ABSTRACT
LADY MARIA NUGENT:
A WOMAN’S APPROACH TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE
by Kayli McCullough

By 1850 the British Empire had proven to be a success. The story of why the empire succeeded however, is a collection of individual stories, from both those at home in the metropole and in the colonies. One woman, Lady Maria Nugent, accompanied her husband to two different colonies, Jamaica and India, living in each for a few years in the early nineteenth century. During this time she kept diaries that detailed the day-to-day happenings as well as her observations of the people and the land. Her story demonstrates the ways in which a woman had to change her own expectations and actions dependent upon the nature of the colony, which were comparable to the accommodations made by her male contemporaries.
LADY MARIA NUGENT:

A WOMAN'S APPROACH TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of History
by
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2012

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## Table of Contents

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1

**Chapter One** .................................................................................................................... 3  
  Maria Nugent’s Background ......................................................................................... 3  
  How Her Diaries Have Been Utilized ....................................................................... 6  
  Historiography ............................................................................................................. 9  
  Lady Nugent’s Approach to Empire ......................................................................... 13

**Chapter Two** .................................................................................................................. 17  
  The Island .................................................................................................................... 17  
  Her Experience .......................................................................................................... 20  
  The Interim Period ..................................................................................................... 37

**Chapter Three** ................................................................................................................. 40  
  India as a “Colony” .................................................................................................... 40  
  Her Experience .......................................................................................................... 42

**Conclusion** ..................................................................................................................... 54

**Bibliography** .................................................................................................................... 60
Introduction To The Thesis

By 1850 the British Empire had proven to be a success as it “encompassed a quarter of the globe” and one in five people were subjects of the British government.¹ In order to achieve domination the Empire required the combined efforts of many individuals, whether British or not. The story of why the British Empire succeeded is a collection of individual stories, from both those at home in the metropole and in the colonies. Previously however, historians only focused on individuals who were seen as directly involved with making decisions about imperial policy or in the administration of the colonies. These histories favored the exploration of a few select individuals, as the histories of the more common colonizers, such as those who were engaged in trade, were not seen as important. Moreover the subjects of study were typically British and male. This presentation of the British Empire promoted the idea that it was a structure almost entirely coercive in nature that relied only on force to achieve its goals. These histories suggested that the British Empire completely subjugated the native populations of the colonies it controlled.

Recently though historians such as Kathleen Wilson have begun to privilege the experience of different individuals in the empire. The works often looked at the contested nature of identity and culture. Focusing less on political and economic entanglements these histories give a more personal representation of the British Empire. These works also acknowledge that empire was oftentimes negotiated and even dependent upon some level of accommodation from the native population. This approach provides the direction for this thesis, making it worthwhile to explore the writings of a woman who experienced the British Empire in the early nineteenth century.

Lady Maria Nugent was one such woman who accompanied her husband to two different colonies, Jamaica and India, living in each colony for a few years in the

early nineteenth century. Her husband had been appointed by the British
government to hold a number of administrative positions in both colonies, and as a
dutiful wife Lady Nugent followed him. Previously Lady Nugent’s diaries would
have been mined for what they could tell historians about important political figures
or events or for general information about the running of the colonies. Now, instead
of seeing the diaries as a means through which Lady Nugent passively engaged with
empire, the diaries can be viewed as an outlet through which she was able to
provide her opinions about and conceptions of the empire and the colonies. In these
diaries she recorded the sights and peoples that she encountered, thereby revealing
new understanding of the goals of the British Empire. Lady Nugent reveals that the
empire served more than just an economic purpose. Lady Nugent’s experience was
contingent upon numerous factors, many of them, such as the nature of the colony,
beyond her control. Lady Nugent’s story demonstrates the way in which a woman
had to change her own expectations and actions dependent upon the nature of the
colony, which were comparable to the accommodations made by her male
contemporaries.
Chapter One

Part I—Maria Nugent’s Background

Maria’s experiences previous to her travels to Jamaica and India had prepared her for a life of service and dedication to the British Empire. She was born Maria Skinner in 1771, most likely in Perth Amboy, to a family that was loyal to and served the British Crown. Her father was Cortlandt Skinner, a member of the New Jersey Bar. Her mother was Elizabeth Kearny, the daughter “of an New Jersey assemblyman, who was acclaimed the colony’s foremost lawyer.” Maria was one of twelve children produced from this union. In New Jersey as a Colony and as a State, Francis Bazley Lee notes that Cortlandt Skinner was “one of the three great figures of the Tory Cause.” A colonel, Skinner was later appointed Brigadier General and was in charge of the loyalist recruiting office located on Staten Island. In 1776 Skinner left New Jersey for New York, while his family went to Amboy. The war posed many challenges for the Skinner family. In the winter of 1776 they “scraped” by “on stores of buckwheat buried beneath the hard-frozen ground.” The conditions proved to be so hard that the youngest child died at only fourteen months. Despite her young age these events surely left an impression on Maria. At the end of war, after the colonists had proved victorious, Skinner and his family left America. They were among the estimated sixty to one hundred thousand

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2 Lady Maria Nugent, Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, ed. Frank Cundall (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1907), liii.
Loyalists who escaped either during or after the war. The Skinner family moved to England, where Skinner retired in Bristol. During the war American patriots had confiscated Skinner’s possessions. The British government in recognition of this loss and Skinner’s service to the monarch compensated him and provided a pension. The government’s goodwill likely reinforced in Skinner the belief that the British Empire was truly one of generosity and humanitarianism. The metropole had welcomed the family when it had nowhere else to go and the government had helped the Skinners financially as much as possible. In this respect the British Empire represented to the Loyalists refugees, an “asylum, offering land, emergency and financial incentives to help them start over.”

At this time, Maria Skinner would have been about nine years old, and undoubtedly she got the same sense of the benevolent nature of the British Empire. Her family’s experiences during the war and their subsequent migration to England likely instilled in Maria a belief in the rightness of the imperial project and a dedication to its mission. Although some authors have referred to her as an American, this is an ill-fitting label, as she would not have conceived of herself in this manner. This allegiance and loyalty to the British Empire would prove to shape and inform Maria Nugent’s decisions later in life. By understanding Maria’s earlier experiences it becomes possible to understand the motivation behind her actions and behaviors while abroad in Jamaica and India.

Maria Skinner had grown up in a family loyal to the British cause and her marriage would only serve to reinforce this dedication. In November of 1797 she married George Nugent, who at the time was an army officer as well as a Member of Parliament representing Buckingham. George Nugent was born in the year 1757,

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7 Purvis, “Skinner, Courtlandt”.
8 Purvis, “Skinner, Courtlandt”.
9 Jasanoff, Liberty’s Exiles, 6.
the illegitimate child of an army officer, Lieutenant Colonel, the Honorable Edmund Nugent, who never married. His mother’s identity is unknown. His father acknowledged paternity and saw to it that his son received a thorough education, first at the Charterhouse School, then later at the Royal Military Academy located in Woolwich. After his education was complete, George Nugent followed his father’s profession. He rose in the ranks of the army, going abroad for a variety of campaigns, including one in Philadelphia in 1778. He also served in Ireland, on a variety of campaigns, and was promoted to Major General in 1796. Nugent continued to serve in Ireland until he was appointed in April of 1801 to the position of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of Jamaica. At this time he was also given the title of Lieutenant General.\(^{11}\) Maria had made a match with someone who had thus far proven his commitment to the imperial cause.

Before her travels Maria Nugent enjoyed a very busy social life. George Nugent had higher social connections than her father, as his uncle would become the first marquess of Buckingham.\(^{12}\) This socially important connection, among others, was part of the reason that Nugent received desirable posts. Although the match was no doubt appealing to the Skinner family because of General Nugent’s vast social connections, it does seem as if their marriage was a loving one, as indicated by the tone of her diary entries. It was no surprise then that Maria Nugent accompanied her husband to Jamaica in 1801, though it is doubtful whether she had any real choice in the matter. At this point the couple had yet to start a family and still could be considered newlyweds. With her choice in husband as well as life experiences Maria was easily able to embrace the British Empire and perceive it as an institution that could serve, in ways beyond an economic standpoint, to benefit people from all over the globe. Even though she was upset at the prospect of leaving England for Jamaica, she nonetheless stated that she and her husband “like good


\(^{12}\)Boyden, "Nugent, Sir George, first baronet.”
soldiers...made up our minds to obey."13 She clearly perceived that even if she was not going to Jamaica in a formal capacity with an official title, she was there to serve, like her husband who did have a position appointed by the Crown.14

Part II- How Nugent’s Diaries Have Been Utilized

Lady Nugent wrote in her diaries diligently while she was in Jamaica and India. It was made clear in the diaries that she expected that her children and future generations would read about her experiences abroad. For this reason, it is unclear as to how much self-editing was involved when Lady Nugent wrote her entries. Moreover, the whereabouts of the original diaries are unknown. Thus scholars have had to depend not on the originals, but rather copies that were privately published for her family in 1839, five years after her death. Multiple copies of each of the four volumes were published, though the exact number of sets printed is unclear. Two of the volumes are dedicated to her residence in Jamaica from 1801 until 1805, as well as subsequent events that occurred when she lived in England from 1805 until 1811. The two other volumes cover the years 1811 through 1815 and detail her voyage to, stay in, and departure from India. These copies do not make it clear whether there was any editing involved in the printing process, whether by the family or by the publishers. However it seems quite likely, given the frank tone of many of her entries, that there was little, if any, editing. Regardless, the copies do indicate that Lady Nugent wrote in her diaries often, except when she was ill or too preoccupied with her family. In the interim period between her time in Jamaica and India, Lady Nugent did make occasional diary entries. They are less detailed

13 Lady Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 2.
14 As stated, George Nugent was illegitimate and untitled. After he returned to England from Jamaica he was awarded a baronetcy in recognition of his services to the Crown. This occurred in the interim period between the couple’s residency in Jamaica and their residency in India. In order to keep the two periods clear and distinct the paper will refer to her as Mrs. Nugent or Maria Nugent in the period when her husband had not yet been given a baronetcy, mostly during her residency in Jamaica. Afterwards she will be referred to as Lady Nugent or Maria Nugent, and this transition will be signaled in the paper.
however, and much more sporadic. The most likely reason for this is that Lady Nugent believed her experiences in Britain were more routine, and therefore not as interesting to the family members who would read her diary.

Lady Nugent’s diaries have proven to be an incredibly rich source for historians of Jamaica, who have plumbed the first two volumes and brought them out in several editions. Her Indian volumes have received less attention. They survive only in copies that were originally published by her family and intended for private consumption. Her insights into colonial life in Jamaica became of interest to the staff at the Institute of Jamaica and these volumes were republished in the early 1900s, with editing provided by Jamaica bibliographer and historian Frank Cundall.

Cundall’s editions (three in total) provide the readers with context on the situation of the island at the time of the Nugents’ residence as well as information of the Mr. and Mrs. Nugent’s family backgrounds. The first edition was published in 1907, while the latter two editions were published in 1934 and 1939. The third edition has a preface that states that the volume utilized additional notes that were taken from the Nugent papers in the West India Reference Library of the Institute of Jamaica in 1937, only a month before Frank Cundall died. These notes include general information that helps clear up the timeline and nature of relevant events, some political, in relation to Maria Nugent and her husband.\(^\text{15}\) Cundall’s editorial policy necessitated the removal of oft-repeated phrases, such as “the day as usual,” and of passages he deemed not essential for “public perusal,” such as daily descriptions of her children’s health.\(^\text{16}\) Despite this, Cundall’s editions are frequently used, as the original volumes are hard to locate.

More recent editions, such as the 2002 edition edited by Philip Wright, with a foreword by Verene Shepherd, have been reissued and cited frequently. A notable difference between the Wright and earlier Cundall editions is that Wright added some entries that had been left out by Cundall. Moreover Wright completely


\(^{16}\) Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, ix, x.
excluded the small portions of the India volumes that Cundall had incorporated in his editions.  

Although her Jamaican diary had gone through a number of editions, very little had been done with the life of Lady Nugent. Despite an abundance of material, scholars had not carefully analyzed Lady Nugent’s own experience until the latest edition of the diary, with the foreword by Verene Shepherd. Shepherd notes that Nugent’s diaries have a potential to appeal to a wide of variety of scholars, some of whom are in fields that were either not prominent or did not exist at the time Cundall produced his editions. One such field would be women’s history, which has gained considerable traction since the 1970s. Shepherd also notes the layers of issues raised in the diary, such as the institution of slavery as well as the existence of a hybrid, Creole, culture in Jamaica. These issues and Maria Nugent’s attitude towards them reveals not only their complex nature but also much about Jamaica. Still Shepherd’s analysis is far from exhaustive and because of the admittedly many issues the diaries raise, they deserve further analysis, especially with regard to how Maria Nugent understood her role in the island and how she fulfilled this obligation.

Another exception is the article written by Susan Klepp and Roderick McDonald, in which they compare the experience of Lady Nugent’s residence in Jamaica to an American workingwoman’s, Eliza Chadwick Roberts. With its comparative framing, the article only scratches the surface of what might be done with Nugent’s story. It examines the theme of sensibility and the relation of these two women to the slaves among whom they lived. The usefulness of this comparison for understanding Nugent might also be questioned. Roberts’ one-month’s stay in Jamaica and her very different social position limits its relevance to illuminating Nugent’s much longer five-year stay. While both women lived temporarily in Jamaica, Maria Nugent had to make Jamaica her home for the time, while Roberts never got past the stage of visitor. Still, while the diaries have been used to explore the issues of slavery and empire in Jamaica, little has been done with regard to her

18 Shepherd, foreword to Lady Nugent’s Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805, xxxvii.
19 Shepherd, foreword to Lady Nugent’s Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805, xxxviii.
life after Jamaica, even as her husband continued to serve the Crown in formal capacities, which in turn kept her engaged in the Empire.

The Jamaican diaries have gained significantly more attention than their Indian counterparts. Most historians who use the Jamaican diaries are seeking basic information about day-to-day life on the island and do not look at the diaries as a whole. While an interest was shown fairly quickly in making the Jamaican diaries available for public consumption, this has not been the case for the Indian volumes, which have yet to receive a modern edition. The Indian diaries have the same detail and extensive material, if not more, than their Jamaica counterparts, so the seeming lack of interest in them is perplexing. Despite the fact the volumes that were originally privately published, they can be fairly easily located and accessed. Unlike the Jamaican volumes, these diaries are not even typically used as a reference or source base for works about early nineteenth century British India. Not only have the Indian volumes yet to be analyzed critically in their own right, but they also have not been looked at in conjunction with the Jamaican diaries to discover what the two sets say about their author and the British Empire. A comparative approach allows the reader to identify continuities or changes in Lady Nugent’s approach to empire. Together the set of Lady Nugent’s diaries, from both Jamaica and India, illustrate more than a personal experiences of empire. They relate a sense of duty that was inherent in the imperial structure. How this duty changes however is partially dependent upon the location. The possibilities were at times constricted by larger circumstances and this becomes increasingly evident when both of Nugent’s imperial experiences outside of the metropole are compared.

Part III- Historiography

The goal of the thesis then is to refocus the study of British Empire and bring the experience of elites back into the conversation, except now with an emphasis on women. Works such as those written by Maya Jasanoff, Trevor Burnard, and Linda Colley have privileged the experience of those individuals not necessarily involved
or engaged within the higher level of colonial affairs. Although these experiences are important, they neglect how important the actions and decisions made by the elites in enabling their experience in the colonies. While there are works that have focused on the elites however, there seems to be a general lack of focus on women such as Lady Nugent. She may not have held a formal role in the governing of the colonies but her actions and behaviors were equally important and crucial to the maintaining of the imperial structure.

Recent work in the field of British imperialism has begun to embrace the study of the individuals to gain insight on issues of identity and power, among other topics. Moving away from a sole focus on larger structures and the metropole, these works have created a more vibrant, dynamic portrayal of empire. This scholarship strives to link these individuals to the larger events and movements at the time; for many historians it has proven fruitful to look at the colonial experience in Jamaica and India.

Maya Jasanoff’s 2005 work *Edge of Empire* explores the experience of the imperial collector in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century India and Egypt. The individuals whose lives she detailed are mostly male, though there are a few references to women, which for the most part are inconsequential. Jasanoff’s overall contention is that the experience of these men helped create a hybrid identity, one that was not wholly European or Indian but rather fused European and Indian. The existence of hybridity in turn demonstrates that the power dynamic between the colonizers and the colonized was not always overwhelmingly in favor of the colonizers. Instead, the imperial structure was one of accommodation on both sides. This work harkens back to the earlier theory of Frantz Fanon, but this time from the perspective of the imperialists. Whereas Fanon focused on the hybrid identity as an experience of the colonized, Jasanoff argues that this fusion is also applicable to the colonizer. Jasanoff’s broad work is not concerned with a single individual; instead she looks at a few stories to illustrate the variety of ways that the empire could function and affect different individuals.

In comparison to Jasanoff’s model of exploring a number of individuals to illustrate larger issues of empire, Trevor Burnard chooses to demonstrate how the
story of one person and his experience within empire related to issues of power. Using the diary of plantation manager and landowner Thomas Thistlewood, Burnard addresses questions about the types of opportunities that empire provided for its subjects that were not born into a position of wealth or power. Burnard’s work suggests that the context of the slave society of Jamaica allowed Thistlewood to transform himself into a man of considerable means and political and social power, which would have been much more difficult to realize in the metropole. Being white in Jamaica carried political and social weight, which in turn afforded more opportunities for Thistlewood’s social mobility. In Britain, where whites were the majority, belonging to this race was not enough to assure significant amount for social mobility. If someone such as Thistlewood did not desire a political post in Jamaica, his vote was still coveted by the candidates because there were so few white men on the island. Comparatively in the metropole Thistlewood’s vote would not likely be so important, if he would have even been eligible to vote at all. Thistlewood’s ability to create this new self was due to his being white. The color of his skin granted him more privileges than it would have back home because of the relatively small number of Europeans residing in Jamaica at that time. Like Jasanoff’s, Burnard’s study mostly hinges on the experience of the white male in the colonies, though references to the female experience, native or colonizer, are found scattered throughout the work.

Linda Colley’s *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* relates the story and experiences of a working class woman in the mid–late eighteenth century British Empire. Elizabeth Marsh’s travels, as well as those of her family, cut across a number of geographic and cultural boundaries. Moreover, the work relates how actions beyond Marsh’s control, oftentimes based on decisions made by her male relatives (her father or her husband), influenced her in unforeseen ways. The male relative’s decisions would decide the nature and extent of Marsh’s travels and this in turn dictated the people and places with whom she interacted. Marsh’s story highlights and relates the numerous developments and large scale events that occurred during her lifetime. Colley’s work uses a more personal approach to empire, though from the perspective of a female imperial
subject. Moreover, unlike the subjects of Burnard’s and Jasanoff’s works who remained in one colony for most of their lives, Marsh moved around within the empire more frequently. Still Colley’s work, like Burnard’s and Jasanoff’s, refocuses the attention of British imperial studies to the exploration of the “average” imperial figure who experienced empire firsthand in the colonies.

The most recent work relating to individual experience is Emma Rothschild’s *The Inner Lives of Empires: An Eighteenth Century History* that, like Colley, explores how the individual story connects to large-scale global events and connections, through the story of the Johnstone family, originally from Scotland. The work pieces together the histories of the eleven siblings and enables one to imagine the numerous threads that tied these people to the empire and the world. The work explores the Scottish Enlightenment and the institution of slavery (among other topics) in an attempt to demonstrate how certain practices or modes of thought were increasingly part of an imperial conversation. The empire molded the metropole just as much as the metropole and its subjects shaped the peoples and institutions it came into contact with outside of Great Britain. Unlike Jasanoff, Burnard, and Colley, Rothschild focused on the experience of the empire within Britain. All of the works however demonstrate the influence that external forces and different cultures had on the subjects of the empire, whether directly or indirectly.

Historians such as Jasanoff and Wilson have repositioned the issue of identity in relation to imperialism to emphasize that the colonies afforded opportunities for reinvention and social mobilization because of the less rigid institutions in place in these locales. These studies demonstrate that the colonies influenced European individuals as much as they did the native population because they provided opportunities for cultural exchange, not merely the reinforcement of British culture upon local populations (no matter how desirable this may have been to the Crown).
Part IV-Lady Nugent’s Approach to Empire

Though historians have given a voice to common individuals in the colonies there is still a part of society that has not been given enough consideration. While her husband journeyed to the colonies as an imperial official, Lady Nugent merely accompanied him without an official title or role. In earlier, politically driven histories, her presence would not have been of much consequence because she did not fill an official role. Because of her husband’s position, Lady Nugent did have a more privileged position in the colonies, making her status a little different than that of the trader and planters of the colonies and their wives. Women in general have only recently come into the conversation. It has been difficult to fully analyze their roles for a number of reasons, most notably because of limited source material. Lady Nugent’s diaries provide an opportunity for scholars to ask questions and think about the role of women in ways previously seen as not worthwhile. For example, as a woman, especially one who held a privileged position as the wife of a man invested with the Crown’s power in the colonies, what opportunities were available to her? Did the colonial experience provide Lady Nugent with the opportunity to refashion herself or was she limited by a sense of duty and what she believed was expected of her? These fruitful avenues for research highlight how women, like their male counterparts, had to adapt to the specific nature of each colony.

As a woman, no matter how privileged she may have been by her husband’s formal position, Lady Nugent had limited means of expressing her thoughts and opinion. She was not allowed to vote or formally engage in politics. Although Lady Nugent undoubtedly vocalized her opinion in some circumstances, this was not always an acceptable outlet. She could however, write her thoughts and opinions. Thus her diaries afforded her a medium to engage with issues in a less formal capacity. Her gender may have restricted the means through which she could articulate her thoughts and opinions, but she was by no means totally incapable of expressing herself.
To assume that colonies afforded the same opportunities for everyone ignores that at times some individuals were constrained in their actions by whom they perceived their audience to be. In Jamaica Lady Nugent took on a role to set an example for the white population, whereas in India she was concerned about how she seemed to a native audience. The key difference is that in Jamaica Mrs. Nugent did not have to consider how she seemed to a native population because they did not exist. In India Maria Nugent still performed for the white population as she had in Jamaica, but her behavior was tempered by her recognition that the Indians were also carefully scrutinizing her actions. It was important that the natives accept her performance because of how empire operated in India, where local accommodation was crucial. Accommodation of a native population had not been a reality of Lady Nugent’s Jamaican experience. Her need to accommodate a native population (or not) who directly linked to how Lady Nugent conceived of the British Empire’s position in each of these colonies. This in turn affected where she, as a British subject, fit into the imperial scheme. The restraints or limited opportunities for her reinvention may never have been explicitly stated, but Lady Nugent’s behavior was constrained. While perhaps self-imposed, it likely felt as if there was no other viable alternative for how she could conduct herself, in relation to her own self-understanding.

Self-understanding in this respect utilizes the definition put forth by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper in their article “Beyond ‘Identity’ “. Brubaker and Cooper encourage scholars to be more deliberate with their language, and cautions against applying the term “identity” broadly, because of its overuse in recent studies. The overuse has resulted in identity becoming a term that is ambiguous in nature and devoid of much analytical value. Instead, the authors suggest terms they believe better represent more precise issues, and therefore, are better suited for analysis. One of their proposed terms is “self-understanding,” which is essentially a
sense of self, that "in some settings, people may understand and experience themselves in terms of a grid of intersecting categories."²⁰

Using self-understanding as an avenue for analysis allows for situational contingency, a necessary component for this project, as it proposes to explore the effect of location. This is a more useful term than identity, which denotes sameness and therefore is ill suited for the purposes of this study. Additionally, self-understanding, according to Brubaker and Cooper, does not inherently mean self-awareness; the creation and fashioning of the sense of self does not need to be articulated in order to exist.²¹ Although historians such as Jasanoff have utilized the broader term identity in reference to individuals as well as national commonality, Brubaker and Cooper support more concrete terms with tighter constrictions, that at the same time do not completely inhibit wider analysis. Self-understanding then provides a focus for analysis of Lady Nugent’s diary, but allows larger connections to be drawn. Maria Nugent’s travels and how she interacted with the foreign climate and people demonstrate not only the opportunities for a woman of her station, and whether the experiences actually broadened or restricted her actions, but also her sense of the world in which she lived. The diaries tell the story of a woman whose understanding of empire and how she fit into it shifted depending on a number of factors, not least of all, her location within it.

Constant references to the metropole make it clear that home was never far from Lady Nugent’s mind. Not surprisingly other colonies and nations do not take the same precedence with her. Nugent’s focus shifted however, depending on events and their relevance to her and her home nation. This is partly due to how much information her husband told her. As the wife of an important official of Jamaica and India, Nugent had knowledge not available to everyone. Regardless, her diaries illustrate the problem with studying her residencies in isolation from one another. They reveal how at times Maria Nugent’s story intersected with major historical events and concerns, but many times these connections would only be realized

²¹Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond 'Identity,'” 18.
when looking back on history. This is not to suggest Maria Nugent herself could not make the broader connections, but rather that it should not be assumed that she did. Lady Nugent’s experiences were extraordinary and unimaginable for many women of her status who never left the metropole and thus never got the chance to experience or test the limits of imperialism.
Chapter Two-Jamaica

“I should greatly have preferred remaining, instead of playing Governor’s lady to the blackies: but we are soldiers, and must have no will of out own”22

- Lady Maria Nugent

Part I-The Island

The first colony Maria Nugent accompanied her husband to outside of the metropole was Jamaica. Geographically, the island of Jamaica is fairly small, as no spot on the island is more than twenty-five miles from the coast. Its size enabled trade, because a rather high number of locations could be easily accessed via water, especially in comparison to other larger colonies. Its small size also enabled relatively efficient transmission of communication throughout and across the entire island.23 The island was divided into three counties, each of which was further divided into separate parishes.24 In relation to other islands in the Caribbean, Jamaica “lies ninety miles south of Cuba and about the same distance west of the long and narrow peninsula of Haiti.”25 The interior of the country is marked by the Blue Mountains in the east, and the terrain was noted as being comprised of many “steep misty valleys.”26 Jamaica’s soil proved to be difficult to cultivate, and this combined with long periods of drought made it challenging to grow crops.27

Despite the unforgiving conditions, colonizers were able to find a crop adapted to the climate and the terrain. By 1801 Jamaica was a thriving colony, dependent largely on the production of sugar. The island had been won from the Spanish in 1655 and had been a British holding ever since. Sugar was the main export of the island and its production was labor intensive. This production

22 Nugent, Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, 2.
26Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 3.
27Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 4.
necessitated the importation of many slaves through the African trade. White settlers were few and far between. By the early nineteenth century they only constituted about nine percent of the island population. Out of the remaining ninety-one percent, ninety percent were enslaved and the other remaining percent was free, most of them making up the Maroon population. Maroons were ex-slaves who had escaped plantation life or their descendents. They resided in the mountainous regions. Comparatively, at the same time, in 1800, in the United States South slaves only comprised thirty-three percent of the population.\textsuperscript{28} In Jamaica the free were far outnumbered by the enslaved and these categories would serve as the main distinction between peoples, though other categorizations could break these two groups down further. Compared to other island economies of the West Indies at the time, Jamaica was the most important British colony. By 1805, Maria Nugent’s last year of residence on the island, Jamaica exported 100,000 tons of sugar, more than anywhere else in the world.\textsuperscript{29} The metropole especially benefited, as Jamaica provided more than 40% of the sugar that it imported.\textsuperscript{30}

This high level of sugar production necessitated an exorbitant amount of slave labor. By the mid-1700s Jamaica absorbed more than one-third of the slave cargos arriving in British colonies.\textsuperscript{31} The institution of slavery on Jamaica differed considerably from slavery in the American South. Whereas slaves in the U.S. system depended on their master to provide all their basic necessities including food and clothing, the Jamaican slaves were granted a little bit more independence. It was common for slave masters to allow slaves a portion of land on which they might grow their own food to do with as they wished, either for their own consumption or to trade for other necessities. Unlike in the United States, absentee ownership was the norm in Jamaica. Many plantation owners actually lived in England and hired other Europeans to take over the administration of the plantation. The managers of the plantations relied on harsh punishments to ensure that the slaves would act in the way that whites wanted them to. This use of force was necessary because most

\begin{enumerate}
\item Higman, \textit{Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850}, 3.
\item Higman \textit{Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850}, 1.
\item Petley, \textit{Slaveholders in Jamaica}, 2.
\end{enumerate}
slaves lived on plantations that had more than 150 enslaved persons; at least twenty-five percent of slaves lived on plantations comprised of more than 250 enslaved individuals.\textsuperscript{32} Strict order was necessary to maintain the power of whites. Because they were so vastly outnumbered, the slave population could have overwhelmed the whites. To prevent uprisings it was important for the whites to reinforce a power structure that was maintained through the use of brute force. Jamaica was a colony that utilized subjugation as a means to reinforce the hierarchy and ensure productivity and efficiency. It would have been far less pragmatic to employ the black population as wage laborers. The decision to enslave the majority of the island’s population depended on whites consistently exercising their power, as well as not questioning their, or the blacks’, place in society. Thus was the nature of the colony to which George and Maria Nugent would arrive in the year 1801. It was a colony that required slave labor to produce goods that were imperative to imperial goals.

Jamaica was made up exclusively of Europeans and Africans with no indigenous population. The Native American population had died out centuries before Maria Nugent and her husband arrived on the island. Colonizers felt no need for negotiation and accommodation, whether politically or culturally. This atmosphere would make it easier for the transplantation of British culture and values. In turn Maria Nugent would not be hindered or limited in her ability to treat the people as she saw fit. It would be much easier for her to act as a benefactor, as there was no real obstacle in her way. Had there been a native population Maria Nugent’s actions would have been vastly different. She might have been constrained to think about how the natives would perceive her actions and whether they would be beneficial to the imperial cause.

Politically General Nugent held the top position on the island. George Nugent had accepted the post of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief early in the year of 1801. Edward Long noted in his history of the island that the position of governor, which necessitated considerable knowledge on a variety of topics, was not

\textsuperscript{32} Higman, \textit{Plantation Jamaica, 1750-1850}, 4.
always given to the most able men.\textsuperscript{33} Given his political background, it seems that George Nugent was well prepared for the appointment. It is worth noting that Long spent a great deal explaining the political structure of the island, making it clear that while governor was the highest position, this executive held a position of delegated power from the British king that worked in tandem with the other political bodies. Although nobles formed the “upper-house” at home in Westminster there was a lack of nobility on the island, and therefore the upper house had to be appointed by the king.\textsuperscript{34}

Maria Nugent’s husband held a position of considerable power and influence, which would serve to them at the pinnacle of Jamaican society. Maria Nugent’s position on the island was even more privileged than it would have been at home, as a result of her husband’s appointment, as well as the color of her skin. As his wife it was undoubtedly expected, even if not stated, that Lady Nugent would reinforce imperial values, as well as transmit culture. He was perhaps the formal agent of empire, but she was unquestionably an informal one, even if she did not have an official post.

Part II-Her Experience

In their article, Klepp and McDonald conclude that the poorer American, Roberts, was better able to connect to the slaves, especially the mothers, than her richer English counterpart, Nugent. They argue that because of her wealthy upper class status, among other qualities, Nugent could sympathize with the slaves, but was not capable of true empathy.\textsuperscript{35} This lack of empathy made it impossible for Nugent to see the need to reform slavery. Conversely, Roberts’ belief in liberty and fraternity spurred her to call for change against perceived injustice, though this does not necessarily mean a complete end to slavery.

\textsuperscript{34}Long, \textit{The History of Jamaica}, Vol.1, 10
\textsuperscript{35}Klepp, Susan E., and Roderick A. McDonald. “Inscribing Experience: An American Working Woman and an English Gentlewoman Encounter Jamaica’s Slave Society, 1801-1805.” \textit{The William and Mary Quarterly}, V. LVIII, No. 3 (July 2001), 660.
Klepp and McDonald’s argument ignores the fact that the length of stay greatly differed between the two women. Roberts only visited for a month, while Nugent lived there for five years. They also fail to take into account the time when these memoirs were written. Nugent wrote her entries daily at the time of her residence, while Roberts penned hers after the visit, and calling upon her memory to inform impressions. Furthermore, Roberts composed her memoir in 1814, a few years after the slave trade, though not slavery itself had been abolished in the United States, as well as Great Britain.\(^{36}\) Roberts, writing her memoir in a way that suggested she knew that the institution of slavery needed reform years before the changes were enacted, made it appear as if she was a woman ahead of her time. If she chose to write the memoir and ignored the plight of slavery by not commenting on its brutality it is possible that her contemporaries would have found fault with her. They might have criticized her and wondered how the brutality of the system was imperceptible to her when she had first-hand experience with it. Conversely, since Lady Nugent had no intention of making her diaries public, she likely did not worry about how her impressions of slavery or politics would be received by a more general audience. The issue of memory in relation to her experience presumably did not play as much a role for Lady Nugent, who wrote as events occurred. Nugent’s record dated from prior to the end of the transatlantic trade, so she had no benefit of hindsight or (as far as we know) opportunity to revise her impressions with time. While Lady Nugent may not have called for slavery reform, to suggest that she was immune to the plight of the slaves and never could identify with them is incorrect, as evidenced by numerous entries in her diaries.

Not long after she had arrived in Jamaica, October of 1801, Maria Nugent distributed a variety of gifts among the female slaves in her household, including a number of gowns and petticoats. She did this in honor of the anniversary of her marriage to General Nugent.\(^{37}\) Periodic moments of gift giving to the black population marked her residence, as she noted later that she gave Negro children,

\(^{36}\) Klepp and McDonald, *Inscribing Experience*, 643.

\(^{37}\) Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 48.
who belonged to a different household, a gift of money.\textsuperscript{38} Finally in detailing her last Christmas on the island, Mrs. Nugent listed all of the items that her Negroes would receive from her and her husband, including a sheep, a lamb, a dollar, and a complete new dress, among other practical items. The act of gift giving was more than a symbolic gesture of good will; it reveals how Mrs. Nugent understood one of her roles on the island and how she was able to carry it out. Giving practical gifts such as clothing and livestock reminded the blacks that while in the end they may have helped run the house they were still dependent on the kindness of their mistress for the most basic items. Mrs. Nugent understood that in Jamaica her role in the imperial structure positioned her above a majority of the population. Nugent used her standing to make the conditions of the slaves better, even if it was through giving simple gifts. At the same time she demonstrated her social position and her charitable credentials.

For Mrs. Nugent’s purposes, gift giving could achieve the same end of maintaining the status quo, but in a benevolent fashion. The idea that empire could serve as a tool to uplift other races and peoples was not necessarily a concept that had existed all that long before. Trevor Burnard’s study of a plantation manager in the mid-eighteenth century Jamaica indicates that the major division on the island was between the races, white and black, and racial identity typically indicated whether a person was free or not. In order to maintain his privileged status it is important for the slave manager needed to have complete mastery over his slaves, usually in a tyrannical manner. A white person gained respect on Jamaica through exercising complete control over the slave population. Although this study rightly points out how one gained power over the slave population on the plantations, what about those few residences, such as Maria Nugent’s, which were not plantations? It was still important to exercise control over the slaves in the household, but the methods had to be different than Thistlewood’s. Maria Nugent could not employ physical or brute punishments not only because of the setting, but also because of her gender. Although as a woman, especially one from the early nineteenth century,

\textsuperscript{38} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 96.
we would not expect her to have ever been in charge of the whippings, even if she owned her own plantation, Mrs. Nugent demonstrates a new approach to empire that goes beyond basic economic advantages of having an empire. By giving her slaves periodic presents or token of her appreciation, Maria Nugent reaffirmed to her slaves her power.

The dynamic between white women and household slaves was a complicated one. The slaves had some level of power in that they were necessary to keep the house running in an efficient way. In this regard the white women was dependent on her household slaves. Yet, the white women could also choose whether or not a slave remained in the household. Since jobs in the household tended to be better than those on a plantation it is doubtful many slaves would have risked losing their positions in the house. Thus while the slaves were crucial in maintaining and running the home, it was ultimately the white woman’s benevolence that decided whether the slaves remained in the house or not. Edward Long complained that the limited number of females on the island encouraged white women to become overly familiar with their servants.39 Although Long was correct in noting that white women lacked significant companionship among their peers in Jamaica society, he is perhaps overstating how familiar the relationship between the women and their slaves actually was. Women just expressed their power in different, perhaps more subtle, forms than their male contemporaries. Even if the white women did become more familiar with their slaves than Long would have liked it is unlikely that these relationships undermined the power dynamic between the white women and their slaves. The white women could choose to be friendly with their slaves if that is what they desired but the slave women did not have the same option. They had to reciprocate, at least they did if they hoped to gain any little bit of leverage or keep their relatively comfortable positions.

Benevolence and kindness towards the slaves, however, while perhaps not always done with an ulterior motive, nonetheless served to uphold the status quo and maintain the unequal balance of power. Not only did Mrs. Nugent give tangible

objects as gifts, but there were also often times when she and her husband allowed the blacks to celebrate their traditional holidays and take off time from their work.\textsuperscript{40} The fact that in the end it was the discretion of the mistress or master of the house to allow time off, for whatever reason, reinforced to the blacks that the whites controlled every moment of their lives. The blacks were beholden to Mrs. Nugent for practical items, as well as intangible things, such as the use of their time. Maria Nugent did not have to resort to the tactics of the slave managers in Jamaica, which admittedly would have been impractical given not only her household, but also her gender. Brute force and coercion towards the slaves remained a reality of island life in the early nineteenth century. But it was beginning to be tempered by something else, a desire to help those seen as less fortunate. In a contradiction of sorts it was an empire that necessitated subjugation of many people but it was through this subjugation that these people could be helped, as long as they had someone to show them the right way.

In the eyes of Maria Nugent, the greatest gift she could give to her less fortunate slaves was eternal salvation. When Maria Nugent claimed that both she and husband would do their duty like “good soldiers,” it might at first glance seem that Mara Nugent meant this in the sense of being good soldiers for the British Empire. Journal entries indicate however that she also saw herself as another type of soldier, a crusader for Christ. There was no point during her residence in Jamaica that Nugent did not worry about the souls of the black population.

Nugent wasted no time in telling the “blackies the Christian story.”\textsuperscript{41} She expected the slaves to do their part in making their conversion to Christianity a reality, however, and was determined that all the blacks under her control would be baptized. This project was a natural one for Nugent to focus her energy, especially when she was missing England so desperately. Religion provided one source of consistency in her world, especially when she first arrived and many aspects of her life, such as her social circle and her family, were not there to provide comforts. It is only a few days after the previous journal entry that Maria Nugent saw twenty-five

\textsuperscript{40} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 66.
\textsuperscript{41} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 53.
of her black domestics baptized and “made into Christians.” The occasion was celebrated with cake and wine.\textsuperscript{42} There was no doubt in Maria Nugent’s mind though, that the conversion of the blacks, backed by her instruction, was real. She did not entertain the possibility that perhaps some converted not necessarily for any spiritual well being, but rather to please her and garner favor. Nugent believed that at this point the slaves were “well acquainted with their expected duties.” The blacks would continue in their Christian instruction, and Maria Nugent talked to a reverend about the Catechism she had arranged for the slaves’ use.\textsuperscript{43} For Nugent, the black’s conversion to Christianity was more than a ceremony; it symbolized a new way of life for the slaves. While she may not have viewed the spiritual conversion as anything less than truly heartfelt, it is evident that Maria Nugent sincerely cared and thought about the situation of the blacks, as well as opposed treatments she deemed too inhumane.

Klepp and McDonald’s article contends that Maria Nugent never saw the blacks as people and thus could never question the practice of slavery. Although it is true that she believed that the slave trade was practical and should continue, Maria Nugent was also against treating slaves solely as commodities. To her understanding, the slave trade was beneficial to both blacks and whites alike. Upon reading opinions concerning the abolition of the slave trade, Nugent believed that many of the claims of abuse and ill treatment are “very greatly exaggerated.”\textsuperscript{44} Moreover, the trade would not be necessary if only “religion, decency, and good order, were established among the negroes... if they could be prevailed to marry.”\textsuperscript{45} To her understanding, once they married, in a manner recognized by the imperialists, then the slave couples could produce children more efficiently. These children would be enslaved, which would render the slave trade unnecessary. Thus while the institution of slavery would not end, the actual slave trade would.

Therefore it seems that Nugent believed that it is the blacks’ fault, and not the British Empire’s, that the slave trade continued to exist. Moreover, the only way to

\textsuperscript{42} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 53.
\textsuperscript{43} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 53.
\textsuperscript{44} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 117.
\textsuperscript{45} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 117-118.
“fix” the plight of the slaves is for them to embrace the British ways. According to Lady Nugent then, not only are the blacks to blame for the continuation of the slave trade, but also to some degree their own enslavement, because of their refusal to live in way seen as acceptable by Lady Nugent.

Nugent believed that to abolish the slave trade would prove not only economically detrimental to the white plantation owners, but morally detrimental to the blacks as well. By 1805 the abolition of the slave trade had been a hot topic in the British Empire, and the movement had consistently gained more momentum since the 1780s. Mrs. Nugent would have undoubtedly been fairly well versed in the arguments for and against the slave trade by this time, though whether her opinion may have changed upon taking up residence in Jamaica is unknown. Her experience could have solidified her convictions that the slave trade was necessary or could have convinced her that it was not all that bad. Regardless, her experience in Jamaica had convinced her that until the slaves began to accept British values and act in a way that she deemed proper then the slave trade must remain. To abolish it would suggest to the slaves that their current way of life was acceptable. The slaves’ way of life was not necessarily problematic in regards to the duration of their earthly lives, but rather for their spiritual ones. By noting that the slaves had an afterlife Mrs. Nugent saw them as more than commodities and recognized some level of common humanity in them. Recognizing humanity in these slaves did not make them equals in Mrs. Nugent’s mind by any stretch of the imagination. The intersection of Mrs. Nugent’s concerns for the slaves’ spiritual wellbeing and her conviction that slavery was necessary highlights the dual purpose of empire. It was an economic venture, maintained for the benefit of the metropole. Yet by this time, empire was also an institution that could help others outside of Britain. This may appear to be contradictory given that the British Empire needed slavery to meet its economic goals, but that is not how Mrs. Nugent would have understood it. To her the British Empire presented a mutually beneficial relationship.

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Not long after the discussion of abolition in her diary, Mrs. Nugent worried herself with how the whites were treating the black slaves. She was concerned that the whites saw the blacks as made solely to “administer to their ease.” While she admitted that the whites, even those who are domestics, were superior beings, Mara Nugent worked hard to illustrate that the “blacks are human beings, or have souls.” Being superior did not, in Mrs. Nugent’s opinion, give whites the right to treat the blacks however they pleased. This is not the only instance in which she noted such an opinion on the issue. At one point during her travels of the island, Mrs. Nugent saw “two poor negroes, who had been in chains nearly a year.” The men asked for General Nugent to free them and he does so. Maria Nugent appeared to have sympathized and thus approved of her husband’s actions. Mrs. Nugent’s distress at this situation further demonstrated her belief in the humanitarian aspect of the empire. Slavery may have been necessary, but cruelty to reinforce the power dynamic was not always required. Mrs. Nugent clearly views the slave master in this situation as lacking in his commitment to and reflection of the benevolent nature of the empire. A quick remedy to the situation was not always manageable though. In many instances it was hard to punish whites that had treated slaves, especially those they did not own, poorly. Interference in the master-slave relationship was rare except in the most extreme cases. Although this may have been the reality of the situation Maria Nugent did her best to maintain the power dynamics while fulfilling her Christian duty.

Since she recognized the humanity of the slaves, it becomes apparent that Maria Nugent believed she had to justify and defend the institution of slavery. She clearly believed in a racial hierarchy, and though she situated the blacks as inferior, she nonetheless viewed their souls as worth saving. She used reason to reinforce the claim that it is sensible to import the blacks from Africa. Mrs. Nugent talked to some slaves and she learned of some blacks who had lived to be past one hundred years of

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47 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 132.
48 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 100.
age.\textsuperscript{50} Conversely, Maria Nugent frequently commented on the large numbers of whites who were dying. In fact, at one point she noted that there are only three topics of discussions, the three “Ds”: disease, debt, and death.” This had been a reality of island life since the beginning of colonization. \textsuperscript{51} Maria Nugent’s lamentations on death and disease echo those written almost thirty years previously by another resident of the island, James Pinnock. In 1780, Pinnock noted four deaths in his family within a three-month span.\textsuperscript{52} By comparison, Mrs. Nugent was lucky as both she and her husband managed to survive their five years on the island. The depressing reality of death among the whites, combined with the seemingly long lifespan of the African slaves (as perceived by the whites), only served to prove her point that the blacks were better able to acclimate than whites and thus it is only practical and sensible to use them as the source of labor. Though she cannot see past the economic practicality and necessity of slavery, this does not mean that Maria Nugent could not critique the harsh climate in which many of these slaves worked. Slavery was a necessary cruelty in part because of the climate of Jamaica, which was not hospitable to whites.

Upon visiting a sugar mill and noting the intense manual labor and poor conditions that the slaves worked under Mrs. Nugent declared that she “would not have a sugar estate for the world.”\textsuperscript{53} Lady Nugent’s disgust at mill conditions does not necessarily mean she thought that sugar mills should cease to exist or even change their methods. But it does illustrate a willingness to sympathize for the “inferior beings.” Her role, as demonstrated by her concern for and instruction for the spiritual wellbeing of the blacks, was the bringer of “Truth.” Her experiences, while not enough to change her mind about a hierarchy or the necessary evil which is slavery, did work to reinforce her belief that she was partly entrusted with the care of serving as an example to these people and helping them see the light of civilization. It is imperative to stress however that for the slaves there was no choice in the matter in regards to converting to Christianity. Much like the relationships

\textsuperscript{50} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 132.
\textsuperscript{51} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 239.
\textsuperscript{52} Brathwaite, \textit{Development of Creole Society in Jamaica}, 280.
\textsuperscript{53} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 86.
between the white women and their household slaves, appearing willing to engage in Mrs. Nugent’s religion might have helped the slaves garner favor but there was no real opportunity for refusal. Maria Nugent did not even entertain the idea that the blacks might not accept her religion. She did not have to have this consideration because of their status as slaves. Her humanitarianism was possible because of the nature of the slave society in Jamaica.

It is not only the black population that concerned Maria Nugent. At times she wrote of her disgust at the actions of the white people of the island. In fact, she often blamed the poor example set by the whites when blacks acted poorly. Until the white men stopped living in such a state of licentiousness with their female slaves and completely reformed their ways, “neither religion, decency, nor morality, can be established among the negroes.”54 The men were not embodying the virtues of the British Empire, a fact that upset Mrs. Nugent. Their actions contradicted what the empire stood for, which she found completely unacceptable. If she found the way that the white men acted to be permissible, then it would have been completely contrary to all of her efforts thus far. By critiquing their actions however Mrs. Nugent was implying that the colonizers were to serve as a model for behavior to those who were not British. She was limited in her ability to express these opinions vocally, because as woman it was not her place confront a man. The diaries, however, offered her an opportunity to condemn these men’s behavior, all the while revealing her conceptions and notions about the purpose of empire.

The men were not the only ones setting a poor example by failing to live up the expectations of proper Europeans. Maria Nugent increasingly became interested in the conduct of the white women of the island. When Maria Nugent arrived on the island she and her husband had yet to start a family. While in Jamaica the couple became first-time parents, adding two children to their family, one boy and one girl. After the birth of her children, she began to pay more attention to the manner in which children are raised on the island. She was upset by the way the creoles spoil

54 Nugent, Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, 118.
their children and this is something she wishes to avoid at all costs.\textsuperscript{55} After the birth of her daughter, not only was she concerned about the way the children were raised, Mrs. Nugent also became concerned with the conduct of every woman, young or old. She felt so strongly about this that she actually took aside a friend who was married, and asked her to be more careful in the ways she talked to her husband. The woman took the suggestion well and promised to monitor her temper in the future.\textsuperscript{56} This instance coupled with the earlier examples shows a realization on Maria Nugent’s part that not only was she supposed to set an example for the blacks, but that she must do the same for the white women and instruct them when their conduct did not meet her standards. She was an agent of empire and set the example of civilization for the entire island. Mrs. Nugent took on this task because of her cognizance of her privileged position on the island, and what she believed was expected of her. Some roles, such as the spiritual were taken up quite quickly, while others developed out of a perceived necessity or because being forced into one role, such as becoming a mother, made her realize she had other duties.

White women were at a premium on the island and this rarity, combined with the position of power that her husband held, Mrs. Nugent noted many men, and women looked to her with regard to their own conduct and behavior. At one of the many parties that she attended on the island Mrs. Nugent dressed in a tiara and sat beside her husband on thrones especially reserved for them.\textsuperscript{57} Her husband may have been granted the authority to act in the king’s name in relation to politics, but it was apparent that his wife was expected to rule by his side, on issues of society and propriety.

While in Jamaica she did meet a number of white women, one of whom ran her own estate.\textsuperscript{58} Applauding the woman for managing the estate so well, Mrs.

\textsuperscript{55}The term Creole is one that can refer to a variety of people. It is unclear exactly which definition Mrs. Nugent adheres to in reference to Jamaica it is likely that she uses the term for people not only of mixed heritage, but also those Europeans who have made Jamaica their home or have enjoyed an extended stay, as well as those children born on the island to European parents. This is supported by her statement on page 320, in which she refers to her and her family as creoles as well. Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 191.
\textsuperscript{56}Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 255.
\textsuperscript{57}Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 57.
\textsuperscript{58}Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 80.
Nugent lamented that many of the white women on the island were widows, as the men did not last long in this climate.\textsuperscript{59} She did not envy these women their independence, and much preferred her married, dependent state. These thoughts suggest that not only were white women at a premium on the island, but moreover there were very few women in the same situation as her, upper class and married. As the governor’s wife, she sat at the top of the hierarchy of this group. At one point, she noted, “All she does is perfection.”\textsuperscript{60} The context implies that she did not believe that this is the reality of the situation, but rather that she believed this is how others perceived her. As a result, few chose to find fault with what she did or said. It was important that Mrs. Nugent serve as the best model possible for the women. Mrs. Nugent viewed women as the ones entrusted with protecting or embodying British culture. Given that there was so few it was even more important that women of the island reflect the right type of culture. This was an unofficial role that Mrs. Nugent had been entrusted with but its implications were enormous. Furthermore perhaps, as echoed by Braithwaite, Mrs. Nugent believed that the colonies of the West Indies had increasingly looked towards Great Britain for cultural guidance, especially after the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{61} She was a direct representation of Britain and her own actions were carefully calculated. The audience for her performance in this sense was the white population of the island. The slaves also served as spectators but it was taken for granted that they would accept her performance. She had to work hard to convince the white population however, by upholding propriety and culture. If the whites accepted her performance and began to take her social cues then one of her most important roles on the island would have been fulfilled.

At times her world consists of a variety of balls and societal functions, where she was (socially) the most important woman attending. A woman who held a higher social rank than her at home in England was considered to be her social inferior in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{62} Her interactions with the blacks, as well as men and women of similar station reinforced Maria Nugent’s self-realization that she had a role that

\textsuperscript{59} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 81.
\textsuperscript{60} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 86.
\textsuperscript{61} Brathwaite, \textit{Development of Creole Society in Jamaica}, xiv.
\textsuperscript{62} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 273.
necessitated that she lead by example. Whereas other women and men could find Jamaica to be a place to refashion themselves however they might have desired, the same was not applicable to Mrs. Nugent. Ironically, rather than giving her more choices, Nugent’s high rank gave her less opportunities than some of those afforded to other women in Jamaica.

Citing the example of Teresia Constantia Phillips, Kathleen Wilson in *The Island Race* discusses how one's social standing and perception could be negotiated abroad in the colonies. Phillips split her time between living in the colonies and back home in Europe. In English circles, Phillips was known for her scandalous life, as the mistress of various men, her life one tangled liaison after another. Despite this poor reputation, Phillips was successfully able to refashion herself abroad. Gossip managed to find Phillips on the fringes of empire, such as in Jamaica, but these stories had little impact outside of the metropole. These exotic locales were more comfortable to Phillips than her homeland. Wilson contends that once in Jamaica, Phillips “mobilized her nationality to ensure her superior position in local power structures.”63 By upholding the imperial structure, Phillips was able to negotiate a more respectable identity for herself.

Maria Nugent was also able to have a higher social standing for herself in Jamaica than she would have had back home; unlike Philips, however, this did not necessarily provide of a variety of opportunities. Instead the assumption of a higher place in society restricted Mrs. Nugent’s behavior to what she felt was expected and required from her. Phillips chose to live in Jamaica because it afforded her the opportunity to raise her standing. Conversely, Maria Nugent, did not actively work to attain a higher status, it came as a natural result of her husband accepting the positions of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief. Phillips did not have the burden of setting an example for the entire island, like Maria Nugent, who took her role very seriously. The difference however was in her expectations between the black and white populations in regards to their

participation in her performance. Mrs. Nugent did not care or really even expect much of a response from the slave population. She believed that they would do as she said and act as she expected. The performance with the white population, however, was much more interactive in that she had to convince them because they had a choice in whether or not they would accept her act.

Maria Nugent also had many interactions with those who were not British, and came from all parts of the globe. She may have served as the supreme societal example but it is evident that her heart still remained in England. Many entries are filled with her desire to return to England, though she made up her mind that she was going to start using her time more wisely, in devotion to more worthy projects (such as the Christian instruction of the blacks).64 What is astounding though is the variety of people with which she came into contact. The chef she employed, Baptiste, was French, as were many of the guests that she entertained in a social and political capacity, as an extension of her husband’s position.65 She also noted dining with a group of Spaniards.66 She had the pleasure of breakfasting with a General and a couple from the United States.67 Her husband's position necessitated her acting in a variety of roles, one of which was to serve as the hostess to these people from various nations and empires. While it is not unreasonable that she would have come into contact with people from these places at home in England, the frequency would perhaps not have been as great. Mrs. Nugent's diaries at times seem to almost exclusively deal with her interactions and life within Jamaica. There are moments though, when she was in the presence of people not of the same nationality and this caused her to refocus her attention. It forced her expand her view and think about how her situation or position fit into the world as a whole, and think about Jamaica and its relation to Britain and the Empire. This was especially prevalent, when there was talk of war between the British and the French.

Mrs. Nugent especially had numerous interactions with people of French origin, whether they lived in Jamaica or not. Early in her residence, Mrs. Nugent had

64 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 69.
65 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 48-50.
66 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 216.
67 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 195.
considerable interaction with a Frenchman, Monsieur Grandjean, whom she spent a great deal of time with, talking and reading.\textsuperscript{68} She made no mention of their talks going beyond the realm of Jamaican society however. Not much later in her stay, Mrs. Nugent was relieved at the news that Britain had signed a treaty with the French (the Treaty of Amiens).\textsuperscript{69} After this her writings are peppered with the state of French politics, especially on the island of St. Domingo, which is relatively close to Jamaica. The situation on St. Domingo had been rather precarious ever since the French Revolution. The whites and free people of color had been battling each other since 1789, and in 1791 the slaves, who made up the majority of the population, began to revolt too. The government in France had no choice but to “enlist the support of the mixed race [\textit{anciens libres}]” to help quell the slave uprising.\textsuperscript{70} St. Domingo continued to be a problem for the French, who were also engaged in war with the English and Spanish in the 1790s. In an effort to gain support from slaves in France’s struggle against the Spanish add English, France’s commissioner abolished slavery. Yet, the island would continue to experience power struggles between the metropole and the new regime of St. Domingo, led by former slave Toussaint Louverture. These tensions would culminate in especially bloody fighting between the years 1801 and 1804.\textsuperscript{71} Given the proximity of St. Domingo and the nature of the conflict, it is no wonder then, that Maria Nugent was concerned about the circumstances of the French colony.

At one point she heard news of a massacre of hundreds of Europeans on St. Domingo, which concerned her greatly for the influence it might have on the slaves of Jamaica.\textsuperscript{72} In this instance the events of St. Domingo are of special concern, not because the island is held by the national enemy of Britain, but rather because of the similar situations of the two islands. Both were slave societies, with an overwhelming black population. Her ability to sympathize with the whites of St.

\textsuperscript{68} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 46-48.
\textsuperscript{69} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 56.
\textsuperscript{71} Girard, \textit{The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon}, 6.
\textsuperscript{72} Nugent, \textit{Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago}, 56.
Domingo transcended national boundaries. Instead of connecting on a national basis she was able to sympathize because of skin color and social position. The massacre forced Mrs. Nugent to expand her focus to think about the West Indies as a whole, beyond her place of current residence. St. Domingo would prove to be a popular topic within the diaries.

She was expected to act as a representative of the British Empire, though in an unofficial capacity, to St. Domingo, a possession of the French Empire. Oftentimes her husband’s position made Mrs. Nugent interact with French diplomats or military officials station on the island in a more formal setting. These foreign diplomats or officials would come to see her husband, and at times it was necessary for Mrs. Nugent to entertain them at dinner. One amusing story relays one of these dinners during which she spoke in English disparagingly of her foreign guests to another dinner companion, only to learn that the French officers could understand every word.73 This social gaffe was a source of great embarrassment to her, in part because she had undermined her own efforts to convince the French in the civility of the British Empire. The gaffe was not only a reflection on her, but as the wife of the Governor-General, it was also a reflection of the British Empire. Regardless, the constant entertainment and interaction with various French officers and visitors gave Maria Nugent a chance to exercise her language skills, which must have been considerable as she noted teaching the language to others.74

Nugent also received gifts, such as a pink and silver dress, from Madame Le Clerc, who was the sister of Napoleon Bonaparte and resided with her husband General Le Clerc on the island of St. Domingo.75 It does not seem as if the two women ever met, and the gifts were greatly appreciated. The gifts also reveal the opinion that Maria Nugent was an extension of her husband. While the peace between Britain and France would not last, during this period attempts to maintain friendly relations included making presents to the wives of important officials, not just to the officers themselves. Nugent responds in kind by having a gift of “English

73 Nugent, Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, 133.
74 Nugent, Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, 82.
75 Nugent, Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago, 142.
cut-glass and trinkets made up for Madame Clerc.” Thus while the men conducted official relations through aides-de-camp, it was apparently expected for the wives to make overtures as well. In this sense Maria Nugent’s place and role in the empire was much larger than simply standing as an example for those in Jamaica. In all of these instances her audience had broadened from the whites of Jamaica to also encompass foreigners. It was not enough to make the British subjects believe in the empire as promoting civility, humanitarianism, and liberty. This image needed to be projected to as many people as possible. If others not involved in the structure bought into this self-promotion, then it gave the empire a different level of credibility. Thus Mrs. Nugent’s role shifted, when necessary, from one of local importance to one of international importance, depending on the status of the home nation at that time. In each instance however it was crucial for her to perform the role expected of her in order to convince or reinforce in others the validity of the British Empire.

Five years and two children later, Maria Nugent left Jamaica with her children, and returned home to England, while her husband remained in Jamaica for another year until he was relieved of his post. Maria Nugent’s concerns that she would never see the shores of home again were for nothing. Before they left a great party was thrown in their honor and though Mrs. Nugent did not believe that all who said they would miss her were sincere, she noted that their words were nonetheless kind and some actually shed a few tears. What really moved her was parting with her household slaves, an experience which she described as painful. While leaving the people behind was hard, Mrs. Nugent nonetheless seemed anxious to return home to England with her new family in tow.

Jamaica and her husband’s role on the island forced Maria Nugent into positions that she would not have in England. She told herself that she was entrusted, whether stated explicitly or not, with setting an example for the entire island, whether black or white, and this forced her to act with the utmost decorum,

76 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 156.
77 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 308.
78 Nugent, *Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago*, 310.
as well as remain dedicated to the Christian cause. For the blacks she was the bearer of culture. For the white population she was the model of behavior. In both instances the exchange was mostly one sided. She instructed others in what she deemed proper behavior and culture without really engaging in behavior or expressions of culture unfamiliar or distasteful to her. Maria Nugent was merely a spectator of unfamiliar cultural acts as demonstrated by her only watching slave celebrations. To actively involve herself in any way would have been unexpected and more importantly, unacceptable. To say this does not suggest that Jamaica did not make an impression on her, just that it did not provide her with the opportunities to remake herself however she saw fit. Instead she was forced to fill the roles expected of her. Not only was she expected to fill a cultural role in Jamaica, but her position also necessitated an international component, as exemplified by the many instances entertaining foreign officers and diplomats as well as her relationship with Madame Le Clerc. She was forced into a multitude of roles and worlds. At times she focused on efforts in Jamaica, but when called upon, she could switch her attention to external affairs. There seems have been nothing that would have prevented Maria Nugent from achieving her goals, one of which was spreading Christianity to the black population.

Part III-The Interim Period

In the period from 1805 to 1811 Maria Nugent enjoyed a break from travel outside of England. During this time, the entries in her diary are little less frequent, especially as her family continued to grow. Initially she often mentions meeting with others who were either bound for Jamaica or had just returned from the island. In many instances she was hoping they would bring or take letters to her husband who was still abroad. The diaries record and detail the various functions she attended

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79 Lady Maria Nugent, *A Journal of a Voyage to, and Residence in, the Island of Jamaica, from 1801 to 1805, and of Subsequent Events in England from 1805 to 1811*, vol. 2 (Alexander Street Press, University of Chicago) under “British and Irish Women’s Letters and Diaries 1500 to 1950”
and the activities of her children, as well as general political and social gossip that she heard.

It appears that she lived a fairly busy social life and attended numerous functions, some of them hosted in her and her husband's honor. At one affair in Britain she noted that all of Jamaica was in attendance and that many of her friends from the colony were back either permanently or for a visit to the metropole. This suggestion that the whole of Jamaica was present reveals how Lady Nugent felt about who counted socially on the island. The only culture that mattered was the British culture and the only people (or audience) that mattered were the colonists. Since her experiences and circumstances during this period were not as unusual as those in Jamaica however, Lady Nugent was not as devoted to detailing every issue and event.

She did recognize at one point that her entries might make her children think less of her. She worried that because all her entries reveal the various affairs and balls she attended, this makes her seem only engaged in frivolous adventures. To correct this she made sure to note that she has been very involved in helping the less fortunate, even if she did not reveal as much in her earlier, or even her later, entries. At times then, Lady Nugent was aware that there was audience for her diaries, but though it made her address issues every now and then, for the most part it does not change the tenor or overall tone of her subsequent entries while in England.

Lady Nugent’s family continued to grow. In addition to her two children born in Jamaica she had two more, one of them born only six weeks before she and her husband would embark on another journey. There was also a third child born during this period, but he did not live for more than a week. His death took a heavy toll on Lady Nugent and her husband. In fact, it is at this point that her diary entries become less frequent as her grief is almost too much for her to bear. During this


81 Raza, "Nugent, Maria, Lady Nugent (1770/71–1834)."
period, her husband was offered a position in India, but he turned it down because it was not appealing to him, or Lady Nugent for that matter, at the time. Her husband stayed busy with political affairs, however, acting as Member of Parliament in the House of Commons representing Ayelsbury.\textsuperscript{83} It was also during this period that Nugent was given a baronetcy, though he was not knighted because of his illegitimate background.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1811, Lord Nugent decided that he was tired of being “idle” and began to think seriously about returning to active involvement in the British Empire abroad. Lady Nugent was less than thrilled at the prospect of leaving her home once again, but recognized that it was duty to do as her husband desired. Nugent got his wish and in 1811 he was appointed the Commander-in-Chief in India.\textsuperscript{85} Unlike with his appointment in Jamaica, however, he was not also appointed as the Governor-General of the colony. This means that instead of holding the majority of power as he did previously, General Nugent found himself in a lower position, even though it was still a role of considerable importance because of the significance (politically and economically) of the colony. For this assignment, the Nugents decided that the children would remain at home in England. This arrangement greatly distressed Lady Nugent, but she thought it best for her children to remain at home.\textsuperscript{86} Thus the pair began their journey to India in late 1811, though they would not arrive to their destination, Calcutta, until January of 1812. During this period, Lady Nugent’s entries become much more frequent and detail the actions onboard their vessel as well as relating her experiences in the various ports the ship docked in along their journey.

\textsuperscript{83}Boyden, “Nugent, Sir George, first baronet (1757–1849).”
\textsuperscript{84}Boyden, “Nugent, Sir George, first baronet (1757–1849).”
\textsuperscript{85}Boyden, “Nugent, Sir George, first baronet (1757–1849).”
\textsuperscript{86}Lady Maria Nugent, \textit{A Journal From the Year 1811 Till the Year 1815, Including a Voyage to and Residence in India, with a Tour to the Northwestern Parts of the British Possessions in that Country under the Bengal Government” Vol. 1 (London: T.W. & Boone, 1839), 2-11, en passim.
Chapter Three-India

“Last night, when we were driving through the bazaar some were taking the air on the house-tops...some squatting in little Chinese looking temples, with their legs crossed, smoking hookah &c., and indeed the whole had the look of a new world. I should like to see the old one again, however.”

Part I-India as a “Colony”

Lady Nugent left England for India in 1811 under different circumstances than when she traveled to Jamaica in 1801. When she left England for Jamaica she and her husband were childless. Now they left four children behind in the care of family friends. Moreover, not only were her own circumstances different, but so were those of the British Empire. Lady Nugent’s writings in India have a completely different tone and approach than those from Jamaica, which reflect a different reality of the British position as a whole in India as compared to Jamaica. Although she still looked upon the new sights and people with fascination and did her best to describe them in detail, much as she did in Jamaica, her words also reveal a new understanding of where she fit in the imperial structure and how this in turn affected her actions and conception of herself. At times, Lady Nugent used words like “caste” and “Hindu” to describe the social structures and faiths of people she encountered in South Asia. The British created these terms as a way of understanding and categorizing difference within the colony. While at times inaccurate and grossly general in the application of these terms, their use demonstrates the recognition of a diversity among the people of South Asia, something not seen during Lady Nugent’s residence in Jamaica.

Technically, India would not be a colony of the British until the 1850s, though the reality of the situation was significantly more complicated. The British had been

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87 Nugent, A Journal from the Year 1811-1815, Vol. 1, 112.
a presence in India since the 1600s in the form of a commercial entity, the East India Company, which was granted a royal charter to conduct trade in India. In order to conduct business the East India Company had to rely on local contacts and diplomats to establish trading outposts.\footnote{Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, 23.} While the East India Company continued to be an important part of British economics and politics, the British had no real control over the administration of India.\footnote{Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, 24.} In fact, it was not until the mid-1700s that the Company shared power or administrative duties with the local government. After collaborating and negotiating with local leaders during the Seven Years War, the Company began to assume more administrative roles. The East India Company becoming more involved in India meant that the British government itself became more involved. Because the East India Company was an extension of the British Empire, and one of its greatest assets, the British public worried about its morality and the risks it took in becoming more entrenched in India affairs.\footnote{Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, 31.} It was important then that the British Crown keep a close eye on India.

By the time Lady Nugent arrived in India, the Company had enjoyed a presence of more than two hundred years, but it was not the sole political power. The Company, and the British monarch for that matter, still relied on local elites to help them maintain power and order in India’s various regions.\footnote{Jasanoff, Edge of Empire, 23.} Although the British were not technically recognized as the rulers of India, by the 1800s they were the de facto rulers, through the East India Company. For example, in places like central and northern India there were still “a loose confederacy of Maratha princes” but the administration was “designed only to raise revenue and their armies were no more than robber bands.”\footnote{Michael Edwardes, British India 1772-1947: A Survey of the Nature and Effects of Alien Rule. (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1967), 9.} Still, the British experience in India was hardly free from conflict and even in the early 1800s the imperialists were often engaged in little wars. Military activity was restricted for a time starting in 1806, but by 1813...
the British was once again engaged in expanding their territory. Unlike Jamaica, India was far from completely conquered, though the British consistently gained more influence and power throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Perhaps the greatest difference from Jamaica that Lady Nugent would have to contend with was the existence of a native population in India. As noted, the British Monarch depended on the accommodation of locals in order to realize their own goals. Whereas previously Lady Nugent had acted in the manner she saw as required of a British woman, she now had to consider how the locals would perceive her behavior. Before her main audience was the white population. She had also stood as an instructor for behavior of the slave population, but they had little recourse but to accept her acts of humanitarianism without complaint. Conversely, a native population did not have to accept Lady Nugent’s efforts. She had to modify her actions and make them acceptable to the natives, which was an entirely new situation for her. This was partially dependent on the circumstances of the native population, which was far from being completely subjugated. Rather it was help from the natives that was crucial for the British Empire to even exist in India and thus Lady Nugent’s own position within the imperial scheme was reconfigured.

Part II-Her Experience

In Jamaica, Lady Nugent had worked to be a spiritual ambassador to the black population of Jamaica. She was directly involved in instructing the blacks of her household in scripture and Bible stories. It was not a question of whether she could do this; she did it because she truly believed that it was for the benefit of the “poor creatures”. Not only did Lady Nugent never question whether she could do this she never questioned if she should. She may have only dealt directly with those slaves in her household but it is likely she believe her actions served as a model for the other whites to follow. If they modeled their behavior on hers, they would do their own part in helping the slaves. Given her strong feelings about conversion and

Christianity it would seem likely that in India Lady Nugent would feel it was necessary to take the Christian message to the native population, despite their current beliefs. Reading the pages of the diary reveals a different woman than before. She was still strongly convinced in the rightness of her message, but she was no longer sure if she had the authority to do so. India as a colony was different from Jamaica and this changed her own conception of where she fits in the hierarchy, which in turn informed a great deal of her behavior.

Lady Nugent’s was able to connect with the Indian population on a level not possible with the Jamaican population. The traditions and society of India were complicated, as Lady Nugent soon realized. She found, much to her dismay, that some very ignorant people have fed her a great deal of misinformation about the customs as well as the traditions of the people of South Asia. To remedy this, she vowed to no longer believe or write anything that she had not experienced first-hand in relation to these matters. In contrast, she made no mention in her first diaries of having been warned about any local customs of Jamaica. The only information she seemed to have received was about the weather and the climate of the island. Most likely the reason for this is that the beliefs and internal structure of the majority population of Jamaica did not matter; the only society worth understanding was that formed by the Europeans and one would expect this to be very similar to what she had experienced in England. Conversely in India, she seemed to have felt an interest, early on, even before she left home, to learn as much as she could about the Indians, so she would know what to expect. Lady Nugent’s acceptance that while they may be inferior, the institutions and practices of the Indians were deeply established, and she was in no position to change this based on her relation to them in society.

One of her first entries upon her arrival in India relates the story of people, whom she referred to as Hindus, sacrificing themselves to the Ganges, a custom that horrified Lady Nugent. She noted the British government had done as much as possible to “suppress this cruel superstition,” but to no avail. Lady Nugent described

the scene, noting the solemn song sung by those who are about to sacrifice themselves. These potential martyrs walked into the sea as far as they were able, should an alligator or shark take them they were thought to “be particularly favored.” Others who wanted to sacrifice themselves merely jumped off of boats with weights tied to their feet. While she was distraught Lady Nugent still could not help but admire the dedication that these people showed to their religion, even if they were wrong. In fact, although she found their situation “wretched”, Lady Nugent described them as “enthusiasts” of their religion. While this term may have a negative connotation it still indicated that she believed the natives to be deeply committed to their beliefs, which would be hard to change.

Soon after arriving in India Lady Nugent was able to make a connection to the local population because of admiration for their religious practices. Whereas before she had simply written off the slave customs as savage, in this instance she respected the devotion of South Asians, even if she found it to be mistaken. It did not take long after her arrival in India for Lady Nugent to form a connection with and develop some level of respect for the native population. This connection was important for setting the tone for the duration of her stay. Because Lady Nugent placed such importance on religion, she could not help but appreciate the fact that India population displayed deep piety. In fact the realization of the devotion and piety of South Asians to their religion, posed a problem for a woman who had previously conceived herself as a bringer of the “truth”, a spiritual guide. It would not be until much later that the government began actively to support missionaries in India, even though the origins of the movement are apparent much earlier.

Nugent believed that there was little she could do to interfere with the local social structure that she was not part of, the caste system. The caste system, a term the British imperialists created to make sense of the complex hierarchy of India, separated the native population into distinct groups, and had a religious component.

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95 Nugent, A Journal from the Year 1811-1815, Vol.1, 71-77.
96 Nugent, Journal from the Year 1811-1815, Vol.1, 75.
At one point Lady Nugent despaired because there were those, including one of her servants, who wished to convert to Christianity but they decided not to because doing so would have made them lose their caste. Once one lost their caste they became an outcast in society. While she was upset that individuals who desired to convert would not do so, Lady Nugent believed there was little that she could do to change the situation.\textsuperscript{98} She stated as much and though it bothered her she did not even attempt to remedy the situation. This passivity reveals a change from her commitment to the work of conversion from the Jamaican days. In Jamaica there was a one major social divide, between black and white, or more generally, free and enslaved, that mattered. In India, however, she realized that the social structure was diverse, and distinct from the one imposed by the British. She was experiencing a different type of empire in India that limited her in ways that she had not encountered in Jamaica. Whereas in Jamaica if had been a social construct that she believed did not accurately reflect the values of the British Empire she would have, for the most part, felt comfortable critiquing and remedying it. In Jamaica at times what prevented her from expressing her opinions vocally was her gender. In India her gender but also her race and her position in the Imperial hierarchy suppressed her views. To express her opinion about the caste system would have potentially offended some of the natives and this would have been detrimental to British interests.

Whereas before she had served not only as example for the colony but also as the agent of empire who brought civilization and Christianity, India posed a new challenge for Lady Nugent. This challenge reflected the British position as a whole in India. Lady Nugent related the story of the murder of six travelers in one region of India at the hands of locally respected men who were believed to be holy men. The British authorities wanted very much to exact justice, but there was little confidence that they could do so without raising local ire and creating a dangerous situation.\textsuperscript{99} At this time local law was still respected by the British to some degree and the law was in turn based on complex religious beliefs and customs, which few in the

\textsuperscript{98} Nugent, \textit{Journal from the Year 1811-1815}, Vol. 1, 95-96.
Company would have been fit to navigate.\textsuperscript{100} In India the British were concerned about the majority population, and chose to respect them. This respect is reflected in the policies of Gilbert Elliot Murray Kynynmound, the first earl of Minto and the Governor-General of India from 1807 to 1813, who desired to “\textit{preserve the social order, rather than to reform it}.” He wanted to interfere as little as possible in the existing social order.\textsuperscript{101} Nugent’s own deference to local customs is further illustrated later in her Indian travels, when Lady Nugent noted how upsetting the pagan noises were, but that “it can’t be helped; the native customs must not be interfered with.”\textsuperscript{102} Once again Lady Nugent had to consider a new audience that was not applicable to her situation in Jamaica, a native population.

Lady Nugent understood that respect for local customs and people was necessary in governing of India. As mentioned, the respect echoed the current administration of the colony, as led by Lord Minto. Minto explicitly stated in a number of documents that he was not supportive of Christian missionaries. He believed that any conversion of the natives to Christianity would be best take place gradually rather than because of “any undue influence or exertions of authority, which are never to be resorted to in such cases.”\textsuperscript{103}

Nugent understood that losing one’s caste and thus becoming an outcast to society created an impediment to the project of having the native convert, no matter how much she, or they, may have desired it. The respect that she had for the piety of the South Asians and their dedication to their religion is apparent in her reaction to the caste system and her acceptance that she could not meddle with it. Before native traditions and customs would not have been an issue, for the most part, to consider. India however was proving to be entirely different for Lady Nugent because of the very existence of a native population. The distinction is apparent from a variety of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{100} Karl de Schweinitz Jr, \textit{The Rise & Fall of British India: Imperialism as Inequality} (London: Meuthen, 1983), 146.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Michael Edwardes, \textit{British India 1772-1947}, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Nugent, \textit{Journal from the Year 1811-1815}, 256.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Ramsay Muir, \textit{The Making of British India, 1756-1858 described in a series of dispatches, treaties, statutes, and other documents}, (Manchester: University Press, 1923), 251.
\end{itemize}
instances in which Lady Nugent’s actions and words suggest that she realized India was different and must be treated as such.

Given that the length of her length of residence in Jamaica was comparable to that in India and the capacity in which she visited these places, with her husband in an appointed position, it seems natural that Lady Nugent would draw comparisons between the two colonies. Since both locations were so exotic and different from her home it seems that she might have compared the two in terms of people and customs, but the comparisons stay at a rather superficial level, never really venturing beyond landscape or climate. At one point she noted that the thunder and lightning were not nearly as bad as they had experienced in the West Indies. In the other few comparisons that she did draw between the two colonies, she always referred to Jamaica in the broader sense, the West Indies. This generalizing of Jamaica in term of geography or general region along with the shallow comparisons she drew depersonalizes her experience to some extent. Moreover, while the customs of the Indian natives and the Jamaican slaves were different, she viewed both groups as inferior and it is a wonder she did not mention something of this nature in her daily writings. The only mention she made was noting how important it is in India, like in the West Indies, to remain regular in one’s attendance to church when it was possible and to remain devout to the Christian faith. By choosing not to draw comparisons between the two colonies, Lady Nugent recognized the inherent differences in circumstances between Jamaica and India. She did not draw comparisons because she realized the situations were incomparable. In fact the only similarity in her entries had nothing to do with the slave or native populations of their respective colonies, but rather the white British subjects. This group was the only constant in both situations and thus the only thing Lady Nugent felt comfortable comparing.

Although she did not reclaim the role she had in Jamaica as the bearer of spiritual truth, Lady Nugent did reclaim the role of ambassador, though in a much different way. Lady Nugent made constant references to visiting and entertaining

105 Nugent, Journal from the Year 1811-1815, 93.
local (and respected) officials and leaders. Her social contacts included a number of rajas, as well as many women who were well respected in their communities. In these instances, she set up an exchange, much like she had with Madame Le Clerc a decade earlier. Upon visiting a local begum, and paying “the usual eastern compliments,” Lady Nugent watched as the begum smokes her hookah, a habit Lady Nugent did not like to see women take up. She said nothing to let the begum know of her displeasure, however, and the women continued their visit.106 The spirit of tolerance that had been a marker of the British Empire in the eighteenth century was still evident as this point, especially in India.107 While this visit had the women exchange nothing more than words, there were many instances that Lady Nugent described receiving much more tangible items. In fact, a few days later, another meeting between the two women resulted in the exchanging of rings, which signified “a token of friendship” and made the women “sisters.”108 These exchanges of gifts and friendship indicate more than a spirit of tolerance, however. Once again, her unwillingness to vocally comment on what she viewed as unacceptable behavior hints at how Maria Nugent understood her position in India in relation to the natives. Lady Nugent had to modify her behavior and at least appear to accept the women’s habits that she would have vocally criticized in Jamaica. Lady Nugent had a new audience. While in Jamaica it was merely the white population that needed to accept her, it was crucial that both the white and native population in India approved of her performance. In Jamaica the slaves were only spectators that were expected to accept the performance without qualms, but this was not the case in India. The natives had a choice and Maria Nugent recognized this difference and changed herself to reflect her cognizance of reality of the situation.

Although some exchanges were acceptable many times Lady Nugent refused gifts because of how the situation might appear to others. In one instance, a rajah sent flowers, along with sweetmeats and a diamond ring to Lady Nugent, but she “of course” refused the last item. She noted this was the second time that this particular

107 Schweinitz Jr., The Rise & Fall of British India, 146.
rajah had sent her such an extravagant gift. She assumed he desired to curry some favor with Sir Nugent and that he believed that her acceptance of such a gift would ensure this.\textsuperscript{109} While her husband was not the Governor of India, his position as head of the Indian Army was one that commanded respect.\textsuperscript{110} This example implies that the native elite saw Lady Nugent as an extension, though in an informal capacity, of her husband, or at the very least her understanding of the situation suggests she saw herself this way. Although it was acceptable, even beneficial to the British cause, to exchange of gifts and make acquaintances with the natives, it was not permissible to accept extravagant gifts. In Jamaica Lady Nugent had also been involved in diplomacy in an unofficial capacity. She also saw no problem in sitting upon a throne in a tiara, which signified her preeminent position. Now in India Lady Nugent’s role had changed because the native population had significant political power, which meant she had to be more discreet and careful with her actions than she had before. In India she was more than a mistress of her household, her role was much more akin to a visiting dignitary. While she had filled the role of ambassadress in Jamaica, it was on a much less routine basis. Moreover this example again underscores Maria Nugent’s desire for the native population in India to buy her performance. She had to strike the perfect balance with regard to accepting gifts. It was important that Lady Nugent not offend the local rulers, but at the same time she had to know when her actions could be misconstrued and in turn reflect badly on the British Empire.

It was not enough for Lady Nugent to merely respect local customs. At times she became an active participant in them. In her diary she notes that she attended a nautch ceremony, in which local girls performed a variety of dances.\textsuperscript{111} When the slaves had engaged in their traditions in Jamaica, Lady Nugent had been content to sit at home and do nothing more than observe. Now she was actively trying to engage with the culture. The necessity of having to engage with a local culture resulted in her being able to form deeper bonds with the people and India as a

\textsuperscript{109} Nugent, \textit{A Journal from the Years 1811-1815}, Vol. 2, 104-105
\textsuperscript{110} Schweinitz, \textit{The Rise & Fall of British India}, 132.
\textsuperscript{111} Nugent, \textit{A Journal from the Years 1811-1815}, Vol. 2, 249
whole, as compared to Jamaica. It is also a very real example of her literally performing for the native population by going beyond the realm of a curious spectator who was seated at a distance.

One can see the higher level of interest she had in the “curiosities” found in India than in Jamaica, simply by her desire to bring back so many gifts to show her children and friends. Her earlier trip gave no indication that there was anything unique or different that she wished to bring home to her family. By forcing her out of her comfort zone and into roles that were not applicable to her residence in Jamaica, where she was only supposed to uphold European standards of decorum, a different Lady Nugent appeared, one who experienced empire in a completely different way than previously and thus imagined her role differently. She understood her position in India as less of a model of behavior for the entire colony and more as one just for her fellow countrymen. Because she was less assured of the exact manner in which she fit into the political structure of empire. In Jamaica it was clear that she was one of, if not the, most important woman on the island because of her husband’s position. In India his position, while important, was far from being the most prestigious. Moreover, in India there was a wholly different consideration than in Jamaica, a native population. The addition of this factor makes it less clear where Lady Nugent fit in the hierarchy. In her own understanding she was superior culturally, but not necessarily politically, and this was an issue she was forced to contend with.

Of course, in India as well as in Jamaica Lady Nugent was expected to act this way the part of a proper British woman. In India it was expected that she just had to set the example and be act as an agent to a smaller number of people and merely be one of a number of representatives of the British people. While she was cognizant that she could not do much to change the native population, Lady Nugent was sorely concerned about the state of the British subjects in India. She often disparaged the problematic nature of the social balls, because of the trap that they presented for the young British officers stationed in India. Lady Nugent noted that many native

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women attended these balls with, in her opinion, the intention of snaring
themselves husbands. She became determined to do something about this, though
since she wrote nothing more about that incident she may have realized that her
efforts would be futile.

If she could not convince the men to be careful about becoming involved with
Indian women, then the least she could do was make the best of a tragic situation.
Lady Nugent was approached about the possibility of making a Gentoo woman a
Christian as she was to be married to the drum major of Lady Nugent’s escort.
Despite her earlier reservations about such matches, Lady Nugent could not help
but seem happy that she had gained a new recruit to Christianity. On the day of
the wedding Lady Nugent made a present of a dress and ring to the bride. Lady
Nugent believed that the woman was of good character and hoped that her
conversion would be an example to her fellow natives. This conversion to
Christianity was only feasible because the woman wanted to convert. The woman’s
conversion reflects Lord Minto’s policy that the only way to secure conversion
would be if it came internally, not externally. The example also demonstrates the
limited ways in which Lady Nugent could act as a spiritual guide in India. In Jamaica
she had been so concerned with fulfilling a humanitarian aspect of empire through
religion. Lady Nugent undoubtedly wanted to do this in India but she was more
limited in expressing her humanitarianism because of the need to consider the
wishes of the native population. In India she had to wait to be asked before she
could act.

While a considerable portion of the population was what Lady Nugent
referred to as Hindu, some were devoted Muslims. Rather than lump the two groups
together, Lady Nugent made various comments about the differences between the
two groups. At one point she noted that the crew of the vessel she was traveling on
was divided between these two groups, composed in different castes, and the
problems this entailed when it came to dining. It would have been an “abomination”

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113 Nugent, A Journal from the Years 1811-1815, Vol. 1, 122.
for members of a caste to “eat out of vessels that had been used by others” of a different caste. The natives would rather go hungry, and this distressed Lady Nugent so much that she gave the servants money to buy their own food so that they might have something to eat.\textsuperscript{116} Lady Nugent realized she could not command the servants to ignore their social rules for convenience sake; the only remedy was to find a solution that did not offend local customs. She understood and respected local values, for the most part. Whereas in Jamaica it was her duty to uplift, this role was perhaps not as viable or necessary in India. At the very least she could not force it upon the Indian population. Whereas in Jamaica Lady Nugent viewed empire as the tool to uplift those less fortunate, in India she had to watch for opportunities for this, responding only if the locals sought her out. She was less focused on conversion and more heavily engaged in other roles that she had been in Jamaica, but in a far less prominent fashion.

Most of the social and political considerations for Lady Nugent in India did not involve international affairs or people. Whereas France had been of the utmost concern in Jamaica, the same cannot be said in India. References to France are rare; in fact the most relevant example comes with “the joyful news of the abdication of Buonaparte, and the restoration of the Bourbons.”\textsuperscript{117} Other than that, there are few references to global events or other nations, save for the frequent expressions of Lady Nugent’s desire to return home and reunite with her children. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Sir Nugent’s position in India did not allow him to be as privy to as much information of international concern as he had been in Jamaica where he ranked the highest politically. Moreover, France had been a chief concern in Jamaica because of the geographic location of its colony on St. Domingo. There was no such (significant) French holding that threatened India to the same degree. Additionally, the role of diplomat was often taken with people who did not live in Jamaica. In India, however, Lady Nugent was constantly acting in an unofficial diplomatic role, because the entire country, while a part of the British holdings, had multiple power structures (the East India Company and the Mughal Empire) and

\textsuperscript{116} Nugent, \textit{A Journal from the Years 1811-1815}, Vol. 2, 178
\textsuperscript{117} Nugent, \textit{A Journal From the Years 1811-1815}, Vol. 2, 306.
thus required the continuous maintaining of favorable relations within the country. To be sure the roles taken by Lady Nugent were considerably different than those expected of her before.

Upon leaving India, Lady Nugent was overcome with great sadness, even deeper than when she had left Jamaica. This reaction is somewhat surprising when one considers that it had been years since she had last seen her children. Given how devoted she was to them it seems the despair would not exceed that felt previously. Her departure was so overwhelming, however, that she was overcome with a flood of tears. While she was leaving Lady Nugent did her best to avoid seeing as many people as possible, because her sadness was so great. This strategy did not work, however, and she was “forced” to pay her respects and say her goodbyes to many of the gentlemen that were present to see her and her husband off.\textsuperscript{118}

What was the most likely cause of the difference in emotion between her leaving Jamaica and her leaving India? In India, because of the structure and power dynamic of the British Empire where the majority population was on a more equal footing and their customs respected and allowed, Lady Nugent bonded on a deeper level with the people and the country. She could recognize and appreciate characteristics, such as their religious devotion, because they were allowed to remain and grow. Comparatively, in Jamaica, the mode of empire necessitated a high level of subjugation upon the majority of the population and thus the only culture or structures that could flourish were those imposed by the British. Therefore, the replication of culture, though far from exact and perfect, as well as the institution of slavery, did not allow Lady Nugent to bond with the population of the Jamaica in the same way that she did in India. Interestingly enough though, it was still her husband’s position that dictated the role that she was supposed to fill in India, but this was also contingent upon a factor not important in Jamaica, the culture of the natives.

\textsuperscript{118} Nugent, \textit{A Journal From the Years 1811-1815}, Vol. 2, 354-355.
Conclusion

Maria Nugent returned to England and lived out the rest of her days (another nineteen years) in the nation that she had dutifully served alongside her husband. While her husband had filled the official role and thus was the only one of them to gain formal recognition, Lady Nugent’s contributions were just as significant. She was so devoted to the imperial cause (and her husband) that she was willing to leave her beloved children behind in the care of family friends. What the exact purpose of the British Empire was however is revealed to be more than just enabling global trade and exploitation for economic purposes. Her travels provided her the opportunity to be benevolent and help others she saw as less fortunate. Lady Nugent’s duties might not have been explained to her for either of her travels, but it seemed that she understood them well. In Jamaica she, as an extension of her husband, was to act as the entertainer and perform informal diplomacy when necessary. As an informal representative of the British Empire and because of propriety, she not only acted in a decorous manner herself, but also expected others to do the same and intervened when she felt they were not. Lady Nugent took on the burden of revealing the truth to the less fortunate black population. She did this without questioning whether it was right or justifiable.

At different times in her travels the word family came to encompass a variety of people, whether related by blood or simply connected through common cultural threads. Her world could expand or contract depending on forces beyond her control and would do so within a matter of days. The role she filled and the manner in which she did so was contingent upon a variety of factors, not least of all her husband’s official title. In India she represented English civilization, but her goal was different than it had been in Jamaica. Instead of forcing the native population to accept the British structures in an attempt to better their lives, the most important goal in India was to maintain friendly relations between the British and the natives.

Whereas before Lady Nugent had been the bringer of civilization and taken little in return, in India she engaged in more of a cultural exchange. She was not able
to force her institutions upon the natives and this resulted in her taking away more (culturally) from the experience with a greater appreciation for cultural difference, even if her conclusions were that the British culture was superior. This exchange helped to create deeper, more meaningful bonds with the country and the people than she had experienced previously in Jamaica. The case of Lady Nugent illustrates the individual experience of empire and how the sense of one's self-understanding changes dependent upon the location, even if in theory their status is not overwhelming different than before. In both places she was in positions of privilege, as the wife of a high-ranking British official. The only difference was the position of the majority of the population and the extent to which the British believed it was feasible to promote their way of life abroad.

Although some people were able to refashion themselves in the colonies, Lady Nugent did not have the same opportunities. This however does not make her experience within the colonies any less meaningful. Rather her story illustrates the considerable impact the imperial structure could have on its own subjects and how this could vary depending on the colony and the state of the local population. It is Lady Nugent’s experience, and that of others like her, which demonstrates the incredibly dynamic nature of self-understanding, something that could undergo innumerable changes and often did. She may have always been stuck in the role of the colonizer, but what this means and how Lady Nugent exercised power in this role was far from static. Moreover, while empires enabled some individuals to refashion themselves, this was not always the case. Empire was not transformative for all of those who entered it. There were times that boundaries between colonizer and colonized were tested and even crossed, but the extent to which this happened was wholly dependent on many factors, most of which were beyond her control.

Women especially were limited in their ability to refashion themselves. They could negotiate a higher standing in society in the colonies than might have been possible at home, but there were still expectations of their behavior. In Jamaica, while it was important for male slave owners to find a balance between mastery and tyranny, which meant understanding when brute force was an acceptable form of enforcement, women had to understand mastery in a different way. Those women
who did own slaves likely hired males to oversee the general slave population on the plantations, but women were not completely removed from the slaves, as they were crucial figures in running the household. In this regard the mastery of the slaves was, as demonstrated by Lady Nugent, contingent upon the success one had in civilizing the slaves in the likeness of the British. It would have been unacceptable for Lady Nugent to wield the whip as the master of her servants, but her tireless effort to Christianize the slaves and desire for the whites of the island to set an example are her own ways of reinforcing the imperial structure and validating her own control of the slaves.

In many circumstances, thought not all, it was a man’s physical dominance over his slaves gained him respect in the colonies, women were forced, because of social expectations they could not completely escape no matter how far they were from the metropole, to find their own means of dominating their slaves, and in this case Lady Nugent used culture. Like the balance the men had to find between mastery and tyranny, Lady Nugent realized that her own cultural mastery had limits. She and her husband were cognizant that in order to keep the majority population under control they had to allow some slave customs and traditions no matter how distasteful or barbaric they found them. In this example, the imperial structure is not overly flexible; there are more opportunities for social mobility, but these are constrained by expectations as to an acceptable manner to obtain a higher position. There was still a level of propriety that was expected. Lady Nugent noted many instances in which women act in an unacceptable manner, but the frequent mentions of this are not indicative that it was more prevalent than at home. Her options for socializing were more limited in Jamaica and thus she might have run into these behaviors more frequently than at home where she had greater options for socializing.

Through imperial figures such as Lady Nugent we can bring women to the forefront of the colonial experience in the early nineteenth century. Scholarship typically discusses women and their roles in regards to the metropole during this period. Historians such as Kathleen Wilson underscore the important role women played in all facets of British life, including politics, even if their role was often in an
informal capacity. Likewise, in the colonies it is often suggested that women were an important agents of empire. Yet, women as representatives of culture (especially associated with religion) are typically relegated to a later part of the nineteenth century when their activities became more prevalent in Jamaica and India. The reason for this surge in the numbers of women is partially because of government encouragement. The government recognized the important role women played in civilizing and maintaining cultural hegemony among British colonizers. Lady Nugent’s experience however not only emphasizes that women played this role fairly early on, but that they filled other important capacities as well.

In Jamaica Lady Nugent did her best to act as a representative of British culture, not only to the slave population but to the Creole one as well. She often reinforced behaviors she deemed appropriate and condemned those behaviors that were not. In India though Lady Nugent’s actions were much more constrained as the native population was on more equal footing with the British imperialists than the subjugated population of Jamaica. This forced Lady Nugent to become more of a cultural diplomat. Her frequent meetings with local elites and the tolerance, though not necessarily acceptance, of local customs underscore this point.

Women, especially those like Lady Nugent who were privileged within the colonial system, played important political roles. She was often forced to fill a diplomatic role, whether with local elites in India or with the French in Jamaica. This role was conducted under the guise of the exchanging gifts or hosting social functions and balls, all of which were fundamental to maintaining the political structure. Her potential political influence was not just apparent to Lady Nugent. The gifts that she exchanged St. Dominguan elites or Indian begums entailed a was recognition on the part of the gift givers that she, despite her lack of official title, could be crucial to good political relations. This role highlights the importance of social relations and connections. These ties provided opportunities for some women to take part in the political sphere, but in a more acceptable form. From Lady Nugent’s story what mattered in the colonies above all was the maintenance of friendly relations and social ties, whether with other Europeans or between the British and the natives.
The British Empire operated very differently in Jamaica than it did in India. This does not mean that the two colonies should be discussed separately from one another as many choose to do. Instead of creating a dichotomy between the British Empire of the West Indies and that of the East Indies, it is necessary to explore them as two halves of the same whole. They may have operated differently, but most of this can be attributed to the different economies. This empire operated with varying levels of tolerance towards native customs, at least in the early nineteenth century. The level of tolerance in part depended upon the situation of the majority population of the colony in question. Women were not the only carriers of culture; men filled this role too. In fact it seems that perhaps the most important factor in maintaining culture is the availability of familiar institutions. Much has been made of the negotiable nature of empire. Kathleen Wilson has emphasized that the colonies offered opportunities for both men and women, but she overemphasized the extent to which individuals could challenge social norms. Those who were most successful in Jamaican society, at least in Lady Nugent’s estimation, were those who most closely conformed to the British ideal of social propriety, especially in serving as an example to the slave population. In India what mattered most was being an ideal representation of British culture, while having respect for the local culture. In each case the British woman were expected to behave, to some degree, in line with the metropole ideal, which stressed showing restraint and not giving into and engaging in local culture and traditions of the colony.

Although the capital could not enforce social or political norms and policy as directly as the Crown would have preferred, those who travelled to the colonies always kept one eye on the capital. What bound these colonizers together was a common culture and experience, or at least a belief that they were similar. While some of the colonizers may not have been able to engage in society in the metropole, there is no doubt that they had some conception of the behavior expected in such instances. Thus while in the colonies they may not have directly replicated British culture, they did their best to mimic it to some degree. Women then, despite their lackluster numbers, were integral to the early nineteenth century British imperial scheme. They were agents of empire who brought with them culture. They were
able to negotiate different positions or roles for themselves even if they were limited by the means that they could do so. They used their constraints to their advantage and to claim a place for themselves in the colonial world. Lady Nugent used religion to assert dominance over the slaves in Jamaica, and understood that meetings with local elite women in India and hosting balls and functions for rajas served a dual purpose. Not only was she maintaining friendly social relations, but this also served to enable the political and economic goals of empire. Politics and economic commerce would have been hampered if relations between figures such as Lady Nugent and natives had deteriorated. While they may have been few in number during this period, the impact and influence of women such as Lady Nugent is crucial to understanding what enabled the British Empire to function in seemingly very different parts of the world.
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