THE GOVERNOR'S STORY

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THE GOVERNOR'S STORY

THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF DAME HILDA BYNOE

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project, when I continued to have questions about some of the family stories surrounding the early life of Ma Harriet (Mayet), Dame Hilda Bynoe's maternal ancestor, my questions resulted in the coming together of various members of the family, descendants of Mayet and her children. They contacted each other by email, and copied me in on the correspondence, explaining ancestral links between the McGilchrists, Preudhommes, Archers and various other families – in Grenada and locations throughout the world – connected with Dame Hilda Bynoe's maternal family line.

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FOREWORD

In *Biographer and Subject: A Tale of Two Narratives,* Allen Hibbard suggests a dialectical relationship between two stories in the crafting of a biography: "The enterprise of writing biography necessarily involves two distinct, yet related narrative strands: the story of the subject and the story of the biographer coming to know, structure, and recreate the life of the subject." Hibbard notes that, "biography itself, as a genre, usually effaces or even erases the stories of biographers' sleuthing and journeys in the interest of creating a clear, coherent, linear narrative of the subject's life."[1] Hibbard seems particularly interested in the biographies that do not seek to disguise the biographer's role, but to acknowledge its effect on the shaping of the narrative. As I will outline below, Hibbard's focus is particularly pertinent to my own history in coming to this biography.

Raising a rather different but connected issue, the American historian Barbara Tuchman writes, "…insofar as I have used biography in my work, it has been less for the sake of the individual subject than as a vehicle for exhibiting an age."[2] From the start of my involvement in this project, the life story of Dame Hilda Bynoe seemed an excellent vehicle for exploring the age and the region that shaped her, but this broader conception of the biographical subject meant that I had to consider my role even more carefully.

This was not least because, throughout the writing of this biography, Dame Hilda had very clear perceptions about the story she wanted to tell. After her responses to the first draft, I began to wonder whether my role was largely that of an amanuensis, and I began to think about the story of the abolitionist biographer Susanna Strickland's role in the writing of *The History of Mary Prince* in 1831. Was Strickland simply the one who held the pen or did she have a more significant editorial role? Historians have questioned how far

Strickland shaped Mary Prince's orally narrated story into something that presented an unambiguous polemic for abolition, even if this meant casting Prince in a role of victimhood that denied her a degree of agency.[3]

My own connection with this biography began, I suppose, in 1968, when my high school, St Joseph's Convent, St George's, Grenada, was, like the rest of the country, abuzz with the news that Dr Hilda Gibbs Bynoe, Grenadian resident in neighbouring Trinidad, was to be Grenada's new Governor, replacing the British national Sir Ian Turbott, who was then in office. The complication was that the person who suggested Dr Bynoe for appointment to office was Grenada's Premier during the last days of the British colonial system, a flamboyant and controversial political figure. Exciting, confusing, inspiring, disturbing, the news of Dr Bynoe's prospective appointment seemed to my high school classmates and me to have all the elements of good drama. It disturbed because Premier Eric Gairy and my generation of youth were engaged in bitter conflict, but the appointment of a woman Governor, and one of our own, also seemed to signal change and say something posititive about the role of women in the shaping of postcolonial Caribbean societies. This aspect of the announcement loomed large in our imaginations.

Dr Bynoe took office as Governor of Grenada on June 8th, the same day that the assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery in the USA. Two months earlier, Martin Luther King had also been slain. Perhaps it is understandable that, given the tenor of the times, my generation of students at the St Joseph's Convent High School, St George's, Grenada, would be, in our teenage certainties, admiring but distant, impressed yet offhand.

One of the surprise finds of my research was an article in a local Grenada newspaper, *The Torchlight*, reporting that Grenada's new Governor visited St Joseph's Convent, and "was welcomed to the school by sixth form student, Miss Merle Collins".[4] This was a time of tremendous political upheaval in the island but I have no memory of delivering the welcome. I contacted a 1968 classmate to ask if she remembered details relating to Dr Bynoe's visit. She did not, though she could also remember that the visit took place and could recall the local and international political tensions of the period. As far as I

know, that early connection has no role in my responding enthusiastically when asked to write Dame Hilda's biography. Perhaps I was simply as fascinated by the story of Dr Bynoe then as I am now. But there are other perspectives to consider in this recounting.

In the years after 1968, I had been a young woman actively involved in the popular agitation of the period. I had written about that period and its aftermath in my novel, *Angel* (1987/2010).[5] I had undoubted views on the politics of the period. How far did I want to edit and analyse Dame Hilda's story? Whatever the answer to this, I came to realise that, as Hibbard indicates, there remain questions of choice and interpretation. Indeed, there are two stories, and unless the decision is taken to render them as two separate accounts – one possibly a ghosted autobiography, the other in interview format with roles clearly demarcated – there has to be negotiation to produce what Hibbard refers to as a coherent, linear narrative. What appears here is the story that negotiation has produced, a story which is, in my estimation, an important one because it makes us think creatively about postcolonial becoming.

What became clear was that Dame Hilda's story could not be told without reference to its wider, indeed worldwide historical context. 1968, the year in which Dr Hilda Bynoe was appointed governor, was also, coincidentally, the year I graduated from high school. It was the year in which political unrest in Grenada was a microcosm of the socio-political upheavals arising throughout the world.

The writer Mark Kurlansky describes 1968 as "unique" because "people were rebelling over disparate issues and had in common only that desire to rebel, ideas about how to do it, a sense of alienation from the established order, and a profound distaste for authoritarianism in any form."[6] Kurlansky documents such elements of the challenge to the established order as the civil rights struggle in the USA, opposition to the Vietnam war, student unrest in Europe and the rise of Palestinian demands for national self-determination. He explains the global situation in this way:

> Four historic factors merged to create 1968: the example of the civil rights movement, which at the time was so new and original, a generation that felt so different and so alienated that it rejected all forms of authority, a war that was hated so universally around the world that it provided a cause for all the rebels seeking one; and all of this occurring at the moment that television was coming of age but was still new enough

> not to have yet become controlled, distilled, and packaged the way that it is today. In 1968 the phenomenon of a same-day broadcast from another part of the world was in itself a gripping new technological wonder.[7]

Kurlansky also names 1968 as "an important year for women, not because of skirt lengths but because of events such as Muriel Siebert announcing on January 1 that she had become the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange in its 175-year history."[8]

He writes, too, in the book, *1968: The world Transformed*, that: "the events of 1968 happened within national contexts yet took place across the globe – from Berkeley to Berlin, Bangkok to Buenos Aires, Cairo to Cape Town, Paris to Tokyo. In addition, many contemporaries – particularly students and intellectuals – believed that their actions were linked to a global revolt against capitalism, imperialism and colonialism that spanned the First, Second and Third Worlds."[9] Throughout the world, there was student protest against the war in Vietnam and these protests sometimes became linked with local agitation against governments considered too conservative and too willing to defend the status quo. In West Germany, student activists confronted the conservative media and the German government. In France in May 1968, there were violent confrontations between police and students, with students standing their ground and fighting back and a surge of worker occupations of factories. It was possible to believe in that year that capitalism and neo-imperialism were tottering.

The Caribbean was caught up in this ferment. There had been enough time following independence in Jamaica and Trinidad (in 1962), for youth, radical intellectuals and workers to see a new elite securing power but showing reluctance to decolonise inherited social, economic and cultural structures.

In October 1968, prominent Guyanese historian Walter Rodney, lecturer and activist at the Mona, Jamaica campus of the University of the West Indies, was barred from Jamaica by the government of Prime Minister Hugh Shearer. In Trinidad, an array of radical groups from Black cultural nationalist NJAC (National Joint Action Committee), to Dr Lloyd Best's[10] Tapia House Movement were developing critiques of and popular opposition to the politics of the towering and increasingly authoritarian figure of Prime Minister Dr Eric

Williams that eventually manifested in the Black Power Uprising of 1970. In Grenada, there were demonstrations against the government of Premier Eric Matthew Gairy, who, although he disdainfully advised "Black Power" advocates that he had been the country's first proponent of "Black Power",[11] was considered by many among the new generation of youth to be repressive and dictatorial. For students from smaller islands study in Jamaica in particular was a radicalising experience, and an affirmation that individual island struggles were part of a greater whole.

For young people and students in the Caribbean there was also the example of Cuba. In 1968, for the ninth anniversary of its revolution, Cuba erected "a sixty-foot high mural of the thirty-eight-year-old Argentine Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who had been killed in Bolivia two months earlier while carrying out what Cuba considered his revolutionary duties in the struggles of neighbouring countries.[12] 1968 was a year in which young people, exposed to ideas of revolution and change, willed much for their own countries.

For all Caribbean countries, then, this was a transitional period. Officially, these were the last days of colonial rule. Some of the islands had already achieved Independence – Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago in 1962, and Barbados and Guyana in 1966 – and other countries of the Caribbean were also moving towards acquiring legal status as Independent states. The new guard, therefore, was being assembled for a leadership role but the indicators of transition were unsettling.

So what I set out to do was write an individual story, a family story, an island story but to see these elements in the context of world change. The word was not yet in vogue in 1968, but this narrative, one of whose subtexts is the theme of migration – both out of and within the Caribbean – inevitably brings to mind the term "globalization". As Thomas Klak notes, "Some globalization writers argue that the world is 'shrinking'; this socially and spatially uneven trend is nothing new to Caribbean people".[13] Klak notes that the term globalization is sometimes reduced by scholars to a discussion about migration – and certainly Dr Bynoe's story presents an experience relating to what Klak refers to as this "compression of the world's peoples, places, and nation-states, as well as a blurring of their territorial boundaries"[14] – but beyond the story of migration in the creation and development of a Caribbean diaspora, perhaps the

largest context for this narrative is the fact that Caribbean people have been experiencing the political,cultural and economic consequences of globalization for over four hundred years.

In the end, though, this is a story of a significant individual, and my narrative asks: Who was she, this young Grenadian woman who had returned from the neighbouring island, Trinidad, to accept the top ceremonial post in a small British Commonwealth nation during the last years of its existence as a colony of Britain? This biography aims to answer that question and to consider the complex interweaving of the personal and the more broadly political in the story of Dame Hilda Bynoe.

Endnotes

1. Alan Hibbard, "Biographer and Subject: A Tale of Two Narratives", *South Central Review,* Johns Hopkins University Press,Volume 23, Number 3, (Fall 2006), pp. 19-36.
2. Barbara Tuchman, "Biography as a Prism of History", quoted in Stephen B. Oates, *Biography as High Adventure: Life writers speak on their art* (The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), p. 93
3. See the introduction of Moira Ferguson to *The History of Mary Prince* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
4. *The Torchlight*. St George's, Grenada: June 10, 1968.
5. My novel, *Angel*, first published by the Women's Press in 1987, and reissued in a revised edition by Peepal Tree Press in 2010, is a fictional exploration of the years from the rise of Gairy to the implosion of the PRG (Provisional Revolutionary Government) and the American invasion.
6. Mark Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked The World* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. xvii.
7. Mark Kurlansky, op.cit,, p. xviii.
8. Kurlansky, p. 20.
9. See *1968: The World Transformed*, Ed. Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 1.

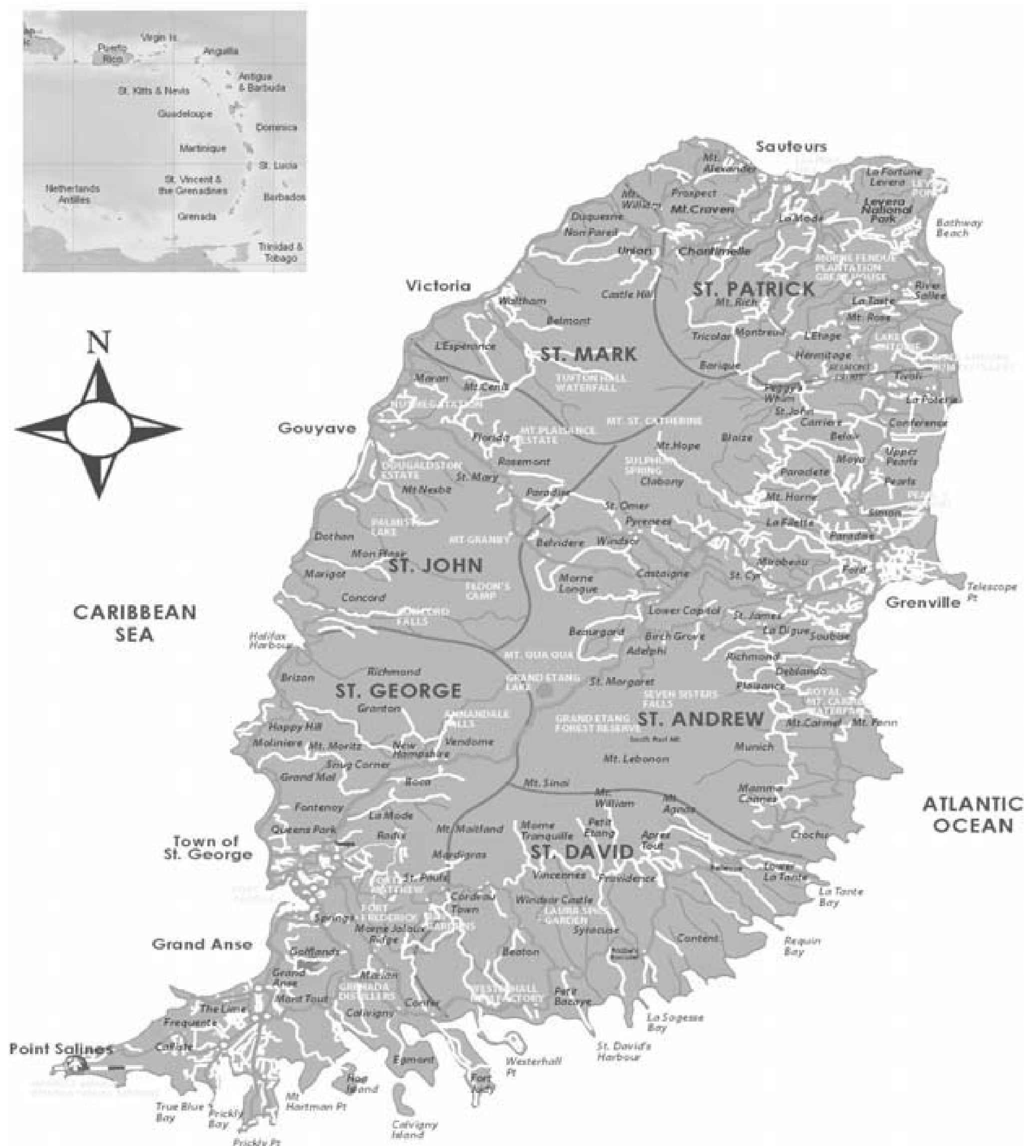
10. See Norman Girvan, "Lloyd Best: A Great Conceptualiser", *Trinidad & Tobago Review,* Port-of-Spain. November, 2005. http://www.normangirvan.info/lloyd-best-a-great-conceptualiser/ and see Gordon Rohlehr, "Remembering Lloyd Best", *Caribbean Review of Books,* March 23, 2007.http://www.meppublishers.com/online/crb/issues/index.php?pid=1073.
11. Radio Broadcast by Sir Eric Gairy, Premier of Grenada, delivered on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th May, 1970.
12. Kurlansky, p. 20.
13. Thomas Klak, *Globalization and Neoliberalism: the Caribbean context* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), p. 5
14. Thomas Klak, *Globalization and Neoliberalism: The Caribbean Context*, pp. 5-13. Klak offers a fascinating discussion of globalization as it affects the Caribbean, moving from the global village and migration aspects of the term to a consideration of Caribbean political economy in a global context, when the term seems less celebratory of Caribbean "global" experience. He observes, "Contrary to the universalistic notion of a 'global village' – in which the world is in various ways coming together, synthesizing, and balancing out, the Caribbean may be better depicted as a region that is increasingly irrelevant in economic and geopolitical terms. At one level, this is an ironic statement. Indeed, Caribbean *people* are more internationally integrated than ever before, thanks to the unprecedented scale of the Caribbean diaspora in North Atlantic countries and the associated remittances. But the massive scale of contemporary emigration and remittances is the result of growing marginalization and pessimism about the economic prospects back home" (p. 13).

CHAPTER ONE
TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERIOD AND THE INDIVIDUAL

On June 8, 1968, Dr Hilda Louisa Bynoe, née Gibbs, a medical doctor resident in Trinidad, was formally appointed to the office of Governor of the Caribbean state of Grenada.[1] This was the highest office in the country, and, until that date, only white male British Colonial Office appointees had held the post. The period marked the beginning of the end of colonial rule as, under the Associated Statehood Act of 1967, Grenada became an "Associated State" of Britain, with control over its internal affairs – Britain retaining responsibility for "any matter which in the opinion of the Government of the United Kingdom relates to defence and external affairs".[2] In 1969, following her appointment as Governor, the Queen bestowed on Dr Bynoe the title Dame Commander of the British Empire,[3] the two actions signifying both colonial patronage *and* colonial disentanglement, making Dame Hilda an overt symbol of the contradictions of postcolonial identity. With her appointment, Dame Hilda inherited the pomp, ceremony and respect due to an office traditionally occupied by a male white representative of the British Crown. As a different sort of representative, female and local-born, time was yet to show how Governor Bynoe would interpret the demands of her office.

With an area of 344 square kilometres or 133 square miles, the State of Grenada comprises the islands Grenada, the largest at 120 square miles, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Originally inhabited by Amerindian peoples and, from the 15th century, claimed, occupied and colonised by various European countries, Grenada shares with other islands in the Caribbean, as well as with Guyana in South America and Belize in Central America, a history of colonisation by Britain and therefore some commonalities of language, culture and historical antecedents.

The demographics of Grenada and neighbouring Caribbean countries followed European demands for labour to cultivate sugar cane



Map of Grenada

fields and exploit other natural resources. The enslaved population in Grenada rose from 525 in 1700 (a period of French colonial control)[4] to 23,536 in 1833, the year in which the British parliament, pressurised by the continuous struggles of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and urged by Europe's awakening conscience, and lessening opposition from the West India interests in the face of decreasing profits, passed an Act for the Abolition of slavery.[5]

As in most neighbouring Caribbean countries, the official end of chattel slavery in Grenada came with Emancipation in August 1838. In the immediate post-Emancipation period, many estates, unable to be competitive, went out of business, and were eventually abandoned. Those who were once enslaved established smallholdings around former estates, laying the foundation for the villages and smallholdings that exist today. Around the middle of the nineteenth century, many of the estates that continued to exist moved from sugar to cocoa and nutmeg production. Meantime, in Carriacou, part of the tri-island state, sugar production was replaced by the production of corn and pigeon peas. In the immediate post-emancipation period, as some Grenadian planters continued to try to keep costs low and make estates viable, there was an attempt to supplement the labour pool with indentured Africans and Indians. Generally, the once enslaved Africans wanted their own plots of land. One observer offered the opinion that "the planter must be well aware that every Negro to whom he is paying wages has at heart a longing and determination sooner or later to possess a piece of land of his own, or at all events to hire and occupy one, which he can cultivate in his own way, and at his own convenience, and not at his employer's dictation. The object of the planter and the labourer are therefore directly opposed one to the other."[6] The historian Alvin Thompson notes that, in the post-Emancipation period, while sugar remained the dominant crop in some countries – Cuba, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad – in others like Grenada, St Vincent, Haiti, Jamaica, it suffered a drastic decline.[7] Small farming, which had started in Grenada even pre-emancipation, developed rapidly in the post-emancipation period. Grenada's terrain was hilly and workers had discovered early that tree crops were successful. According to Pugh and Momsen, "this fact shaped the evolution of agriculture and land tenure after Emancipation on Grenada in a unique way in the region."[8] Several other researchers refer to the development of smallholdings in Grenada and opportu-

nities for those once enslaved to acquire land.[9] Noting that some proprietors developed their failing estates into smaller plots and sold them to the peasantry, one writer comments also on the hardships of the period: "Generally, the post-emancipation century passed by painfully for the Grenadian colony. The vagaries of the world market meant that Grenada's material fortunes ebbed and flowed."[10]

As we try to understand the relationship between such social formations in Grenadian society, and the associated cultural frameworks and social attitudes that had developed by the time of Dr Bynoe's formative years, it is worth considering how the sociologist M.G. Smith characterised the Grenadian society that emerged in the 1950s and 60s. Though from contemporary perspectives M.G. Smith's terminology is sometimes troubling (one notes, for example, the belittling and reductive terms used to characterise traditional African religions), he offers some useful insights. Eschewing broad divisions into classes, Smith settled on the terms "folk" and "elite" to divide the society into broad, diametrically opposed groups. Those he described as "folk" were, generally speaking, "poor in property, resources and skills", and largely of the African and Indian groups who were descended from slaves and indentured servants. His analysis suggests that the folk would adhere to, or have broad sympathies with, aspects of traditional Africa present in the society like the shango (traditional Yoruba religion) and saracca. On the other side were the planting class and those descended from them, whom Smith described as "elites". Smith characterised these groups in the early 1950s as "two sharply different populations whose association traditionally presumed subordination of the majority to the regulating institutions and power of the few."[11] In the society that he saw emerging, there were, Smith assessed, "racial and cultural hybrids" who occupied "the interval between the extremes" .[12] From the end of emancipation to the beginning of the 1950s, Smith argued, there was an accommodation between these two opposed groups, with the "folk" having no political representation. In the 1950s, such representation began to emerge and the uneasy consensus that had existed between these opposing groups since emancipation was over. Generally, according to Smith, "elite" and "folk" were sharply distinguished by their behaviour, ideas, speech, associations, appearance, colour, housing, occupation, status, access to resources, and in other ways."[13] For all the deficiences of Smith's analysis (his neglect of the

dynamics of class formation, and a more complicated relationship between culture and class than he appears to allow) his work does point to features that had an impact on the organisation of classes in the society, on the working class perceptions of itself, on the composition and organisation of the peasantry and on the self-identification of the middle classes. This analysis has a bearing on the attitudes towards and perceptions of the family groups that helped shape Dame Hilda Bynoe's sensibilities. She was proud of her African ancestry and origins among the working people, and her story suggests early association with and continuing sympathy for those described by Smith as the "folk". In an essay examining hegemonic and counter-hegemonic tendencies in the Grenada Revolution of 1979-1983, Gail Pool draws attention to what she terms the "creative base of Grenadian culture" and notes, importantly, that Antonio Gramsci viewed culture as an important part of the formation of ideologies.[14] This perspective might help explain how the Governor's politics were influenced by her interest in ideals and attitudes common among the "folk". One might say that those described by Smith as the folk progressively found a place in the various classes emerging during the post-emancipation period, accommodating themselves to ideas and attitudes extant among the elite whilst also retaining positive attitudes to folk culture. Consonant with this, and reflecting changes in factors such as economic status, levels of education and political influence within the society, there emerged notions such as lower middle class, middle class and other designations such as the "aspiring" working class. These suggest both a more dynamic and complex pattern than M.G. Smith's elite/folk dichotomy and the emergence of challenges to and changes in the nature of the elite. Less reductive than M.G. Smith in their analysis of the changing times during the hundred years after Emancipation, Kaufman et al allow for "a rising black and mixed middle class" in Grenada during the first years of the twentieth century. This group, they noted, "began to challenge both the Crown and the planter class", and included "labor intellectuals" such as T.A. Marryshow.[15] After Marryshow in Grenada came a politician more closely aligned with the folk who worked on the estates, and so more effectively poised to break the uneasy elite/folk consensus.

The post-war period of the late 1940s and 1950s was, for the British Caribbean, a period of increasing localised decision-making

and the emergence of trade unions, mass political parties and political leaders. The progress of political events during this period was influenced by political developments in Britain, where the Labour Government of 1945-51, with a policy shaped by Fabian socialism, and working to develop these ideas within the contradictory framework of colonial imperial policy, gave a degree of support to the idea of increased devolution of power to the colonies.[16]

In some ways, Grenada's modern story of post-war decolonisation, and the journey of Dame Hilda Louisa Bynoe towards the governorship, has its genesis in part in the ascendency of a local-born politician and union leader, Eric Matthew Gairy, who was later to recommend to the British Crown Dr Bynoe's appointment. Dame Hilda's rise also has its genesis in the changing social relations of gender in the twentieth century Caribbean and in particular Caribbean women's perception of their role in politics and development. Feminist scholar Eudine Barriteau includes the Caribbean in her contention that "the philosophical contradictions of liberal ideologies predispose states to institute unjust gender systems."[17] Assessing the changes that took place during the twentieth century, Barriteau concludes that "through a combination of indigenous and external pressures, the evolving Caribbean state has altered women's unequal access to its resources. It has removed, amended or reformed the legal inferiority or dependency assigned to women in constitutions and laws." Like other liberal feminists, Dr Bynoe participated in this challenge to laws that enshrined a notion of women's inferiority. Gloria Payne-Banfield, who was a prominent civil servant in Grenada for a number of years, states that, "Dame Hilda's appointment provided Grenadian and Caribbean women with inspiration, encouragement and hope in those critical years prior to the 1975 United Nations International Women's Conference (Mexico), when the clamour for the recognition of equal rights for women was, at last, receiving some attention throughout the international community".[18]

In a more controversial way, Eric Gairy may also be said to have had some impact on the twentieth century status of women. In fact, as we consider Hilda Bynoe within the age that produced her, it is also important to trace Eric Gairy's journey towards his decision to appoint a woman governor.

In July 1950, recently returned from Aruba, where he had been a migrant worker, Eric Gairy, then twenty-nine, registered a workers'

organisation, the Manual and Mental Workers' Union. Gairy was then a vocal representative of Grenadian youth, the children of the working people determined to struggle against perceived injustices meted out to their own and their parents' generation of workers. By 1 August, 1950, Eric Gairy's new party, the Grenada People's Party, held its first meeting in celebration of Emancipation Day, the day in 1838 when Africans in the West Indies secured the legal termination of their enslavement.[19] In this recognition of the history of his country's working peoples, Eric Gairy was well ahead of his time, since events celebrating Emancipation Day gained wider currency in Grenada only during the first few years of the twenty-first century. Eric Gairy, with a working-class folk sensibility, and having established both union and party, set about organising among and agitating on behalf of estate workers.

In the year following Gairy's organisation of both the union and the political party, on 15 June 1951, the Grenada (Legislative Council) Order in Council, 1951, came into operation. This provided, for the first time, for elections under universal adult suffrage and the removal of property and income qualifications previously required of candidates for election.[20] Adult suffrage transformed Grenadian politics, as it was transforming politics in neighbouring Caribbean countries. After a series of union victories for the working people, though with a developing reputation as more of an individualistic union and political boss than as a party political organiser, Gairy had a significant victory in the 1951 elections. A. W. Singham's important book, *The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity* (1968), is a pertinent study of Gairy as a populist, crowd-pleasing but increasingly authoritarian figure. He was to continue to be the major political leader in Grenada for the next twenty-eight years. For an understanding of Eric Gairy's influence in Grenadian politics during these years, one needs to consider the polarisation between planters and peasantry, the underlying differences in culture between those described by Smith as "folk" and "elite", and the attempt to maintain a consensus, by the dominant religious, educational and official administrative institutions, that this was the "natural" order of society. But these groups did not have any intrinsic sympathy for each other and Gairy's emergence as someone keen to represent workers and peasantry was generally welcomed by a group which until then had no political representation. A woman in her nineties, who did not identify herself

as a supporter of Gairy, confirmed the truth of an idea I used in my novel, *Angel*.[21] Explaining the practice of planters who wanted their estates worked, planted in tree crops like cocoa at little cost, she said, "these people, they give you the land and tell you it is yours to work, and just when it is time for you to reap, they tell you they will take it back, and they give you another piece". She paused and added, "they leave the door wide open". Wide open, I understood, for the advent of a politician like Eric Gairy. The suggestion here is that while increasingly Gairy may have revealed himself as an authoritarian figure, the working people's sense of an oppressive plantocracy made them welcome someone who presented himself as working in their interests, who knew the workings of the estate system and was not intimidated by the bosses. In a highly polarised society, with a "folk" group newly enfranchised (identified by M.G. Smith in 1953 as comprising approximately 94% of the population),[22] any champion of the peasantry would be a popular political figure.

Eric Gairy was well acquainted with the narratives of the working people on whose behalf he had established union and political organisations, and *narrative*, personal or otherwise, is important to an understanding of events. When Eric Gairy was a child, living with his parents, Douglas Gairy and Theresa Gairy, in the environs of Dunfermline and Mt Horne estates in rural St Andrew's, his father worked as a driver on the Mt Horne estate. A plantation post inherited from the days of enslavement, the driver was responsible for ensuring that the estate workers did their work – his job was to "drive" them. Needed constantly to be present on the estate, Eric Gairy's father was required to live in the estate house allocated to the "driver", and he was seldom at home with his family. Eric, as a boy, was always moving between his parents, acting as a messenger linking the male and female authority figures in his life. He became very familiar with estate conditions, with the workers' expressed needs and with the attitudes of those who owned and/or managed the estates. He heard people of his parents' age and older being referred to as "boy" and "girl". He learnt at firsthand lessons about the place of race and class in a colonial plantation society; about the urban/rural divide; the role of women in the plantation economy – for instance in the house of the estate owner he learnt that there was an effective apartheid in the economic organisation of Grenadian society. He was sometimes on the estate tennis courts (available only to whites),

acting as a ball boy, chasing tennis balls as the white estate owners and managers enjoyed their sport. These were all lessons that were important to him as he sought, in his own way, to reform the society of which he became the leader, and redress some of the grievances and disadvantages of working men and women. Towards the end of the 1960s, Gairy was careful to appoint women to his cabinet. These appointments suggest that, whatever may have been other limitations in the exercise of his authority, and despite the fact that he was developing a reputation as a womaniser (see Chapter 5 for Dr Bynoe's reference to this) Gairy was at least aware of the need for change. Grenadian cultural historian Caldwell Taylor also notes that when he began his 1967 term of office, Chief Minister Gairy not only promoted women to higher ranks within his government, but also appointed women to positions of authority in public works positions – "road work", as it was popularly known, appointing women as road drivers. According to Taylor, a road worker named Andolina, of Grenville, St Andrew's, was the first such promotion.[23] This perception is supported by social historian Nicole Phillip who also notes the "increase seen in the number of women appointed in the government."[24] All of this suggests that by 1968, Premier Gairy's receptivity to the idea of having a woman as Governor of the emerging state was not an isolated inclination.

Hilda Louisa Gibbs, second daughter of T. Joseph Gibbs and his wife Louisa Gibbs, née La Touche, was born on November 18, 1921, in Crochu, St Andrew's, on the north-eastern side of the island. She was younger than her sister Josephine by twelve years. Hilda's father told her many stories about his earlier life. On Sundays, he rode to church in his horse and trap, as did another person in the area, Sir Joseph De La Mothe. At the church, there was a shaded tree, and by some stroke of fortune, Sir Joseph would always be in the shade of the tree and Hilda's father would have to park his horse and trap in the sun. One day, divining fortune's hand, Joseph Gibbs went early to church, and, finding the shady tree unoccupied, he put his horse in that coveted spot. The priest asked Joseph to remove his horse. He refused. And so was born a story that T. Joseph Gibbs recounted to his children, advising them that they should stand up against what seemed unfair, regardless of who was meting out the treatment.

This is one of the classical stories about the shaping of the sensibility of what might be termed a Caribbean middle class, aware

of the privileges given to white officials and the titled elite who held sway in the colonies, and determined not to be subservient. When told this story, I did not have to wonder (as I might have had to do if told a similar story set in the post-independence period) if Sir Joseph was white and British. My assumption was indeed correct.

Among those who won a seat under the party banner of the Grenada People's Party in 1951 was Thomas Joseph Gibbs, popularly known as Uncle Joe, a candidate for the parish of St David's.

In an analysis of the social forces that produced Dr Eric Williams, Prime Minister of neighbouring Trinidad & Tobago from 1955 to 1981, Gordon Rohlehr, one of the region's most perceptive literary and cultural critics, writes:

> The most intimate portrait that we have of the society that produced Williams is C.L.R. James' warm depiction in *Beyond a Boundary* of the aspiring and respectable puritanical black lower-middle or upper-lower class of the 1920s, whose avenue towards self-betterment was education. As James portrays it, this class was tough, stoical, rigidly moral and powerfully focused in its drive towards excellence. It would produce both stiffly starched colonials and, in a younger generation, either latent black nationalists or the variety of socialist ideologues who began to appear between the 1930s and 1940s and whose ideas and energies would be absorbed in the nationalist movement that Williams was to lead in the mid-1950s.[25]

Hilda Bynoe was not in the mould of Williams, but her life and expressed views suggest that she was a mixture of some of the qualities suggested by Rohlehr. Bynoe was powerfully focused in the drive towards excellence. She was nationalist, assertive about her African heritage, and proud of the mixed Caribbean (Carib, African and European) history that produced her.[26]

The lesson imparted by T. Joseph Gibbs' story – and many others of a similar nature that the girls had from their parents – was deeply imbibed. Much later, Hilda Gibbs, training as a medical doctor in England, would write poems that spoke of the pride and social sensibility inherited from her parents:

> The woman told the story
> About the hurt, anger
> Rage of the people.
>
> She ought to know

> She is one of those people
> One of those self-same people.[27]

The sense of being "one of those self-same people" was later to be a part of Dame Hilda's modus operandi in her role as Governor, and it conditioned her responses to many situations she was to encounter.

Among other influences for the young Hilda was the Grenadian politician Theophilus Albert Marryshow, who, by Dr Bynoe's own account, played an important role in her early politicisation. Marryshow, popularly known as T.A., ardently supported the regional movement towards a federation of the West Indies. As a federalist, Marryshow was interested not only in the development of Grenada, but also in a union of those countries which had more in common in socio-political and economic terms, and their shared experience of British colonialism, than any objective differences to divide them. The motto of *The West Indian*, the newspaper Marryshow founded, was "The West Indies must be West Indian."[28] Speaking of Marryshow's impact on her life, Dr Bynoe mentions being told about the early post World War One days, when Marryshow began speaking about the importance of West Indian unity. She knew, too, how Marryshow had agitated against the then Colonial Secretary Blood.[29] "He got the people to march and say that Blood must go." Marryshow's example is mentioned by other people who came to be influential in world politics. Wilfred Little, the brother of Malcolm X, wrote about the influence of Marryshow's newspaper, *The West Indian,* in his own family. According to Wilfred Little, his mother, who was from Grenada, used to read passages from this newspaper aloud to her children. Marryshow was "somebody she boasted about all the time".[30] Marryshow was clearly important in the shaping of ideas among that generation of Grenadian people, and, indeed, had significance in the shaping of ideas in the Caribbean and African diaspora.

Caldwell Taylor notes that the Marryshow of Hilda Gibbs's childhood was a radical figure, openly and effectively challenging the colonial administration so that in time it made the kind of constitutional concessions that benefited Eric Gairy. Taylor notes that in 1917, Marryshow founded the Representative Government Association (RGA) to agitate for a new and participative constitutional

dispensation for the Grenadian people.[31] When, in 1925, Grenada was granted a New Constitution, representing a modification of Crown Colony rule, T. A. Marryshow was one of the five members elected to the new Legislative Council. Taylor also notes that, in the 1940s, Marryshow was one of the officers of the Marxist-leaning Caribbean Labour Congress.[32] Marryshow was by no means a lone voice, and the way he influenced others must also be seen as part of the range of ideas circulating in the Caribbean during the first part of the twentieth century. UCLA's African Studies Department writes, for example, that "many modern Caribbean nationalist leaders have acknowledged the importance of Garveyism in their own careers, including T. Albert Marryshow of Grenada; Alexander Bustamante, Sir William Grant, J.A.G. Smith, and Norman Washington Manley of Jamaica, and Captain Arthur Cipriani, Uriah Butler, George Padmore and C.L.R. James of Trinidad."[33] There were, then, several influential schools of thought extant during the period of Hilda Bynoe's childhood. While it is unclear which individuals, apart from Marryshow, had the most influence on her, it is clear that her instincts remained both federalist and pan-Africanist. This appears to have been recognised by pan-Africanist groups. She spoke cordially of these groups and the *Trinidad & Tobago Mirror* reported that she gave an address at the 3rd annual dinner of the African Association of Trinidad & Tobago.[34] She seemed generally interested in the struggles of the working people, although her comments suggest that she did not identify herself with notions of "left" politics or of radical feminism.

As she sat at her home in Diego Martin, Trinidad, Dr Bynoe recalled the days of early anti-colonial agitation and the influence of the known political thinkers of the period, those officially acknowledged and those only known to the communities in which they lived. Alongside her memory of Marryshow, there was a memory of the example given by her mother, and other women of her mother's generation, to Caribbean life generally and to the shaping of her political ideas in particular. She recalled that her mother participated in demonstrations against Colonial Secretary Blood, even while her father, because of his job and his status in the community, could not take part in them.

Given the political and personal history that shaped her, how did Dame Hilda Bynoe think of her role in the Caribbean and in the

world? I asked this question in the course of our discussions, and, several times in her responses, Dr Bynoe came back to that question, using it to structure her story, wanting to explain how, as woman, as wife, as mother, as Caribbean person she conceptualised her role in Grenada, in the Caribbean, in the world. Her multi-levelled replies to the question reminds that whatever judgements might be made on her period of office, there are several questions of interest when we consider her story. It is not only about the individual but about how events influenced her, and her influence on the shaping of events. How was it that in a region where males were emerging as the natural inheritors of British male imperial dominance, a woman came to hold the prestigious position of first native governor in her island, and first woman governor anywhere in the British Commonwealth? Was it entirely due to a political decision made by Eric Gairy? What motivated Premier Gairy to make this decision? Was it his own perception of the importance of women's role in Caribbean development? Was it his perception of the importance of the participation of working people (amongst whom he would have numbered her father, T.J. Gibbs and his family), in the politics of the nation? Why was it that a little more than five years after her appointment, the Governor felt personally insulted and unable to continue in her post when demonstrators too casually and, she felt, disrespectfully, associated her name with those of local politicians who "must go"? What was the Governor's role and relationship with the country of which she had become the chief official face? What was her perception of her political role in the Grenadian/Caribbean environment of 1968?

When I was thinking about the anomalies of Dr Bynoe's position as governor, the potential clashes between being the official representative of the British state and her personal views, I was drawn to the story of a nineteenth century Englishman, Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783-1869), a Governor and "political economist, writer, platform speaker and radical MP in his heyday", whose career is described by Michael J. Turner in his article "Raising up Dark Englishmen". Turner describes Thompson as an anti-colonial critic of British imperial policy during a period when such views were very rare.[35] Thompson was the first crown-appointed Governor of Sierra Leone from 1808 to 1810.[36] His avowedly anti-imperial, anti-colonial stance might seem to undermine my implied argument – that, by virtue of her *Caribbean* identification with the land she came to

govern, Dame Hilda Bynoe reacted to events in Grenada in a uniquely personal way, that her response as Governor to the events of 1974 reflected the fact that her Caribbean story made her more personally involved than a white expatriate British representative would be. In considering Thompson's attitude to his official role as the Queen's representative in Sierra Leone, Turner argues that "we can learn much more about opinions on empire if we examine the ways in which radicals of Thompson's ilk regarded colonial affairs and questions of race." In his effort to understand his subject, Turner asked, "What influenced Thompson's words and deeds? Why did he emerge as a critic of empire and a champion of the natives at the time of the Indian Mutiny?" Turner's effort to understand Thompson is an effort to understand the times that produced him, the influences on his personal and political background, and how one might situate Thompson within the society of Sierra Leone. I pull the example of Thompson into this discussion because it seems to me that an examination of the life of Dame Hilda Bynoe offers similar kinds of opportunities for understanding and interrogating both the individual and the Caribbean communities that helped to shape her.

Endnotes

1. Representative of the British Crown in a colony or commonwealth state that is not a republic and regards the British monarch as Head of State. The Governor is, in legal terms, the Queen's Representative, appointed on recommendation of the local government. The post is, in effect, more than just ceremonial. In a recent comment on the powers of Governors in those Caribbean states that do not yet have full independence, an article in the August 2004 *New York Amsterdam News* ("British Caribbean Colonies Prepare to tackle Britain", Vol. 95, Issue 38, p.14), notes:

   > The premiers or chief ministers of five of Britain's colonies in the Caribbean have decided to challenge the extensive powers British-appointed governors have over their islands and to demand more autonomy to deal with financial and political matters. In the clearest indication yet that the heads are no longer prepared to put up with business as usual, the leaders of the Cayman Islands, volcano-ravaged

Montserrat, Anguilla, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and the British Virgin Islands spent two days in the Caymanian capital last week mainly discussing ways of how to cut the powers of Queen Elizabeth's representative to their islands. Bermuda – the idyllic, temperate, tourist paradise just east of the Carolinas – was the notable absentee, but its Black-led government, now in its second five-year term, has already been talking about moving to gain independence from Britain after 400 years, despite opposition from whites.

The leaders say they want some of the veto powers of governors to be reduced and for Britain to allow them more control over their financial affairs in addition to more leeway on political matters.

For example, Montserrat, a full member of the 15-nation Caribbean Community (Caricom), cannot vote on any foreign affairs matters that Caricom deals with because Britain is still in charge of foreign policy, defence and (to a large extent) its financial affairs as well. On a vote as to whether to recognise Haiti's US-installed administration, Montserrat would have to remain quiet, as Britain's position – rather than the island's – would suffice, a situation that has caused much vexation.

2. For a discussion of Associated Statehood, and the powers of the Governor within that framework, see Masahiro Igarashi, *Associated Statehood in International Law* (The Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 2002), particularly Chapter 4, "West Indies Associated States." Quotation, p. 134.
3. An Order of chivalry established by the United Kingdom in 1917.
4. Grenada was in French hands between 1652 and 1763 and then between 1779 and 1783. For a discussion, see, for example, Henri Martin, *The Decline of the French Monarchy, Volume 1: History of France from the most remote period to 1789* (Boston: Walker, Fuller & Company, 1866), pp. 535 & 539. (Available both in print and as an e-book). See, too, Gordon Turnbull, *A Narrative of the revolt and insurrection of the French inhabitants in the island of Grenada* (Printed for Arch. Constable at the Cross and sold in London by Vernor & Hood, 1795). Available online as an ebook.
5. Quoted from Merle Collins, *Grenada: A Political History 1950-1979.* Ph.D. thesis, London School of Economics, University of London.
6. Colonial Office Document. CO101/107, desp. No. 138, Keate to Colebrooke, 4 May, 1854. encl. Report on the Blue Book for the year 1853. f. 206. Quoted in Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, *Beating the Pen on the Drum: A Socio-Cultural History of Carriacou, Grenada, 1750-1920* (New York: ProQuest, 2007), p. 262.

7. Alvin Thompson, *The Haunting Past: Politics, Economics and Race in Caribbean Life* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1997), p. 123.
8. Jonathan Pugh and Janet Momsen, *Environmental Planning in the Caribbean* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), p. 25.
9. See, for example, George Brizan, *Grenada: Island of Conflict.* (London: MacMillan, 1998), p. 246; Beverley Steele, *Grenada: A History of its People* (London: McMillan Caribbean, 2003), pp. 239-241; Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso Books, 1988), p. 463.
10. Edwina Ashie-Nikoi, op.cit, p. 299.
11. M.G. Smith, "Stratification in Grenada", *in Blackness in Latin America*, Volume 2, Ed. Whitten & Torres (Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 314.
12. Ibid. p. 318.
13. Ibid., p. 314.
14. *Anthropológica,* Vol. 46 No. 1 (1994), pp. 77-78.
15. Will Kaufman & Heidi Macpherson, *Britain and the Americas: Culture, Politics and Society: Transatlantic Relations* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2005), p. 433.
16. Collins, *Grenada: A Political History*, 1990, pp. 49-50.
17. Eudine Barriteau, "Theorizing Gender Systems and the Project of Modernity in the Twentieth-Century Caribbean, *Feminist Review,* No. 59: *Rethinking Caribbean Difference* (Summer 1998), pp. 186-210.
18. Interview with Gloria Payne-Banfield, November 2011.
19. See Collins, *Grenada: A Political History*, 1990, p. 52.
20. See Collins, *Grenada: A Political History*, p. 53
21. London: The Women's Press, 1987; and revised edition, Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2010.
22. M.G. Smith, "Stratification in Grenada", op cit., pp. 313-314.
23. Interview with Mr Caldwell Taylor, November 23, 2010.
24. Nicole Phillip, *Women in Grenadian History 1783-1983* (Kingston, St Augustine, Bridgetown: University of the West Indies Press, 2010), p. 94.
25. Gordon Rohlehr, "The Culture of Williams: Context, Performance, Legacy", *Callaloo* Vol. 20, No. 4, *Eric Williams and the Postcolonial Caribbean: A Special Issue* (Autumn, 1997), pp. 849-888.

26. According to historian Lennox Honychurch, "the French priest Fr Raymond Breton who lived among the "Caribs" recorded the people's own name for themselvea as Calliponam in the women's speech, and Callinago in that of the men". Lennox Honeychurch, *The Dominica Story: A History of the Island* (London: Macmillan Caribbean; Reprint edition, 1995). Some historians today use the phonetic spelling Kalinago instead of Carib. Most people in the region, including Dame Hilda, use the word apparently learned from centuries of European occupation of the region, "Carib".
27. Hilda Bynoe, *I Woke at Dawn* (Port of Spain: Hanz' On Publishers, 1996).
28. For more about Marryshow, see Jill Sheppard, *Marryshow of Grenada: An Introduction* (Letchworth Press, 1987). The book is not now generally available but some information from the text may be found at <http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/BNCCde/grenada/centre/tam.htm>.
29. Captain Hilary Rudolph Robert Blood (Sir Hilary Blood) was a career colonial Civil Servant. He entered the colonial Civil Service in Ceylon (1920) and served there for a decade before being appointed as Colonial Secretary in Grenada. Between 1942 and 1954, he served the British Colonial Office as Governor (successively) in Gambia, Barbados and Mauritius (The University of Glasgow story, <http://www. universitystory.gla.ac.uk/ww1-biography/?id=1484>).
30. Jan Carew, *Ghosts in Our Blood: With Malcolm X in Africa, England, and the Caribbean* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994).
31. Online publication, *BigDrumNation,* November 19th, 2010. *<http://www.bigdrumnation.org/comments/crowncolony.html>*
32. Interview with Caldwell Taylor, November 18, 2010.
33. "Marcus Garvey and the UNIA" (1995-2010). The Marcus Garvey and UNIA Papers Project, UCLA: UNIA and UCLA African Studies Center. Celebrating 50 Years. 1959-2009. http://www.international.ucla. edu/africa/mgpp/mgunia.asp>. Butler was Tubal Uriah Buzz Butler, a Grenadian who had migrated to Trinidad.
34. *Trinidad & Tobago Mirror*, 13 November 1988.
35. Michael J. Turner, "'Raising up Dark Englishmen': Thomas Perronet Thompson, Colonies, Race, and the Indian Mutiny",

Journal of Colonialism and History, 6:11, (2005), (Project Muse. Article accessed in HTML).
36. Turner, "Raising up Dark Englishmen", op.cit.

CHAPTER TWO
"GETTING THE BEST OF MY ANCESTORS"

Throughout our interviews, Dame Hilda reminded me that the question to which she was responding was: how did you think of your role in the Caribbean and the world? As with every Caribbean story, or indeed any story, there were various cultural and social building blocks that went into the construction of Dr Bynoe's contemporary Caribbean sense of self. But her response began, very consciously, with stories of her ancestors, paternal and maternal.

Maternal Ancestors: Carib and Scottish

Hilda Bynoe's maternal ancestry includes a story, often recounted in the family, of Carib ancestors and particularly of Mayet, Harriet McQuilkin, who lived to be 105.[1] When Mayet died, in or around 1928, her great-granddaughter Hilda was about seven years old.

Dame Hilda's son Roland explains, "My grandmother was a La Touche, my great grandmother was a Redhead, and my great-great grandmother (Mayet) was a McQuilkin whose father was Scottish." Dame Hilda recalls that Mayet, who had never seen a doctor and had treated herself with bush medicine when ill, had perfect vision. Near Mayet's house was a stream and a little pool. Just before her death, Mayet had had a slight cold and was already getting better when she had a dip in the pool, caught viral pneumonia, and died.

Dr Bynoe remembers many gatherings with Mayet and her descendants, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One memory, in particular, resonates. Assembled in Mayet's yard, the children, asked what they would like to be when they grew up, gave various responses that mostly reflected their rural island experience. Some talked about wanting to be chauffeurs or to work on the estate land near their homes, "in Mr. La Mothe's cocoa", one wanted to be a priest (in fact, he later became a pastor in the Adventist church), their

ambitions reflecting the possibilities apparent to them; the child Hilda said she wanted to be a doctor. It was a daring ambition, a self-fulfilling prophecy that her family would never let her forget. All those who were present when the announcement was made, and those who were told about it, let her know that they regarded it as a promise to be fulfilled. With this memory to sustain her, whatever other individuals might think later about their personal roles in the unfolding of her story, Hilda Bynoe was always aware that there were more ancient beginnings to her achievements, beginnings enshrined in her family's – and her community's – perspectives on the role of education in social progress, beginnings witnessed by her family and friends, and by Mayet (Ma Harriet), the Carib ancestor whose life connects to the original Caribbean story.

People in the community around the St Andrew's/St David's area, where the family lived, say they have heard of Mayet. They associate the name with the Gibbs' family story, seeming to know only that Mayet was Carib and that she was somehow connected with the story of T. Joseph Gibbs, Hilda's father, whom they speak of with respect as "Uncle Joe", as someone who owned a shop, who has a place in the story of Grenadian rural society as an "ole-time headmaster for years in Crochu school". One woman assessed that "Uncle Joe's" family were "fairly well off people". They were "not in my bracket when I was growing up", a ninety-year-old woman explained. This description of the Gibbs family in the 1930s and 40s suggests what in the Caribbean might be regarded as an emergent class of black working people who had done well, and who were steadily easing their way into middle-class society. The comment might be measured against the discussion of the folk and social stratification in the period between emancipation in 1838 and Grenada of the 1950s in the previous chapter. The "well off people" would be the ones considered elite, both the rural plantocracy and whites and some of mixed race, perceived to be of superior economic and social status, generally – though not exclusively – resident in St George's, the capital, and environs. The "my bracket" of the speaker suggests a perceived positioning among the less economically privileged folk. The "fairly well off people" may once, ancestrally, have been of the less privileged group, but because of land acquisition, and perhaps education and such factors, they had moved, as the years passed, to a different position up the socio-economic scale.

"My ancestors," Dr Bynoe explained, "came out of Europe, out of

Africa and out of ancient America, a wee bit of all sorts of things and a preponderance of Africa." When I asked about the "wee bits", she responded, "There's Scotland, there is England, there is France – and Ancient America I'm particularly proud of because it was the land of my Carib ancestors." Her response calls to mind Caribbean poet Derek Walcott's conclusion that with all those elements, "either I'm nobody/or I'm a nation".[2] Young Hilda Gibbs's family ensured that she knew she was somebody, and so she claimed various inheritances in the creation of her Caribbean sense of nation.

According to the family narrative, though the oral accounts seem uncertain whether it was Mayet herself or her mother involved, there is a story about one or the other, with her sister, being captured by British sailors either while swimming in Trinidad waters or while walking on the streets of St George's.[3] While the stories handed down through different branches of the family differ in some particulars, one constant is that their ancestor was a young Carib woman captured by British sailors. Since Mayet died in or around 1928 at the age of 105, she would have been born around 1823, and this places the events regarding the story of the capture of Carib maidens somewhere either at the beginning of the nineteenth century if the story is about the mother, or in the 1840s if the story is about Mayet herself. According to one family story, the sailors, on their way through the Caribbean with these Carib women captured in Trinidad waters, stopped off in Grenada for food and water. There, the young Carib girls, both good swimmers, escaped. One, Mayet or her mother, made it to shore, but her sister was never heard of again. Another variant tells of Mayet's sister being captured by British sailors on the streets of St George's. Confrontations with European peoples were evidently still dangerous for the original inhabitants of the Caribbean. The family still speculates that the other sister must have been caught and taken away, but not killed. If so, there may be another half to this story, existing, perhaps, somewhere in Europe or elsewhere in the Americas. Symbolically, the story of the kidnapping remains a powerful motif in this family recounting. It roots the island's first local Governor in the pre-colonial Amerindian heritage of the region.

Mayet McQuilkin married Bozy Redhead, one of the five sons of an Englishman who had migrated to the island. This explains Roland Bynoe's narrative, with which this chapter begins, that his "great grandmother was a Redhead". Dr Bynoe told me, "It's a descendant

of the same Redhead, the daughter of another brother, who later married Maurice Bishop.[4] The comment emphasises her understanding of the complex relationships that connect various participants in Caribbean political stories. Dr Bynoe's grandmother, Anne, was one of the twelve children (eleven girls and one boy) of Mayet and her English husband. Anne married a La Touche (and this is confirmed by Roland Bynoe's narrative that his grandmother was a LaTouche) and together they had two children, Eliza, aka Duxie and Louisa (La Touche), who became the mother of Hilda and Josephine. Dr Bynoe speaks of her maternal relatives, descendants of Mayet and Bozy Redhead, as being now resident in several places, in and out of the Caribbean. These residents of the diaspora still have a special relationship with land in and around the boundaries between rural St David's and St Andrew's parishes, Grenada.

Dr Bynoe explained, "My grandmother died very young. She had two children, about a year apart, and after the second child, she died. My mother was the second child. When Mother was about three months old, my grandmother died." Great-grandmother Mayet assumed responsibility for the two girls, Louisa and Eliza, aka Duxie. Louisa married Joseph Gibbs and they had two children, Hilda and Josephine. Duxie, her sister, remembered by her niece as having "long hair down to her waist", married Herbert David and was in Trinidad, en route to Panama to meet her husband, who had travelled there to work on the Panama Canal, when she died of pulmonary tuberculosis. When Duxie died, her children, Enid and Gladys, were taken from Trinidad to Grenada to be part of the Gibbs household of Duxie's sister, Louisa.

Dr Bynoe spoke of these relatives as belonging to one family unit. Her cousin Gladys later had a daughter, Hazel, whom Dr Bynoe adopted, and she was also very close to her aunt Enid. Hazel subsequently travelled to Guyana where she met and married Julien Archer. As Dame Hilda told the stories, both names and details stood out as important and it became clear not only how interwoven are the stories of various families in Grenada's small island community, but also how interconnected are the stories of Caribbean existence. Grenada, Trinidad, Guyana, Panama all feature as part of what is presented as a "Grenada" story because of the demands of "national" identification. Her story was also a practical demonstration of the island dictum that "you never know who you're talking to". It

Louisa LaTouche, Hilda Gibbs' mother, and her cousin.

highlights the importance of the extended family in the society, the family connections created within and between islands and countries. Such stories also help to explain why, in Grenada and other similar small-island (and small country) communities, political tensions – and political relationships generally – are never only about ideology. Known or unknown to outsiders, or sometimes even to other local participants in a political drama, family connections remain an important dynamic influencing individual and, sometimes collective responses to political conflicts. There is often an underlying sense of community knowledge that some family connection is involved in political events, even when these connections cannot be fully detailed. As Dame Hilda recounted these stories, it seemed to me that they suggest that today's "independent" Caribbean nations have ignored their inheritance, undermining their legacy of interwoven histories by focusing on separate postcolonial national identities.

"Mayet," Dr Bynoe told me, "had one son. This son had two sons but one died at a young age. The other, known as Cousin Jose, had a son called Norbert who lost his home during Hurricane Ivan." The mention of Hurricane Ivan is not a gratuitous one. Many individuals connect their personal family stories to details of political events and the hurricanes that regularly transform the landscape – and the Governor's story is no exception. She mentions family events that coincided with "Janet": "The first (family) house went with Hurricane Janet". She was referring to a major hurricane that occurred in 1955 and was probably the preponderant force that organised historical time in the Grenadian imagination until it was displaced by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. This apparently simple detail again situates Dr Bynoe's sensibility as shaped by the natural occurrences of the Caribbean environment.

This kind of extended family and kinship structure, affected as it often is by migration, is quintessentially Caribbean. Indeed, Dr Bynoe's recounting is evidence of what Lara Putnam refers to as the "generative (rather than just communicative) possibilities of narrative", which, she avers, have "particular resonance in the British Caribbean".[5] In other words, these narratives are crucial not only to our understanding of the individual, because they situate her historically, explain her social and political shaping, and her connections with land, personal family and wider Caribbean community, but that

such stories have a causative/generative role in the shaping of behaviour. The individual is explained by reference to the past, to ancestry, to land, to location within the community. For instance, when Hilda Bynoe became Grenada's Governor, the fact that she was the daughter of T.J. Gibbs would be an important part of her local identification and the way people responded to her.

T. J. Gibbs's mother, Dr Bynoe's paternal grandmother, had twelve children. On both maternal and paternal sides, the infant mortality rate was high. Her paternal grandmother was called Ma Sese (pronounced SaySay), a Yoruba woman, Dr Bynoe says, revealing her respect for an African heritage. She also referred to Ma Sese's physique as being, in some aspects, Yoruba. Ma Sese, officially Mary Felix, had migrated to Grenada from Dominica in search of land, as did many others who in the post-emancipation period migrated from other islands to Grenada and in particular Trinidad, where land or work was more easily available. In a recent study of migration within the region, Dr Katherine Schmidt notes, "Historically the nature, direction and magnitude of migration in the Caribbean have always been influenced by trends in global and regional socio-economic development."[6] She adds, "After Emancipation in the nineteenth century, the movement of labor to destinations within the region continued." In the post-emancipation period, Dame Hilda explained, the estates in Dominica from which Ma Sese's family came remained in the hands of the large estate owners. The eldest brother of Ma Sese's family, Uncle Lindsay, Lindsay Felix, was the pioneer in the family migrant venture. Uncle Lindsay had gone to Grenada and established his home near what is today the village of Kumar, on the northeast side of the island, close to the border between the parishes of St David's and St Andrew's. "He built his house on the hill, the top of a hill just below Grand Bacolet estate, before the village called Kumar. Kumar did not exist in those days, but I'm identifying it now." Here the narrative gestures towards a more comprehensive local history and one pauses to consider Kumar, this village that "did not exist" in the days when Uncle Lindsay first settled in Grenada. Kumar, which today is synonymous in the Grenadian imagination with Indian identity, "did not exist in those days". When Uncle Lindsay settled in Grenada, Indian settlement had not yet begun to transform the demography of the island. Indians were imported by the British into the Caribbean to substitute for what was described as

the post-emancipation loss of African labour. Ron Sookram notes that, "a total of 3,200 Indians were imported into Grenada between 1857 and 1885."[7] Historian George Brizan writes, "in 1881 there were 1,572 Indians in Grenada."[8] Before the settlement of Indians, Kumar did not exist as an entity separate from the village of Grand Bacolet.

On his hillside in Grand Bacolet, Uncle Lindsay worked hard, encouraging his siblings from Dominica to visit and make their home in Grenada. Dr Bynoe mused that the children of this pioneer might be said to have achieved less socially and otherwise, "to have not done as well" as those of his siblings. It is a not unfamiliar story. "He was busy taking care of everybody." It was in response to Uncle Lindsay's call that his sister Mary, Ma Sese, followed his lead and settled in Grenada, where she met and married Sylvester J. Gibbs, a Barbadian who, having quarrelled with his family, had decided to drop the family name and adopt the name Gibbs. The Gibbs family from which Dr Bynoe is descended has no family connection with other families by the name of Gibbs in Grenada. The name Arbuthnot, she believed, was the one that coincided with her Barbados family history.

Here, again, this family story typifies many Caribbean stories. It is not a compact story featuring just one island, but a cross-Caribbean story, with – in this case – strong African threads. The early stories on both maternal and paternal sides involve migration in search of better opportunities; a working people's urge to settle in spaces where it was possible to acquire small plots of land to ensure an independent means of survival; the instability associated with "naming" in Caribbean societies; family narratives that reflect on a history of colonial oppression, and the relationship between all of this and the developing organisation of society in the post-emancipation period. In particular, the stories provide a dynamic example of how Caribbean family patterns have been shaped by migration and how Caribbean migration has been shaped by family patterns.[9] Further, a reading of Mary Chamberlain's *Family Love*,[10] and Lara Putnam's assessment of this work, helps situate Dr Bynoe's concern to locate herself in her extended family, including relatives with whom she may no longer have contact, but whose stories are important to her construction of self and, importantly for our story, relevant to her construction of the world in which she was to operate as a governor.

Lara Putnam, discussing *Family Love*, draws attention to Chamberlain's conclusion that "Families are micro-societies of their own, with their own histories and cultures, creating their own dynamics and ethos, continuities and ruptures, constantly evolving to accommodate growth and change – of individual family members and of the family as a unit."[11]

Thus, in one strand of the story, Dr Bynoe drew attention to her paternal grandmother, Ma Sese's struggle to ensure her children's success, her going to work at difficult jobs so that her children would be able to advance socially and economically. She noted how her father appreciated his mother's struggles, how, "as soon as my father could, he built (his mother) a cottage." She recalled the cottage, the family house, plum trees, and a special relationship between her father's family and the area around St David's and St Andrew's parishes. Other members of the family had acquired lots in northeastern villages like Mama Cannes, (what is today) Kumar and other areas.

This structuring of the narrative, Dr Bynoe's concern to give details both about the land and about her extended family, suggest that she is very conscious of her story as coming from a particular ideological base. As Anthony Maingot has noted, "West Indian peasant ownership (is) synonymous with freedom." Maingot adds that it is "a story as old as the Haitian revolution…"[12] It is a story pertinent to political organisation notably because the evidence is that the Grenadian peasantry and working people are less interested in any ideological reasons for reorganising of society than in the practical value, social and economic, of land ownership. While Dr Bynoe's maternal family story is bound up with the Amerindian inhabitants of the Caribbean lands (to describe them as "owners" would seem inconsistent with Amerindian values) and with her great-grandmother Mayet who "was never a slave", as well as with the migration of British people who were migrants seeking their fortune in the Caribbean; her paternal family story features Africans who had been taken to the Caribbean during the period of enslavement and who, in the post-emancipation period, moved from one island to another in search of better opportunities and, more specifically, in search of land on which to settle. Because it was easier for the ex-slaves to get grants of land in Grenada, as noted above, her father's maternal ancestors moved from Dominica to Grenada. Then they moved again, back to Dominica, to Trinidad, to Panama, to Maracaibo

in Venezuela. All of this is important to an understanding of Dr Bynoe's insistent belief in Caribbean integration, notwithstanding the fact that Caribbean political organisation in the post-independence period has run counter to the federalist instincts of politicians such as T.A. Marryshow.

Inevitably, this sense of her origins conditioned Governor Bynoe's responses to attitudes encountered during her period of political office. Personal narratives are embedded in and are used to explain economic and socio-political realities. Dr Bynoe never spoke in general terms about the various members of the family, but invariably named the individuals and their stories.

> "Datchik got his piece of land and worked it. Paren got his piece of land and worked it. They had this tradition, even in those early days. In those days, too, people wanting to emigrate would lease their piece of land for cash to pay their expenses. They would lease it to you for two years, five years. You would reap the land, and you would purchase it in the end, if they didn't come back, or you would lease land again and eventually you would own the land. Some of my uncles acquired land and married and settled down and they had their families. And my aunts, two of them – one is May Regis's grandmother who married a man with a piece of land and had his children."

There are several facets to the story that Dame Hilda told. It was about the relationship with land developed in the post-emancipation period as a means towards personal freedom; it was about the fact that ownership often came in small lots slowly and precariously acquired; about why education meant so much to working people especially in the period following full adult suffrage, when it became progressively clear that working people of various races could inherit the highest offices in the land; the place of religion and the church in shaping the values and identities of individuals and groups; how family relationships are woven into the social fabric of the community; and the particular role of generations of women, exemplified by Ma Sese and Mayet, in ensuring that their children first of all survived, and then, subsequently, made it up the social ladder. Of the struggles of her paternal grandmother, Ma Sese, for her children, Dr Bynoe said:

> "When she should be sending them out to work, she decided that she herself would go out to work. She went to the Grand Bacolet estate as a labourer at that time of her life, and then, of course, as soon as my father could, he built her a cottage."

These are memories not only of the self-sacrificing mother but also of the dutiful son, aware and respectful of the sacrifice made, and, importantly, the role of the usually white-owned agricultural estate in the lives of the working people.

Dr Bynoe mentions not only the cottage built by her father but also the trees around the cottage – plum, sugar apple, sapodilla – and the fact that the trees on her family land were often the markers of graves. Her ancestors were buried on that land, because "only the very rich built tombstones". The tree as a symbolic marker of the resting places of ancestry gives a particular resonance to Dr Bynoe's later recounting that when the announcement of her governorship was made in 1968, she was "on a plum tree". That positioning – "on a plum tree" – is itself a story. When the announcement was made, Dr Bynoe was ingesting her ancestors and sharing with them an achievement they had helped to produce. The land owned by the family is a repository of ancestral memory. Dr Bynoe remembered realising as a little girl that there were graves in that place where the plum trees were planted, plum trees that were monuments to the ancestors.

> "...and we had a beautiful yellow plum orchard down there and I remember as a child getting these plums and I used to say I'm going to be clever because I'm getting the best of my ancestors."

When I mentioned this part of the story to Caldwell Taylor, his observation was that in more ways than one the Governor was defying tradition, for it was at one time a popular belief, no doubt influenced by various religious stories and certainly by the Bible story of Eve's role in the garden of Eden, that girls could "spoil" a plum or other fruit tree, "make the fruit sour" by perching on the branches and eating the fruit.

The Governor's family story also confirmed that religious institutions frequently structure community activities. In this part of Grenada, the Catholics had their cemetery to which others did not have access, so that working people who were not Catholics had to make other arrangements for the disposal of their dead. The importance of Christian denominations in this story is also a testament to patterns that unfolded during the post-emancipation period when the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches competed in the conversion of African peoples to Christianity. When the Indians settled in Kumar, and other places later, it was the Presbyterian churches who

were (as elsewhere in the Caribbean) more active in their conversion. As Dame Hilda reported:

> "There was a piece of land in the area going down by the sea which had belonged to Mayet and her husband. It belonged to the family. They were not Catholics and the cemetery was always a Catholic cemetery and so they had their own private cemetery and that is where the cemetery was."

This then is a story that resonates with a sense of belonging to and understanding of the land and the complex relationship to it of the people who occupy it. These personal understandings moved with Hilda Bynoe in her professional life, as first the doctor and then the governor, to help shape her interaction with the wider community. For example, in celebrating the particular contributions of the women on both sides of her family, Dr Bynoe sees them as part of a wider set of women's values. Ma Sese, she said, was

> "typical of the African women that I know, that I learnt to know as I grew up, and in the generations, in my office, and so on, in Guyana and wherever I worked – the African woman, similar to the Indian woman in the sense of having the responsibility and having the ambition that my child must get a stage ahead of me."

It is evident that when Dr Bynoe encountered people in her office she saw them in historical perspective, always conscious of the circumstances of their existence – and in particular the circumstances of Caribbean women on their journeys towards achievement not only for themselves, but for the families for which they felt themselves responsible. This was a historical perspective to be found more in the oral tradition than in scribal history. As the Caribbean scholar Rhoda Reddock states:

> …even while women's contribution to wage work and participation in labour struggles was not acknowledged in mainstream labour scholarship, the oral tradition and other sources reveal a central contribution by women and their children to many of the labour struggles of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century of the Caribbean region.[13]

Notions of Diaspora and Globalisation[14]

Joseph Harris writes that the concept of the African diaspora as a field of study "gained momentum from 1965 when the International Congress of African Historians convened in Tanzania and included in its program a session entitled, "The African Abroad or the African Diaspora".[15] However, the reality of what lay behind this discursive term had existed long before this period. And whilst the term first gained currency as a mode of description for the historical experience of exile of the Jewish people, the word first came into general usage for the African experience of dispersal some time between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s. As George Shepperson notes:

> Who first used this expression, I do not know; and I wish very much that someone would attempt the difficult task of tracing the employment of the Greek word for dispersal – which, until it began to have the adjective *African* or *black* attached to it, was used largely for the scattering abroad of the Jews.[16]

Dame Hilda, in our conversations, was clearly conscious of various kinds of diaspora experience in the formation of her own consciousness. She spoke of the "African women" and "the Indian women" encountered in her offices, stressing the points of origin of these Caribbean people. It became clear, too, that to Dame Hilda, the Grenadian story was also Dominican, Trinidadian and Barbadian, and that this is a core Caribbean phenomenon. Indeed, the post-slavery travelling between countries of the ex-enslaved replicates that of the original Amerindian inhabitants moving from mainland and through the islands, and that of European interlopers who moved from one island to another (often bringing their enslaved Africans with them) in the search for greater opportunities, or when circumstances, such as in Santo Domingo in 1790s, caused European colonists to flee to safer shores.

Dr Bynoe's narrative highlights, in a very personal way, the essentially interlocking nature of Caribbean existence as demonstrated through the experience of the wider Bynoe family. Not all the brothers who followed Uncle Lindsay stayed in Grenada. One member of the family, Ma Sese's oldest son and T.J. Gibbs's brother, returned to Dominica, and of Dominica she said, "My father went *back*, when his brother died." The family responsibility was not only

to the Grenadian space but also to family members who "went back" to another Caribbean island. Dominica became an integral part of the notion of home. An important part of Ma Sese's legacy to Grenada, Dominica and the Caribbean was that, as Dr Bynoe noted, "she gave her children, girls and boys, the maximum of elementary education. That is what she could give them and she gave it to all of them."

Caribbean people living in countries such as England or the United States maintain a concept of an absent, original home-space and today, when there are discussions of diaspora, these discussions tend to focus on that dispersal from developing to developed countries. Dr Bynoe's story is a reminder that, just as there were dispersals of African people across Africa, highlighted, for example, in E. Kamau Brathwaite's *Masks* (1968), the second part of his trilogy, *The Arrivants*,[17] before the forced dispersal across the Atlantic into the Americas, so Caribbean people – African, Indian, Amerindian and the various admixtures of these peoples – have continued to migrate within and across the Caribbean, establishing diasporic identities long before the increased emigration to sites outside of the region that followed the 1939-1945 World War. In contemporary Trinidad, for instance, it has been estimated that one in three Trinidadians came from elsewhere in the Caribbean.[18]

In Dr Bynoe's recounting, "My father went back" constructs Grenada as what today might be described as a Dominican diaspora for the family of Uncle Lindsay. "My father went to Dominica to see that his brother was properly buried and to see if he had any wife… and there was no connection left that he had to worry about or bring back home or anything like that." In this case, "home" is transposed onto the Grenada experience. Dr Bynoe remembers that her father returned from Dominica with "a marble topped table" that is "still there, with a little crack", in the family house in Crochu. A tangible bit of the Dominican story sits, symbolically, in the Grenadian home space.

This sense of intra-regional migration lies behind Dr Bynoe's commitment to a federal future for the region. Not only was her maternal great-great grandmother stolen from "Trinidad waters", but, in reverse, her paternal grandfather, Mr. Gibbs, "a tailor by trade", travelled to Trinidad in search of better employment opportunities because he was not earning enough for his family to survive off his trade and their five acres of "mountain land" in Grenada. In

Trinidad, he found employment as an estate overseer and, although he kept contact with and later returned to his Grenada family, he fathered a child in Trinidad. As Dr Bynoe said, "My father acknowledged her."

Later, when Dr Bynoe travelled through the United States, she met her relatives, Mayet's descendants, in New York. Another thread of the story takes family members to Maracaibo and to Panama.[19] While nationalism might constrict family borders, members of the family inhabit and are citizens of the world, and were so long before the world came to speak of itself in global terms. As historian Mary Chamberlain notes, globalisation is not a new concept; it lies at the heart of modernity. She writes:

> International migration… strikes at the heart of nationhood and the nation state… International migrants are by definition global people whose horizons and allegiances, education and enterprise, family and friendship are both portable and elastic. What, finally, unsettles about international migration is that it internationalises the nation-state and globalises identity… And few, if any, people are more global and more migratory than those from the Caribbean.[20]

It is a fact that Caribbean governments have been forced to recognise. Today, throughout the region, governments are turning more obviously to engage the ideas of citizens in the diaspora in the business of national development. Dr Bynoe's story reminds us that Caribbean family economics and family organisation have long quietly acknowledged what governments, perhaps hampered by a nationalist narrative, have been slower to engage.

Endnotes

1. Amerindian or Native American. One of the peoples met by the Europeans when they invaded the Caribbean. Recently, the group known as the "Caribs" in Dominica, announced that they were officially going to name themselves "Kalinagos". Kalinago is thought to have been the original name for the Carib peoples, before the Europeans named them "Carib", meaning "cannibal".

2. Derek Walcott, "The Schooner *Flight*", *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (London: Cape, 1980), p. 4.
3. The first inhabitants of the country today known as Trinidad & Tobago were the Kalinago peoples. In 1498, Columbus happened upon the island, named it La Trinidad and claimed it for Spain. The first significant but never very sizeable Spanish settlements were in the 1590s. In 1797, Britain invaded and took the island from Spain. The family story of the capture of Mayet's mother and sister in Trinidad waters may date from these days of the second wave of British imperial incursion into the region.
4. Maurice Bishop was a member of the New Jewel Movement, which ousted Prime Minister Eric Gairy from office in the "British" Caribbean's first revolutionary overthrow. Bishop was Prime Minister of Grenada from 1979 to 1983. In that year, he and several colleagues were murdered in internecine party strife. Following these events, the United States invaded Grenada.
5. Lara Putnam, "Caribbean Kinship from Within and Without", *History Workshop Journal,* Issue 56 (Autumn 2008), pp. 279-288.
6. Dr Katherine Schmidt, "Migration in the Caribbean", ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean (2010). <http://www.slideshare. net/egfred/migration-in-the-caribbean-dr-katherine-schmidt>.
7. Ron Sookram, The Indian Community in Grenada (Germany: VDM Verlag, 2009), p. 12. Sookram quotes George Roberts and Joycelyn Byrne, "Summary Statistics on Indenture and Associated Migration Affecting the West Indies, 1834-1918", *Population Studies* 20 (1966), p. 129. See also Ron Sookram, "Grenada in Contemporary Historiography", *Small Axe* - Number 22, Volume 11, Number 1, (February 2007), pp. 156-163.
8. See George Brizan, *Grenada Island of Conflict* (London: MacMillan Caribbean, 1997), p. 245.
9. Lara Putnam poses these questions ("Caribbean Kinship", p. 282) in her 2008 discussion of Mary Chamberlain's work on Caribbean kinship.
10. Mary Chamberlain, *Family Love in the Diaspora: Migration and the Anglo-Caribbean Experience* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, Memory and Narrative Series, 2009).

11. Putnam, p. 286.
12. Both are quotations from Anthony Maingot, "Review: Coming to Terms with the 'Improbable Revolution'", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Volume 27, Number 3 (Autumn 1985), pp. 77-190.
13. Constance Sutton, ed., *Revisiting Caribbean Labour: Essays in Honour of O. Nigel Bolland* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), p. 21.
14. For further comments on the recurring theme of diaspora, see above pp. 37-39.
15. For a discussion, see Joseph Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington: Howard University Press, Second Edition, 1993), pp. 3-4, "Diaspora as Concept and Method".
16. George Shepperson, "The African Abroad or the African Diaspora", in T.O. Ranger (ed.) Emerging Themes of African History (Nairobi, 1968), p. 152.
17. Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
18. See the International Organization for Migration <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/americas/central-and-north-america-and-th/trinidad-and-tobago.html>
19. See notes to Chapter Two for references to Panama and to Wilfred Little and the dissemination of ideas in the diaspora.
20. Mary Chamberlain, *Caribbean Migration: Globalised Identities* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-library, 2002), p. 1.