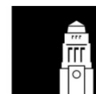

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Anim-Addo, A (2018) Reading Postemancipation In/Security: Negotiations of Everyday Freedom. Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism, 22 (3). pp. 105-114. ISSN 0799-0537

https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-7249186

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Reading Post-emancipation In/security: Negotiations of Everyday Freedom

Anyaa Anim-Addo

Following emancipation, the Anglophone Caribbean was cast, within published representation by notable travellers, as a place in crisis, and as a place in flux. To illustrate, novelist Anthony Trollope's clichéd take on the ruin of Jamaica, as precipitated by emancipation, noted:

> That Jamaica was a land of wealth, rivalling the East in its means of riches, nay, excelling it as a market for capital, as a place in which money might be turned; and that it now is a spot on the earth almost more poverty-stricken than any other – so much is known almost to all men. That this change was brought about by the manumission of the slaves, which was completed in 1838, of that also the English world is generally aware.[1]

In his 1859 publication The English in the West Indies, Trollope, like many of his contemporaries, was concerned to stress that emancipation threatened the livelihood of the economic elites: the plantocracy. As Trollope's words indicate, the prospect of emancipation brought loud and insistent clamour concerning an uncertain future for the region, depicted as formerly "excelling" in terms of its "market for capital" in contrast to the "poverty-stricken" state of the post-emancipation moment. Markedly, those who profited from the system of slavery rehearsed such discourse of ruin and decay and indeed, authors such as Trollope would repeat similar sentiments or conclusions in their narratives. Thus within the context of anti-abolitionist debate and its aftermath, the islands were considered as sites and as causes of

[1] A. Trollope, The English in the West Indies (Leipzig Berhnhard Tauchnitz, 1860), 82.

economic insecurity. How, though, were precarity and insecurity negotiated through the everyday practices of this period?

Two interlinked questions concern this essay. Firstly, how might problematic elite accounts nevertheless prove useful to an understanding of post-emancipation insecurity? Secondly, by what process might such accounts shed light on the everyday realities of negotiating economic insecurity? The travels of novelist, historian and travel writer Owen Rutter nearly a century after emancipation in the era of fruit shipping and tourism allow both questions to be briefly addressed and a process of reading against the grain to be brought to the fore. As he travelled, Rutter noted, for example, the decline of sugar-cane cultivation outside of the southwest of Tobago and its replacement by cocoa farming and coconut picking. A central focus on everyday practices of economic security draws attention to what these market shifts meant for coconut pickers who were "paid 1s. 8d. a thousand nuts and can pick 2000 to 3000 a day, occasionally 5000, which means a good wage."[2] Notably even in the context of this reportedly "good" wage, black workers sought to secure their livelihoods through a negotiation between the perceived insecurity of wage labour and the perceived security of the provision ground. Thus Rutter noted the customary practice of the African Caribbean population working for four days of the week, keeping "their own gardens on which they live." [3] Concern with security and insecurity poses different questions of travelling representations. Alongside the coconut pickers, in the course of his travels Rutter noted beggars, entertainers and banana workers, all aspects of black livelihood strategies that contribute to a composite picture of economic activity but also a history of the everyday insecurity relevant to individual islands and the region. Much of what might be gleaned

[2] Owen Rutter, A Traveller in the West Indies (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1933), 92.
[3] Ibid.

depends on the reader's selected focus as well as varying degrees of reading with and often against the grain.

It should be noted that on the one hand, large-scale forms of mobility, principally forced displacement of Transatlantic slavery and subsequent indentured labour schemes, embedded forms of insecurity and colonial violence into Caribbean lives. On the other hand, mobile practices at a smaller scale contrastingly enabled Caribbean people to navigate and negotiate the multiple insecurities of the plantation complex. As a result, for ordinary Caribbean people, negotiating everyday insecurity after emancipation involved the adaptation of longstanding security strategies, including recourse to mobile practices and strategic mobilisations of place.

Everyday freedom and economic in/security

To understand the concern with "in/security" involves recognition of the interplay and negotiation between security and insecurity. Travellers' tales can afford rich glimpses of such everyday negotiation. Drawing from such tales the theme of economic in/security, this article engages with processes and practices of security shaped by that which Chris Philo terms the "experiences, emotions and agency of everyday peoples in everyday places".[4] As the Caribbean In/securities research network underscores, centering the region within a conceptualization of security demands sensitivity to the historical insecurity of "genocide, slavery and colonialism" in the archipelago and its legacies.[5] Such an emphasis calls the post-emancipation period into particular question, since this was the period during which the legal

[4] Chris Philo, "Security of Geography/ Geography of Security," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS 3 (2011): 2.
[5] Patricia Noxolo and David Featherstone, "Co-producing Caribbean Geographies of In/security," Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 39 (2014): 604.

dismantling of slavery lent a new significance to everyday struggles. Moreover, the practices of ordinary people shaped the meaning and texture of Caribbean freedom. Additionally, that historians have long recognized the centrality of political protest and social contest during this period is significant to this debate.[6] These crucial negotiations of post-slavery relations existed alongside more mundane practices of securing livelihoods, which is the overall focus of this essay.

Caribbean ports, marked by external and strategic security processes and militarized within imperial regimes, can be understood in relation to different levels of security that might be categorized as "big-S and small-s security."[7] The separation of these two levels proves to be informative especially because ports were sites of internal island practices and strategic negotiations of security at an individual scale, even as they were regulated externally by imperial governance and transnational commerce. In this way, ports were sites of the entanglement of big and small-s security. Thus, through A.F. Ober's A Guide to the West Indies and Bermudas (1908), an historical perspective premised on reading against the grain might maintain sight of the United Fruit Company's influence on travel and regional commercial enterprise in relation to economic in/security at the island scale even as local black porters within the nascent tourist trade might be glimpsed earning two shillings per day carrying to the required destination, "baggage, if not exceeding 60 pounds in weight all the way on his head".[8] The export of fruit mattered to islands' economic prosperity with Ober

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[6] For example see Douglas Hall, Five of the Leewards, 1834-1870: The Major Problems of the Post-Emancipation Period in Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Nevis and St Kitts (St Lawrence: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971); Gad Heuman, *"The Killing Time": The* Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (London: Macmillan, 1994); Karen Fog Olwig, ed., Small Islands, Large Questions: Society, Culture and Resistance in the Post-emancipation Caribbean (London: Frank Cass, 1995); Verene Shepherd, I want to Disturb my Neighbour: Lectures on Slavery, Emancipation and Postcolonial Jamaica (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2007).
[7] Noxolo and Featherstone, "Co-producing Caribbean Geographies," 604.
[8] Ober, A Guide to the West Indies and Bermudas (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), 362.

noting that "fruits, bananas and oranges, comprised about half of Jamaica's exports, the bulk of which were natural products in 1905-6."[9] At the same time, the internal marketing system resonated equally at the human scale for those individuals securing their livelihoods.

Adopting a differentiated focus, recent development research concerning the Caribbean highlights a range of livelihood strategies in present-day island contexts, including microenterprise.[10] To draw upon questions of "small-s" or individual scale security with a particular focus on livelihoods whilst acknowledging the significance of colonialism and transatlantic slavery within Caribbean experiences of insecurity invites questions of how such livelihood strategies – rooted in the era of slavery – were developed and modified after emancipation. With the post-emancipation movement of workers away from estates to free villages and urban centers,[11] urban spaces took on an increased significance as sites for securing livelihoods. At the same time, such spaces remained tied into crucial relationships with rural production. Creative strategies for securing livelihoods that also mobilized practices associated with urban exchange, transporting them offshore, merit particular investigation.

In the context of a changing economy and hard fought new patterns of labor, securing livelihoods needed to rest upon strategies that were not only dynamic but also importantly mobile. Since the movement of workers away from plantations to free villages and urban centres (the "flight from the estates")[12] was itself a mobile strategy and contributed precisely

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[9] Ober, A Guide to the West Indies, 148.
[10] Hebe Verrest, "Rethinking Microentrepreneurship and Business Development Programs: Vulnerability and Ambition in Low-Income Urban Caribbean Households," World Development 47 (2013): 58-70.
[11] For example see Douglas Hall, "The Flight from the Estates Reconsidered: the British West Indies 1838-1842," Journal of Caribbean History 10 and 11 (1978): 16-24.
[12] Douglas Hall, "The flight from the Estates Reconsidered," 16.

to the discourse of ruin and decay with which this essay began, it seems particularly apt to foreground mobility as an analytical lens. Tim Cresswell's definition referring to "'constellations of mobility' as historically and geographically specific formations of movements, narratives about mobility and mobile practices" is useful.[13] In this instance, reading against the constellation of mobility – both against the "narrative" of travellers' texts and against their leisurely tours as "mobile practice" – a different set of mobilities emerge, which relate to processes and practices of negotiating insecurity. To underscore the central focus, with sensitivity to the "everyday deployment and negotiation of in/security", this article draws specific attention to everyday sites.[14] Interrogating the case study of the market place as a site of everyday in/security, it emphasizes the mobile processes of negotiation and the mobilization of place associated with securing livelihoods after emancipation.[15]

Securing the market

Several types of market were under clamorous discussion in this period: the sugar market and declining sugar prices, indentured labour schemes and their impact on "the market for agricultural labourers."[16] Less discursively prominent in nineteenth-century travelling representations but more central to everyday practice was the internal markets for food and produce. While authors such as Trollope lamented the economic threat of emancipation and Ober referred to its "mournful effect", everyday livelihoods were negotiated with greater immediacy in internal markets.[17] Although markets, as spaces, were customary and entirely

[13] Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 28 (2010): 17.
[14] Noxolo and Featherstone, "Co-producing Caribbean Geographies," 605.
[15] Ibid.
[16] H. de R. Walker, The West Indies and The Empire: Study and Travel in the Winter of 1900-1901 (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), 170.
[17] Ober, A Guide to the West Indies, 200.

everyday (with the first legally founded Jamaican market in Spanish Town in 1662), the significance of the public market becomes apparent through its absence.[18] Thus in 1858, the Governor of Bermuda appointed a Committee of the Council and Assembly to investigate the establishment of a public market in Hamilton, Bermuda. In 1859, the Bermuda Royal Gazette insisted that it was "high time that the Town of Hamilton should possess, what we believe is considered elsewhere of the first consequence to every place, a Public Market for the sale of Fish, Vegetables, &c."[19] As the Committee considered potential sites behind the Town Hall or adjacent to the Saltus Company Timber Yard, the Bermuda Royal Gazette welcomed progress on "this important matter".[20] Markets then, were significant, and tellingly so, not only to the traders who would secure their livelihoods within them, but also to the municipality and beyond.

Especially in the light of markets that came to be increasingly "consumed" within elite tourist itineraries, as accounts including those of Annie Brassey, Charles Kingsley and Trollope indicate, reading against the grain of elite mobilities renders marketing strategies a visible everyday negotiation of insecurity.[21] Such marketing activity was built on crucial precedents from the era of slavery, as noted by Sidney Mintz. Indeed, Mintz's work underscores the relationship between precariousness and the internal marketing system, as he highlights that the plantation system "served to destroy rather than to create the peasantry" leaving the plantation and provision ground system in its place.[22] During the era of slavery, warfare could and did result in marked food insecurity and even "a vicious circle of high prices,

[18] Sidney Mintz, Caribbean Trasformations (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 195.
[19] "A Public Market in Hamilton," Bermuda Royal Gazette, May 31, 1859 (emphasis mine).
[20] Ibid.
[21] Mimi Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to Zombies (London: Routledge, 2003).
[22] Mintz, Caribbean Trasformations, 180.

malnutrition and reduced production and profits."[23] John Stewart's observations indicate that during this period, the provision ground provided a potential basis for economic security, since these allowed the "industrious" to "not only support himself comfortably, but save something."[24] Moreover, the significance of mobilities to internal marketing activity is apparent in the fact that Jamaican laws controlling the movement of the enslaved "always excepted their marketing operations."[25] In addition to Mintz, Verene Shepherd's work draws attention to the gendered dimensions of such activities, which, by her account, provided particular opportunities, specifically for women working in livestock pens, who could grow surplus produce for sale.[26] After emancipation, Charles Roden Buxton's 1860 publication Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies noted the security offered by the provision ground in contrast to the insecurity of irregularly offered labour. He acknowledged that the labourer could "make more by cultivating his provision ground, than by working for hire at five or six shillings a week" and suggested a Jamaican preference for renting land "and raising provisions for the market".[27] Such livelihood strategies were not only inherently marked by mobilities but were also deployed with a new kind of significance as a way to reject or negotiate low wages after emancipation.

Leisured mobilities led visitors such as Lady Annie Brassey to the market place. Brassey travelled to Trinidad in October 1883 and the day after her arrival in Port of Spain, "started at

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[23] Ibid.

[24] John Stewart, A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1823), 267.

[25] Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, 198.

[26] Verene Shepherd, "Alternative Husbandry: Slaves and Free Labourers on Livestock Farms in Jamaica in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", Slavery & Abolition 14: 1 (1993): 41-66.

[27] Charles Roden Buxton, Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 56.

an early hour […] to visit the market."[28] During this trip, Brassey - primarily concerned with her own tourist experience - was "somewhat disappointed" by the encounter.[29] Yet reading closely against the "experience" of her leisurely mobility and the narrative of this elite tour, it becomes evident that the site was marked by competition and by autonomy.[30] To Brassey's eyes, trading seemed particularly precarious due to the scale at which it operated, with produce offered in "little heaps, and dabs, and snippets" while "at least twenty vociferating dealers" vied for custom.[31] Yet the agency with which the traders secured their livelihoods was apparent even to Brassey, who noted that "[e]ach peasant proprietor or owner of a hut and a patch of ground of the smallest dimensions, seemed to have brought in the produce thereof for sale, independently of the aid of any middle-man".[32] Thus Brassey's account is indicative of the market's function as a space of competition but also as a space offering the potential for economic control, free, as she sees it, from the interference "of any middle man" or, as is perhaps more appropriate in light of the gendered nature of internal marketing practices, of any middle-woman. The necessary inter-dependence between the vulnerability of competition and the potential to exert economic agency proved evident in these spaces.

Brassey observed similar characteristics in urban and rural markets. Thus in the latter, in the village of Linstead, Jamaica, Brassey's emphasis on the small scale of such entrepreneurship and indeed her acknowledgment of the significant competition amongst vendors even begins to undermine Carlylean tropes of fertile over-abundance and an easy living for the Caribbean peasantry. [33] Instead, these depictions gesture towards the precariousness of securing

[28] Annie Brassey, In the Trades, the Tropics and the Roaring Forties (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1885), 120.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 17.
[31] Brassey, In the Trades, the Tropics, 120.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Thomas Carlyle, Occasional Discourse (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853), 5.

livelihoods in this period. On Tuesday November 13, 1883, Brassey wrote that "a large number of people – among whom the black element strongly preponderated – were all selling, or trying to sell, their little heaps of produce and the price of these was so trifling that in some cases, even when the would-be vendors did succeed in disposing of their wares, they had to combine with a neighbour in order to make up the equivalent of the smallest coin of the Island of Jamaica (a quotta – worth a farthing), which was all the purchaser was willing to pay".[34] Brassey's observations of the large number of people engaged in small-scale trading is borne out by Mintz's assessment of the Jamaican marketing system, in which he notes the competition and the fragmentation of the system.[35]

While Brassey observed the financial accumulation associated with individual sales in Port of Spain and in Linstead, we must also note the necessary investment required for such activities and the financial regulation of these spaces read by travellers as simply "animated," bustling or disordered scenes. Antigua's market regulations for 1862, for example, required vendors to pay a fee at the east gate of 2 pence for each basket or tray of fruit brought in for sale, a penny for 28 pounds or less of potatoes or yams, 3 pence for a load of provisions carried into the market by one person.[36] As Mintz notes that petty traders in the Jamaican context often borrowed their initial capital, an additional layer of precariousness is woven into such everyday marketing practices.[37] It is of significance to acknowledge that these spaces were also fractured by competition beyond that recognized in Brassey's account. In 1850, Jamaican proposals to form an association sought to protect "the country people's small stock, ground provisions, &c., which are usually monopolized on their way to market by

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[34] Brassey, In the Trades, the Tropics, 253. See also the layered meaning in the Jamaican folk song 'Linstead Market'.
[35] Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, 218.
[36] "Rules and Regulations of the Public Market," The Antigua Observer, October 24, 1862.
[37] Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, 218.

higglers at unfair prices, which are again exorbitantly advanced in the city markets by the higgler – thus plundering both the growers and the townspeople".[38] While the higgler would emerge as a key figure, in this context higglers were accused of committing "fraud" "on the city population, who ought to be supplied with those necessaries of life at the lowest rate compatible with fair remuneration to the producer".[39] In this way, Brassey's and other travellers' accounts, highlighting the bustle and competition for sales within the market only partially revealed the competitive nature of internal marketing practices. Higglers' interception of the produce of the "the country people" in transit was a strategy bound up with the mobility of the country producer and their goods and equally dependent on the mobility of the higgler who negotiated such "unfair" prices on the way to market. While nineteenth-century Jamaican higglers were accused of benefitting significantly from such bargaining on the move, it is notable that Mintz makes an entirely different assessment of higglers in the twentieth century, noting that their service provides routes to market for small producers and that they pay high fees to truckers in order to transport goods to market.[40] Regardless of the balance of profit within such negotiations, securing and maximizing livelihoods involved the deployment of mobile strategies, with the effect that livelihoods were negotiated between traders as well as between vendor and purchaser. Final negotiations between vendor and purchaser in the market place comprised one layer in multiple everyday negotiations required to secure livelihoods through the internal marketing system.

It is important to stress that while mobile strategies enabled higglers to secure livelihoods, the market itself was also mobilized in response to the changing post-emancipation economy.

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[38] "Jamaica (from the Jamaica Despatch)," The Cornwall Chronicle and County Gazette, April 2, 1850, 3.
[39] Jamaica (from the Jamaica Despatch)', The Cornwall Chronicle and County Gazette, April 2, 1850, 4.
[40] Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, 221.

Moreover, in order to capitalize on the opportunities presented by elite leisure mobilities through the region after emancipation, marketing processes were importantly mobilized and proliferated in coastal and sea-borne spaces. Thus, in contrast to Brassey's visit to the market, the market was typically mobilized and brought to steamships, such as the vessel on which Charles Kinglsey arrived on his tour of the region more than three decades after emancipation in the British colonies. At St Kitts, Kingsley wrote that "[t]he first thing that caught our eye on board the negro boats which were alongside was, of course, the basket of fruit and vegetables, of which one of us at least had been hearing all his life."[41] These baskets of bananas, grapes, avocados, coconuts, yams and capsicums were transported alongside the steamer by "women who offered them for sale."[42] Thus the RMS Shannon, on which Kingsley travelled, only proceeded [o]ut of English Harbour, after taking on board fruit and bargaining for beads, for which Antigua is famous".[43] The localized custom of selling on the move proved all the more significant as the tourist economy brought more leisure travellers following in Kingsley's footsteps. Since travellers on the new leisure itineraries could not be relied upon to venture into towns and villages and large ships often remained in port for a matter of hours, this mobilization of the market took on a new strategic significance. Mobilizing the market allowed vendors to secure trade in an era of emerging tourist economies.

The market, frequently captured in travellers' accounts, and increasingly photographed in the final years of the nineteenth century, could represent public regulation and a spectacle of governance. In this vein, a rhyme penned for Jamaican Governor Sir John Peter Grant

[41] Charles Kingsley, At Last a Christmas in the West Indies (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1871), 55.
[42] Kinglsey, At Last a Christmas, 56.
[43] Kinglsey, At Last a Christmas, 63.

(Governor of Jamaica 1866-1874) celebrated the New West India Market House in Kingston in 1872:

Behold a House for Market great,

Sir Peter did that Building make.

Kingston such a structure never had,

The citizens therefore should be glad.

Notably the verse highlighted the Market House's function in bringing together an international clientele, as the verse reads that in this space:

People of different nations meet

Proving that building what a treat'[44]

These lines celebrated the market as an institution that was also a meeting point responsive to international trajectories – a function served by the mobile market of small rowing boats as much as by formal structures. Winnifred Brown-Glaude argues that we might understand the Victoria Market in Foucauldian terms, with clerks seeking to survey and discipline peasant marketing and the Victoria Market "built to contain and discipline" the "peasant economy".[45] Although the regulation of such spaces is undeniable, the everyday negotiation of insecurity was simultaneously subject to controls and regulation and able to exceed the spatial boundaries of such formal control, as strategies for securing livelihoods were mobilized. In this way, important negotiations between higglers and growers took place on the way to market, while produce was sold from small rowing boats as well as in formal market squares.

[44] MS EUR MSS F127/48, British Library, St Pancras, London.

[45] Winnifred Brown-Glaude, *Higglers in Kingston: Women's Informal Work in Jamaica* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 82.

To conclude, travellers to the Caribbean sought spectacle and sensory experiences in their tourist "consumption."[46] As they moved through the islands, and particularly through port towns, regional and island forms of economic insecurity intersected with flows of capital and goods negotiated at the "small scale".[47] The documentation of this experience might be read in a range of contesting ways. Reading against the grain of their leisured mobilities, post-emancipation livelihood strategies might partially be revealed through the published texts and images in circulation during the period. This strategy is of particular significance since the "agency of everyday peoples in everyday places" is all too often silenced in governmental archives.[48] At the same time, there are moments at which travellers' texts and images may capture everyday negotiations of insecurity so routine as to be absent from official archives and records of governance. Post-emancipation markets, characterized by the interdependence of insecurity – vulnerability and competition – and by the potential for enhancing economic livelihoods offer a rich example of everyday negotiations of security and insecurity. Furthermore, internal labour mobility and external leisure mobility intersected through the mobilization of the market. Marketing strategies not only drew upon longstanding patterns of internal island mobility by requiring that traders and products be brought to market but after emancipation the market itself moved, particularly in response to tourist ships, in order to secure trade. Thus the market – and the market on the move – became key to securing livelihoods after emancipation. The vulnerability and opportunity associated with these negotiating spaces were marked by practices that remained only partially visible to travellers. Whatever measure of success of failure they engendered, small-scale negotiations of insecurity pushed back against, and were themselves in negotiation with larger scale insecurities. More importantly than negotiating livelihoods in a strictly financial sense,

[46] Sheller, Consuming the Caribbean.
[47] Noxolo and Featherstone, "Co-producing Caribbean Geographies," 603.
[48] Philo, "Security of Geography/ Geography of Security," 2.

marketing strategies and mobilizing the market helped to secure "independence" and thus freedom in the face of everyday economic insecurities after emancipation.[49]

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Patricia Noxolo, members of the CARISCC network, and to the Leverhulme Trust for supporting the network. Thanks also to the editor and anonymous reviewers of Small Axe for their valuable comments and suggestions.

[49] Mintz, Caribbean Transformations, 223.