. Hooper's comments though, lay bare the contradictions that are rife in his diagnosis of the forest problems in Jamaica and the place of the Maroons in the island's political and environmental history. Hooper insists on a distinction between ordinary Black people who had, according to him, the most deleterious impacts on the forests and the Maroons who are comparatively more benign.

In some respects, it is possible to understand Hooper's forest protection proposal as simply an 1880s repeat of the British proposed 1730s treaties whereby the Maroons were to be allowed autonomy and rights on condition that they help secure an enclosed space of Black freedom. Just as the treaties made sense to the British for preserving slavery, Hooper's proposal to include the Maroons and appropriate their ecological knowledge to secure the forests does suggest how Maroon ecologies were seen as in line with colonial forestry priorities. However, this does not undermine the case for noticing Maroon ecologies and Black agency, and we do not have any evidence that the Maroons agreed to Hooper's proposal. What we do know is that by the next major set of forestry policies were to be articulated, the Maroons would be eliminated from the discourse, subsumed into

an undifferentiated mass of Black peasants from whom the forests must be protected. The Maroons are not simply rouge actors that valiantly fight against colonialism in some ethereal space of the backwoods, or else racial traitors who roam the forests in search of Black people seeking freedom after 1739. They are implicated in the dynamic production of space. What Hooper's presence and his report show is that a kind of "Maroon question" persisted as a challenge for colonial government. That question was always about how to subordinate or appropriate Black geographies and ecologies. The distinctions between Maroons and non-Maroon Black Jamaicans in Hooper's report and how those differences are described are obviously connected to the political aftermath of Maroons status as hero-traitors. It is precisely because Hooper does not unpack this difference, that we have to notice the material ecological work that is done by the relationships between Maroons and the production of space, regardless of their stated, unstated or contested status. The fact that the tragedy of slavery, the reality of Maroon and Black resistance, and the fact that Maroons did negotiate symbolic and physical space (including through the treaties) come together in Maroon spaces, make Maroon ecologies important for our understanding of the limits and possibilities of Black geographies and ecologies. The history of this relationship was clearly shaping colonial social memory.

Conclusion

The Jamaican Maroons had a productive and protective effect on the island's forests; the forested highlands were shaped by Maroon presence-absence which mediated Black and white interest and access. These forest landscapes ground the outcomes of the contestation of racial regimes, subsistence practices, and performances of freedom. Reading colonial environmental history and conservation through Black Geographies, calls attention to the spatial and ecological effects of marronage. Subjected to such a reading, Hooper's report provides crucial openings for mapping a subaltern environmental history of Jamaica. Such a history shows how the trajectories of conservation and development have been significantly orientated by Black socio-ecological struggle. I have used arboreal side-effects to name spatial outcomes that index symbolic and material locations that are not outside the state or modern (spatial or ecological) knowledge systems, but inextricably linked to the state and its systems of knowledge. These spaces outcomes of marronage critique state-making and dominant knowledges. The arboreal side-effects of marronage, as material Black ecologies, work against the imperial natural and landscape history that tries to order the world according to a political economy of which species are valuable, when, and for what purposes. Maroon arboreal work disrupts that knowledge system and its spatial orders on the ground.

The disruption, and disruptions from native people and groups like the Maroons more broadly, motivates ever intensifying state-making practices to reduce the incommensurability and the dissimilitude, as well as achieve enclosure and submission. The least likely place to find affirmations of the arboreal side-effects of Maroons in colonial Jamaica is the colonial archive. Yet, if we submit the archive to the scrutiny of Black Geographies scholarship glimpses of this arboreal dynamic emerge. These glimpses allow starting points to plot a Black history of the Jamaican forest that repositions the current constellation of protected areas, with the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park and World Heritage Site, and the Cockpit Country Forest Reserve and Protected Area being the primary spatial elements of the national frontispiece of environmental conservation. The challenge to the archive also shows that the environment does not simply witness the abuses of slavery and attempts at freedom, it too is subject to colonialism's violent transformations for economic gain and social control, and it serves as refuge for freedom seekers—an accomplice in their endeavor.

A Black geographies and Black ecologies analysis—*Black ecocriticism*—asks that we grapple with the ways in which Black life and the environments enabling Black life have had to work against projects of environmental management and development that are antagonistic to Black

people. These antagonisms are inherent when and because colonialism, racial capitalism, and neo-imperialism attempt projects of socio-spatial and ecological control that are predicated on a view of Blackness as a problem. Such antagonisms characterize the ways in which Maroons have been historicized. Conceptualized as other than or other to the “human,” who is the bearer of rights, the individual with spatial history and agency, and other to the enslaved Black who were supposedly docile and valuable chattel, the Maroons were targeted for suppression and extermination by colonial authorities, until peace treaties ended hostilities. But more than just rebels against empire building, the Maroons are spatial actors whose agencies shaped the forest and shaped how the forest became a target of colonial projects of ecological and social transformation and domination. Maroon ecologies are ecologies of alterity, demanding new epistemologies to recuperate not just Black ecological world making, but pre-colonial human ecologies that were dismissed a priori as non-existent because they manifested outside a European colonial grid of intelligibility. The idealized conception of forestry as space to be protected from Black degradation and according to European scientific rationality, are woefully inadequate considering such a poetic reimagining of the forest biogeography and Black ecological archeology.

Intense Maroon environmental activism over the past 10 years, along with other local communities of the Cockpit Country and environmental organizations, against bauxite-alumina mining in Cockpit Country suggest that the Maroons and their allies are not content with Black arboreal ecologies becoming a thing of the past. Extractivist projects, questions of Black rights, and oppositional place-informed Black resistance are not matters of the past. Maroon arboriculture and insurgent sociality position the Maroons’ territory as sites for understanding land as mnemonic. These relationships shape everyday Maroon social memory and negotiation of landscape.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to James McCarthy, Anthony Bebbington, Brian Williams, Levi Van Sant, Case Watkins, Katey Castellano, and Ina Vandebroek whose comments improved earlier drafts of this paper. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful comments.

Highlights

- Contributes to the literature on late colonial environment and resource management through a consideration of Jamaican forestry development and the role Maroon nature-society relationships.
- In foregrounding the examination of the Maroons’ production of spaces in the material sites tied to subsistence and ecological transformation, the paper shows the value of combining Black ecologies and Black geographies scholarship.
- Shows how Black geographies and Black ecologies framework can challenge historical archives to focus on the contributions, grassroots struggles, and transformative dimensions of Black communal life rather than fixation on Black death, displacement, and subjection.
- Offers a conceptualization of arboreal side-effects of Maroonage as a means of locating the spatial consequences of Black subaltern struggles on the material transformations of landscape.

Declaration of conflicting interests


The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust; Middle

Tennessee State University Provost's Diversity Dissertation Fellowship; and a National Science Foundation Geography and Spatial Sciences Program - Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Award (ID Number: 1854274).

ORCID iD

Alex A Moulton  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8768-8503>

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