

Introduction

Queer Fractals

Making Histories of Repair

Growing up in Kingston, Jamaica's capital city, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I could not help but learn that violating expectations of gendered and erotic behavior was both wrong and potentially dangerous. As a young child, I quickly learned that my feminine behaviors and expressions, preference for quiet indoor play, and desire to socialize with girls were not acceptable for a boy. These ways of being elicited intense bullying from other boys, who did not hesitate to call me "battyman." Though I did not develop attractions to other boys until much later, these early experiences taught me that "battyman" was a derogatory term that marked not only sex between men but also the failure of boys to conform to codes of masculine behavior. As I became a teenager, Jamaica's popular music genre of dancehall became fixated on regulating gender and sexual behavior, with songs like Harry Todder's "Bad Man Nuh Dress Like Girl" and Buju Banton's infamous "Boom Bye Bye." The invocation of violence in the lyrics of some of these songs compelled me to hide my "softness" and filled me with terror at my burgeoning feelings for other boys. I was a sheltered, upper-class teenager, and only after I left Jamaica to attend university in Canada did I learn of Jamaica's gay human rights organization J-FLAG and that several of my friends also experienced same-gender desires. At the time, however, I felt intense isolation in my queerness and knew of no

others “like me.” In my last year of high school, before I would leave Jamaica for Canada, I found myself sitting beside a fellow classmate, unable to believe the ramifications of his surreptitious question, “You know there were two battyman here last year?” I turned to face him, flabbergasted. I had always admired the elegant angularity of his eyes and, as a Chinese boy, I wished that mine had the same shape. But in that moment, I looked at his eyes in a different way, searching for some sign that he was joking. His face, so much darker than mine, was dead serious. The gravity of his question forced me to consider what was previously unthinkable. In my world, “battyman” was so “other,” that even as I reluctantly began to recognize myself in that term, I could not imagine that such a vilified figure (much less two!) could have a past so close to home. All I could manage in response was a stunned, “Yuh too lie,” a characteristic Jamaican expression of disbelief. Even as it stared me in the face, I was unable to accept this opening to queer history.

Fractal Repair emerges as an attempt to re-engage this conversation. Anthropologists open their monographs as narratives of arrival; mine is a story of return.¹ I could not take on my schoolmate’s question in the moment; I needed space and time to come back to it. This process of “turning back” characterizes my relationship not only to Jamaica’s queer history but also to the theoretical and methodological approach that I use to construct it. It is a fractal relationship. Fractals refer to patterns that repeat, but never exactly in the same way. There is always a site of rupture, a space of difference in what might otherwise appear to be exact repetition. This ruptural difference animates the practice of queer history making that is my central concern in this book. What does it mean to return to explore a space of previously unrecognized difference? What kinds of theoretical investments are required to support this form of inquiry? And what sorts of historical narratives are forthcoming from this endeavor?

My return is motivated by the reparative capacity of history making in response to queer violence. I focus on Jamaica not only out of a commitment to redressing my own psychic harms but also because the island’s contemporary reputation for supposedly being “the most homophobic place on earth” demands critical response.² Though *Time* magazine first attributed this moniker to Jamaica in 2006, the island continues to grapple with its association with homophobic exceptionalism almost two decades later. The supposed intimacy between Jamaica and queer violence operates as a blueprint for regional and global imaginaries. The island stands in for anti-queer sentiment across the Caribbean writ large, and the notion of a globally recognizable homophobia that famously calcified around Jamaica has become a durable framework

through which to interpret and hierarchize queer violence across the world.³ It is impossible to ignore the violations that queer people experience across multiple domains of contemporary Jamaican life. But the relationship of this violence to ongoing legacies of empire that pathologize racialized difference and gender and sexual impropriety is also unavoidable. These legacies are apparent in colonial epistemologies that animate racialized narratives of Jamaica in terms of sexed and gendered deviance and in the ways Jamaicans themselves struggle with how we have been conscripted into these narratives.⁴ In this book I bring to bear the power of history making on the troubled/troubling space of queerness in contemporary Jamaica. I wager on the capacity of evoking the past to perform the cultural and political work of repair.

My approach to repair is indebted to the work of Deborah Thomas, who advocates “thinking about reparations as a framework for producing knowledge”; and Eve Sedgwick, who proposes reparative reading practices that “assemble and confer plentitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self.”⁵ In this book I thus explore how historical knowledge production can “confer plentitude” on the embattled site of queerness in Jamaica.⁶ I am not undertaking a search for queer heroes in Jamaica’s past in the hopes of offering a narrative of redemption. Nor am I tracing the origins of queer violence on the island to the racialized workings of colonial power as a way of externalizing contemporary regimes of gender and sexuality. Instead, I lean on the power that coheres in the practice of history making itself. Stuart Hall notes that “far from being grounded in a mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within narratives of the past.”⁷ Taking my cue from Hall, I wager that the practice of positioning in relationship to the past may be generative of reparative effects. This approach suggests that the potential for historical repair lies less in the content of historical accounts than in the process of constructing them.

In *Fractal Repair* I propose a theory and method of reparative history making by attending to the way that mathematics structures historical thought. The mathematics I am referring to is less about numbers that have come to represent objective, universal, modern facts, and more about the way mathematical argumentation entails a form of storytelling.⁸ Brian Rotman contends that doing mathematics involves “reading and writing highly specific and internally organized sequences of mathematical sentences—sequences intended to validate, test, prove, demonstrate, show that some particular assertion holds or is ‘true’ or is ‘the case.’”⁹ Mathematics thus op-

erates as a mode of representation with rhetorical force and epistemological effects. Different kinds of mathematics perform this (representational) work in different ways. The grammar of arithmetic is especially prominent in practices of history making. *Arithmetic* is derived from the Latin or Greek term for “art of counting” and is the branch of mathematics concerned with the computation of numbers: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Arithmetic practices shape historical consciousness and often set the terms of debate over how representations of historical subjects are constructed. These practices are constitutive of the materials that historians often use as sources to create narratives of the past, such as census documents. They also influence the crafting of these narratives through structuring metaphors around “adding” subjects considered to be missing (perhaps “subtracted”) from existing historical records.¹⁰ Yet arithmetic practices can have intensely violent effects. The inscription of these practices performs discursive violence by erasing or monstrously objectifying subaltern subjects. They materialize technologies such as ledgers and surveys that facilitate the disappearance of Native women, the commodification of enslaved Black women, and the construction of Indian women in terms of sexual deviance.¹¹ In so doing, arithmetic operations enable the regulation of subaltern life according to broader political economic exigencies.¹² The numerical calculations that eliminate, commercialize, and fetishize racial, gender, and sexual alterity underwrite racial capitalism and colonial governance. Approaches to history making that take on arithmetic form thus run the risk of reinscribing these modes of violence. Scholars working at the intersection of digital humanities, critical race and ethnic studies, history, and science and technology studies are thus skeptical of the liberatory claims that often accompany the enactment of digital technologies. Rather than freeing minoritized subjects from the obscurity of history, the computational practices that undergird these technologies create new conditions of subjectification that reconfigure hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality in the production of archival knowledge.¹³

In this book I follow Katherine McKittrick to ask what it might look like to make reparative histories that “count it out differently.”¹⁴ Evelyn Hammonds inspires this move with her suggestion that any inquiry centering Black lesbian sexualities requires “that we must think in terms of a different geometry.”¹⁵ The etymology of the term “arithmetic” indexes the act of counting. The term “geometry” derives from the Greek or Latin word “geometria,” the root “geo” meaning “earth,” and the root “metria” meaning “measurement.” While arithmetic is concerned with the computation of numbers, geometry seeks to describe the properties of bodies in space via distance, shape, size, or position. A turn

to geometry thus facilitates the kind of positioning in relationship to the past that Hall advocates. And even if arithmetic is the basis on which geometric operations are performed—it is not possible to practice geometry without the computation of numbers that constitutes arithmetic—making geometry the ground on which to conceive of history making opens up different avenues of inquiry. Rather than asking about figures that go missing in narratives of the past, a focus on geometry reorients reparative histories to questions of form and geopolitics. What are the appropriate forms through which to conduct and narrate historical research? How might relations of power structure the form of historical narratives across differentiated space? What kinds of approaches to history making would be useful in confronting the problem space of queerness in contemporary Jamaica?

I begin to answer these questions through the generative field of fractal geometry. While Ron Eglash illustrates how fractal formations permeated the knowledge systems of various African societies for centuries, the term “fractal” was first coined by the Polish-born French-American mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot in 1975 from the Latin verb “frangere” meaning “to break,” or the Latin adjective “fractus” meaning “broken.”¹⁶ Fractals describe patterns that repeat at different scales. Mandelbrot used the concept of fractals to account for the supposedly irregular structures of nature that classical mathematics considered to be “pathological” or “monstrous” because they failed to conform to the logics of Euclid and Newton. He insisted that ocean currents, hurricane gales, and earthquake tremors were not haphazard. Instead, they were characterized by a kind of regularity as patterns that occur at various scales of repetition.¹⁷ Fractal geometry is a fitting approach to Jamaican queer inquiry because the recursive properties of fractals bring together theories of queer formation and Caribbean subjectivity.¹⁸ It encompasses Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s understanding of the Caribbean as “a repeating island” while also making space for Judith Butler’s notion of gender as constituted through repetition.¹⁹ It aligns with the circularity of Édouard Glissant’s poetics of relation that characterize Caribbean consciousness and the recursivity of Gilles Deleuze’s theorization of history writing through eroticism.²⁰

Nothing’s Mat, the novel by Jamaican feminist theorist Erna Brodber, serves as a model for the kind of fractal history making that this book explores. Set in the twenty-first century, *Nothing’s Mat* centers the efforts of Princess—the text’s young, Black, female protagonist—to learn about her family history. Fractals function as the means through which Princess constructs her family’s past and also as a structuring principle of the novel itself. Princess undertakes this quest as part of a high school assignment and quickly finds that she

must leave England for Jamaica when her parents are unable to answer her questions about present and past family members. In the company of her Cousin Nothing (or Conut, for short), Princess soon discovers that the linear template she had initially planned to use is unable to account for the various relationships in her family. With Conut's help, she ends up fabricating a sisal mat made up of repeating circles encompassing family in England, Jamaica, Panama, and the United States that she submits as her assignment. In the end, Princess notes:

My presentation did not use the straight lines and arrows that one normally sees in family trees. I used the circles as in Conut's mat, . . . I got an A for my paper and learned two new words—"iteration" and "recursion." I was not sure I knew what they meant then, but Miss had said that these were the principles we used in making the mat. "Your end is your beginning" she quoted from Conut and smiled "In what odd places does wisdom reside," she added. "The literature speaks of the West Indian family as 'fractured'; you might be able to prove that it is a fractal."²¹

Brodber's fractal history making highlights the fact that no return is identical. This space of difference that prevents exact repetition constitutes a potential site of repair. In the language of fractal geometry, the lines that change with each iteration are called active lines. (The lines that remain the same are called passive lines.) Though the characters in *Nothing's Mat* recognize the repetition of historical patterns, they also acknowledge the possibility of change. Princess thus notes a similarity between the relationship she has with her cousin Joy and the relationship that Conut has with her cousin Pearl in the generation above her. In Princess's words, "The structures were there and all we would be doing through our lives was replicating them: the two women so close you'd think they were sisters. She [Joy] and I were just a repeat of Nothing and Pearl."²² Yet Princess is also determined not to let history repeat itself. She names her daughter after a deceased relative, vowing to give her a "second chance to live a normal and happy life *this time*."²³ At the completion of each circle of the fractal family mat there is always a string left hanging that can be taken up and woven in a different way. The difference in repetition that the hanging string implies is inherent in the recursive process.²⁴

The gender and sexual politics of *Nothing's Mat* suggests that queerness marks the difference of repetition. The fractal structure of Princess's family mat incorporates queer subjects and relations in ways not possible within linear kinship systems. The mat thus includes Princess's relatives queered by transgressing expectations of female domesticity—such as Euphemia, who

was so physically strong and economically self-sufficient in making a life for herself in Panama that her community members called her a “man woman.” It also includes Conut herself, who planted sugarcane on her land in Jamaica and “got herself talked about” because women were not supposed to use the pitchfork. The mat also incorporates all manner of intimacies that exceed and unsettle relations of blood and marriage that not only prompt North Atlantic observers to use the label “fractured” but also puzzle many of the characters in Brodber’s diasporic West Indian world. Some of these relationships include cousin-siblings, mother-sisters, fosterings, and adoptions as well as the return of deceased family members’ spirits in other bodies, and interdependent sacred relationships with plant and animal life.²⁵ Conventional mappings of kinship are unable to render the fulsome family past that Princess seeks, because the queer kin and relations that she learns about are unthinkable within their structuring logics. It is her family’s queerness that compels her engagement with fractal geometry as a way of narrating her family’s past.

In this book I join the concept of fractals to the concept of queerness in order to propose queer fractals as a method and theory of history making. My use of the term “queer” draws on the late seventeenth-century English meaning of “queer” to refer to something “strange,” “odd,” or “peculiar.”²⁶ Queer thus operates less as a fixed category and more as a relation to existing conditions.²⁷ In this capacity, *Fractal Repair* synthesizes two strands of critique. First, it considers the antiracist work of Afro-Trinidadian scholar J. J. Thomas. In his 1898 monograph *Froudacity*, he notes, “It sounds queer, not to say unnatural and scandalous, that Englishmen should in these days of light be the champions of injustice toward their fellow-subjects, not for any intellectual or moral disqualification, but on the simple account of the darker skin.”²⁸ In his text, which critiques English knowledge production about the Caribbean, Thomas mobilizes queer to denounce colonial ideologies of racial inferiority.²⁹ Second, *Fractal Repair* engages the work of contemporary scholars in North Atlantic queer studies who use “queer” to refer to gender and sexual relations of power. Eve Sedgwick thus describes queer as “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender or anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically.”³⁰ Ron Eglash suggests that ruptures in cycles of repetition function as openings from which to examine relations of geography, race, gender, and sexuality; I contend that queer fractals involve looking at how these modes of alterity operate as sites of difference within the context of historical change.³¹ *Fractal Repair* mobilizes these breaks with the past as an opportunity to produce

counter histories, or representations of the past that are opposed “not only to dominant narratives but also to prevailing modes of historical thought and methods of research.”³²

Fractal Repair offers a way of thinking about how temporality and mathematics shape the relationship between history making and the work of repair. The language of reparations constitutes the globally dominant framework for situating the role of historical knowledge as a means of intervening in the present.³³ Within this framework, the practice of reparations often involves a juridical accounting of past harms as a means of repairing the effects of violence in the present.³⁴ For countries like Jamaica that struggled for centuries under the yoke of empire and are still reckoning with its legacies of violence, such an approach to repair holds out the promise of justice and accountability. And the fact that discussions of reparations often traffic in the language of finance—capital transfers to survivors of violence—is no small matter to impoverished nations who are grappling with structures of economic underdevelopment that colonial powers laid in their wake. Reparation discourses thus posit historical research as arithmetic inquiry in the service of a linear, progressive temporality. Only by quantifying the harms of the past that persist in the present can something like liberation be achieved for the future.³⁵ Yet Denise Ferreira da Silva notes that such an approach to redress constitutes “a failure to think colonial and racial violence in its full fractal complexity.”³⁶ History does not proceed along the liberal coordinates of progress either in the Caribbean or for queer subjects.³⁷ The promises of revolution, emancipation, independence, and development remain unfulfilled in a region that continues to be plagued by social, cultural, economic, and political ills, and dependency on imperial powers.³⁸ And the fruits of liberation do not fully belong to those who fall under the sign of queer, for even those who have gained the most from the advances of LGBTQ activism continue to experience the psychic legacies of queer violence and stigma.³⁹

How would practices of history making unfold if they took on the recursive shape of Caribbean and queer temporalities? And what are the implications of constructing fractal representations of the past for conceptions of redress and repair? *Fractal Repair* displaces arithmetic and centers geometry as the structuring logic of history making. While this move does not necessarily carry ethical or moral implications, it nevertheless compels a different approach to creating historical narratives.⁴⁰ *Fractal Repair* thus attends to the way the past, present, and future take shape through patterns that repeat but never exactly in the same way. This kind of history making shifts the mode of repair away from narratives of overcoming history and toward living with

the recursive effects of the past in the present by holding on to the moments of rupture: those sites where exact replication fails.⁴¹ The potential of repair in the future resides in these queer moments of contingency, “the unpredictable and the unknowable in time that governs errant, eccentric, promiscuous, and unexpected organizations of social life.”⁴²

History, Mathematics, Jamaica

Jamaica is a key site in the history of modern mathematical imaginaries because gender and sexual relations on the island have posed a problem for the racialized workings of colonial capital since at least the seventeenth century. Indeed, the conscription of Jamaica into calculations of empire around race, gender, and sexuality would later prove to have global implications for the demographic regulation of peoples across the Atlantic. My use of fractal geometry as a point of entry into the problem space of queerness in contemporary Jamaica is thus not new. Instead, it draws from and reconfigures the ways that the language of mathematics has already been used to produce colonial knowledge about the island. In so doing, *Fractal Repair* counters the notion that mathematics is somehow an objective practice; it takes for granted that mathematics is co-constitutive with the subjects who practice it and the contexts in which it takes place.⁴³ Jamaica is central—not incidental—to the formation of modern mathematical logics of race, gender, and sexuality.

In the aftermath of England’s successful military campaign to wrest Jamaica from Spanish control in 1655, a major concern of the new imperial power was to populate the colony to provide adequate labor power for its economic purposes as well as military forces to defend England’s new possession in the Americas. Yet England’s Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, was troubled by the demographics of the island’s population, with more than four men for every woman, a situation that he interpreted as stymying natural increase in the colony. Having conquered Ireland in 1649, Cromwell proposed to resolve what he interpreted as a gender imbalance through the forced migration of Irish women to Jamaica.⁴⁴ Though Cromwell’s immigration scheme was never implemented, it was nevertheless pivotal to the development of modern mathematical thought because of its influence on Cromwell’s secretary, William Petty. Petty was an English physician, economist, and natural philosopher who coined the term “political arithmetic,” a new approach to statecraft using innovative quantitative techniques in ways that anticipated the modern social sciences of the Enlightenment.⁴⁵ He developed the principles of political arithmetic through policy proposals that exhibited a structural similarity

to Cromwell's Jamaica immigration scheme. In Ireland, he advocated an exchange with women in Britain so that Irish women would be civilized by British society, while British women would marry Irish men and reshape Ireland to be more productive from within.⁴⁶ To prevent English "degeneration" overseas, he proposed that English men in the New World buy Native girls and marry them only after they had been raised to be English women.⁴⁷ Across the Atlantic, Petty applied a method of reasoning rooted in "number, weight, and measure" to manipulate demography as a means of maximizing British military and commercial strength.⁴⁸ His political arithmetic enacted a biospatial rationalism by manipulating race, gender, and sexual relations to support the workings of empire.⁴⁹ First conceived in relationship to Jamaica, Petty's political arithmetic constitutes an early example of what Michel Foucault refers to as biopower, or the regulation of bodies and populations as an exercise in the politics of life.⁵⁰

If the demographics of colonial Jamaica warranted a particular kind of numerical intervention in the seventeenth century, the stakes became much higher in the period between the world wars. In 1926 Charles Benedict Davenport, American biologist and founder of the International Federation of Eugenics Organizations, seized upon Jamaica to carry out research on "race mixing." Funded by the Carnegie Foundation, this project was intended to be the first step of a larger effort to identify mixed-race people around the world and subject them to eugenic measures.⁵¹ North Atlantic eugenics discourses held that racial mixing posed a threat to humanity because interracial reproduction not only jeopardized the advancement of the supposedly "superior" races but also produced pathological offspring.⁵² Petty and Davenport both problematized the coexistence of "superior" and "inferior" people, but differences in the discourses of race under which they operated led them to approach this problem in different ways. Petty advocated a policy of race mixing that Davenport, in the promotion of racial purity, would later condemn. This is because prior to the seventeenth century, ideas of blood, civilization, nation, culture, and race were used interchangeably, as there was no clear line between cultural and physical elements or between social and biological hereditary.⁵³ Petty's demographic interventions thus sought to enact a flexible kind of racial alchemy that would later become untenable within the framework of race-as-biology that would come to underpin Davenport's work.⁵⁴ But if Petty and Davenport differed in their evaluation of interracial intimacies, they both nevertheless maintained an investment in white superiority through racial enumeration.

For Davenport, Jamaica proved to be an ideal research site. Davenport noted, "There still exists a fair proportion of pure blooded representatives of

both the white and Negro races, as well as a large number of hybrids between these races.”⁵⁵ This was far from the first of such studies and was certainly not the first attempt to quantify race since British statistician Francis Galton first coined the word “eugenics” in 1883.⁵⁶ The significance of the Jamaica race-crossing study lay in the mechanization of racialized enumerative practices in support of the kind of demographic intervention that Petty envisioned three centuries earlier. To deal with the sheer volume of quantitative information collected, Davenport partnered with IBM, whose machines could organize data by “reading” the holes in the columns and rows of Hollerith punch cards.

Davenport’s eugenic researchers worked with IBM to adapt the punch-card system, which had originally been created to collect data for the US census, to collect and quantitatively analyze information that was thought to index racial difference, including a plethora of bodily measurements such as height, head length, nose breadth, mouth width, fingerprints, and so on.⁵⁷ With the ability to process 25,000 cards per hour, punch-card-based sorting machines could rapidly cross-tabulate human measurements against both eugenic standards and geographic markers to locate individuals for eugenic action. This was the first time that IBM created a system to track and report racialized characteristics. The system would later become significant for the practice of eugenics across the Atlantic. Five years later the company developed the punch-card systems used in Nazi Germany to automate racial warfare in the identification and location of European Jews and other undesirable peoples. Colonial Jamaica was the training ground for the mathematical technology of the Holocaust.⁵⁸

Today, Jamaica—which has been formally independent from England since 1962—continues to occupy a prominent place in Atlantic imaginaries around race, gender, and sexual deviance, but for a different reason. Rather than indexing the colonial predicament of settler reproduction or the global problem of race crossing, Jamaica now stands in as “the most homophobic place on earth.” As the island became even more firmly enmeshed in the structures of global capital at the end of the twentieth century, Jamaica began to garner a reputation for homophobia in American and European contexts where Jamaican same-gender-desiring and gender-nonconforming subjects were often represented in terms of violence.⁵⁹ While the lyrics of dancehall artists such as Buju Banton and Shaba Ranks were perhaps the most recognized of these representational forms, nuanced themes of queer violence also pervaded the creative works of Jamaicans living in the diaspora, such as writers Michelle Cliff and Patricia Powell in the United States, and Makeda Silvera in Canada.⁶⁰ In the next decade, North Atlantic human rights

organizations began paying greater attention to Jamaica, producing knowledge about queerness on the island for global audiences using inflammatory rhetoric such as “hated to death.”⁶¹ But it was Tim Padgett’s 2006 article for *Time* magazine describing Jamaica as “the most homophobic place on earth” that has proven to be the most enduring shorthand for associating Jamaica with violence toward same-gender-desiring and gender-variant persons.⁶² Such narratives not only highlight how queerness operates as a site of systemic discrimination and violence across multiple domains of contemporary Jamaican life; they also rehearse colonial epistemologies that mobilize the attribution of racialized difference and gender and sexual impropriety as markers of deviance and inferiority.⁶³

My use of fractal geometry as an approach to history making to confront the contemporary problem space of queerness in Jamaica is not unrelated to the ways that the quantification of race, gender, and sexuality was mobilized to address the challenges that the island posed to the workings of eugenics and colonial capital. If the recursive nature of queer fractals refuses the positioning of reparations as a means of liberation from the past, the troubling history of fractal geometry forecloses a heroic construction of queer fractals as an approach to history making. Mandelbrot, the “father of fractal geometry,” began working at IBM in 1958, and his access to the company’s computer and punch-card systems was indispensable to his thinking on this new field.⁶⁴ The same company and the same technology that produced racialized knowledge about Jamaicans for transatlantic eugenics research served as the fertile breeding ground for the formation of Mandelbrot’s fractal thinking. There are two implications of the fact that fractal geometry owes its existence (at least partly) to IBM’s punch-card system. First, the study of Jamaican queer history cannot be separated from gendered and sexualized discourses of racial deviance within transnational projects of capital accumulation. Second, because arithmetic is the basis on which geometric operations are performed, constructing fractal histories of queerness in Jamaica cannot escape the pathologizing racialized arithmetic on which such mathematical procedures occur.

Rather than trying to avoid or minimize fractal geometry’s troubled/troubling history, I explore what it would mean to acknowledge and move with its difficult legacies. In so doing, I take my lead from the way that Brodber’s protagonist, Princess in *Nothing’s Mat*, navigates relationships of violence in fabricating her family’s history. While Princess’s expansive fractal mat accounts for queer kin that otherwise fall outside of linear kinship charts, it also incorporates all forms of violations that characterize family formations in the afterlife of the plantation.⁶⁵ The mat thus includes Mass Eustace, who

begat Nothing through rape, as well as Everard Turnbury, who, upon marrying Nothing after Mass Eustace's death, physically and sexually assaults her. It materializes repetitive patterns not only of love, intimacy, and solidarity, but also of hardship, suffering, and violence.⁶⁶ Nothing's sexual violation is a reiteration of what her own mother experienced. As a genre of history making, fractal geometry cannot evade the violent conditions and legacies that gave rise to its creation. But while *Fractal Repair* is not an innocent knowledge project, its capacity for producing representations of the past with reparative effects lies in the certainty that even if history seems to repeat, it never does so exactly.

History Making and Repair: Between Caribbean and Queer

Fractal Repair reconfigures the ways that Caribbean and queer subjects have long mobilized history making as a mode of repair. The very notion that queerness and the Caribbean have histories and that these histories should be created (or “discovered”) and known is premised on the assumption that they are in fact valid historical subjects. The existence of something like “Caribbean history” or “queer history” is therefore not self-evident. Instead, they are claims produced through struggles to redress the racialized violence of empire and injurious regimes of gender and sexuality. The act of making Caribbean and queer histories takes shape in response to colonial ideologies that posit the possession of a triumphant history as an index of humanity proper, while also insisting on the pastlessness of subjects marked by racial, gender, and sexual alterity. Claiming queerness and the Caribbean as legitimate subjects of historical inquiry works to repair the damage imposed by this association of subalterity with history-lessness.

Yet histories of repair performed in the name of “Caribbean” and “queer” often do not overlap. Caribbean people have used the claim of historical specificity as an assertion of self-determination and a critique of European and American imperialisms. By insisting that the region exists as an autonomous entity whose past needed to be considered on its own terms, they broke with the prevailing notion that Caribbean pasts were simply an extension of North Atlantic history.⁶⁷ In so doing, they laid the foundation for contemporary projects of history making oriented toward demands for reparations from (former) colonial powers. Mimi Sheller notes that “one of the greatest silences in Caribbean historiography is the invisibility of queer subjectivities”; queerness escapes this anticolonial and (later) reparative investment in making

Caribbean histories.⁶⁸ On the other hand, queer subjects have relied on the power of invoking the past to destigmatize non-normative gender and sexual relations, by using history making to unsettle discourses of a “natural” gender and sexuality that enabled the pathologization of queer individuals and communities. Yet given the interrelationship between knowledge production and geopolitics the de-pathologizing effects of these history-making projects largely remain confined to the North Atlantic.⁶⁹ David Eng and Jasbir Puar thus critique “the institutionalization of queer studies as its own particular brand of US area studies,” leading Kadji Amin to call for more queer genealogical approaches that “center racialized people and/or geographical locations outside Europe and North America.”⁷⁰

Fractal geometry provides a method that can bring together the reparative potential of Caribbean and queer history making. This approach insists on the relevance of mathematics for thinking about how relations of race, gender, sexuality, and geography shape the production of historical knowledge. Such geometry is the basis of my intervention into these two fields—space (“geo”) structures my engagement with queer history, and form (“metria”) structures my engagement with Caribbean history. *Fractal Repair* orients studies of queer history toward the Caribbean while locating queerness within the existing shapes of Caribbean thought.

In writing about the development of historical disciplines in the Caribbean, Barry Higman notes that “subjects which have become important in European and North American history-writing have sometimes been neglected or ignored by Caribbean historians. Gay and lesbian history, and the history of science, for instance, have found few practitioners in the Caribbean.”⁷¹ Extending Higman’s observations, it is not only that North American and European historians produce accounts of gay, lesbian, and scientific pasts in ways that Caribbean scholars do not, but also that these historical narratives spatialize “gay,” “lesbian,” and “science” and construct them as distinctly North Atlantic phenomena. If spaces are not naturally discontinuous but instead are *made* to be separate through practices of place making, one of the many ways that spatial distinction is achieved is through the production of historical narratives.⁷² Theories of queer formation that rely on the trope of modernity are prime examples of this process. Though the sense of novelty associated with modernity is produced through the calcification of *global* networks of exchange and production, the modernity that is foundational to historians’ conception of queer emergence is often confined to the North Atlantic.⁷³ For Michel Foucault, the consolidation of a regime of power that regulates populations and individual bodies through sexuality becomes “an indispensable

element in the development of capitalism,” and the marker of “the threshold of our modernity.”⁷⁴ In this model, the homosexual as a durable category of personhood eclipses—even if it never fully replaces—the more ephemeral classification of sodomite. Gaytri Spivak critiques Foucault’s claim that the capacity to understand oneself (and be understood) in terms of sexuality indexes one’s modernity. She points to the Eurocentricity of Foucault’s writing and argues that “the topographical reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions.”⁷⁵

To the extent that modernity becomes axiomatic to theories of queer formation, the centrality of the Caribbean to conceiving modernity makes the region indispensable for queer historical inquiry. Michel-Rolph Trouillot maintains that the Caribbean’s modernity lies less with any particular characteristic of the region itself and more with its insertion into a regime of history and sociopolitical regulation.⁷⁶ The systematic arrival of Europeans in the Americas at the end of the fifteenth century not only marked the first moment of globality and the making of the Atlantic World but also the production of the Caribbean as a modern region through colonization. Through European arrival, Indigenous genocide, and the importation of enslaved African and indentured Asian labor, the Caribbean became the site of a new international system of agro-industrial capitalism that joined colony and metropole, field and factory, producer and consumer, European and Other. Though these developments could only be interpreted as a break with the past, Sidney Mintz argues that the Caribbean functions as “an instance of precocious modernity, an unanticipated (indeed unnoticed) modernity—unnoticed especially, perhaps, because it was happening in the colonies before it happened in the metropolises, and happening to people most of whom were forcibly stolen from the worlds outside the West.”⁷⁷ It is through this “unanticipated modernity” that this book explores the question of queer history.

Fractal Repair brings together this concern about the geopolitics of queer historicization with a preoccupation with how queerness figures into existing forms of Caribbean historical thought. For Caribbean historians, the concept “creole” marks the specificity of a history-writing tradition from within the region; it indexes a shift from an imperial to a decolonial approach to writing about Caribbean pasts.⁷⁸ In its initial formulation, the term was used to describe arrivals in the New World who differed from the Old World societies of their ancestry and the Indigenous people they encountered.⁷⁹ “Creole” condenses notions of sameness and difference as well as those of time and space. Although creole subjects may be the offspring of Old World parents, their distance from the Old World and their time in the New World marks them

as different from their lineage.⁸⁰ While creolization, or the process of making creoles, may elicit romantic images of cultural formation through consensual interaction among equals, creolization instead occurs through dynamics of conflict (as well as accommodation) and always through unequal relations of power.⁸¹ Creolization has become the master symbol of the Caribbean.⁸² Caribbean creolization is a product of the region's fundamental modernity forged through relationships among various kinds of ethnoracial difference.⁸³ In a region made anew through European conquest, Indigenous depopulation, and the introduction of enslaved African and later indentured Asian laborers to create and maintain an international system of agro-industrial capitalism, the relations that developed within and between these various ethnoracialized groups could not be anything but modern.

Insofar as Caribbean people understand themselves as (and are understood as) historical subjects through creolization, this creolization takes on a queer, recursive shape. Kamau Brathwaite argues that "it was in the intimate area of sexual relationships . . . where the most significant—and lasting—interculturalization took place"; and Sidney Mintz suggests that it was the social organization of these patterns of "mating" across ethnoracial lines that shaped the specific nature of creolization across Caribbean societies.⁸⁴ To the extent that queerness indexes gender and sexual peculiarity, the forms of intimacy that Brathwaite and Mintz discuss taking root among Caribbean people were intrinsically queer/peculiar to the systems of gender and sexual propriety that existed in Old World and the New.⁸⁵ This is because neither the region's Indigenous inhabitants nor its later arrivals, who came under diverse conditions of unfreedom, were able to faithfully reproduce the logics of intimacy with which they were familiar (I discuss this point in greater detail in chapter 2). I maintain that as Caribbean people mobilized discourses of creolization to position themselves as legitimate historical subjects, queerness was key to their foundational logics.⁸⁶ Strange forms of gender and sexuality alchemize Indigenous, European, African, and Asian people, transforming them into modern New World subjects. Ultimately, in this book I bring together the reparative impulses of Caribbean and queer history making to theorize queer formation through Caribbean modernity and to conceptualize the shape of creolization through queerness.

Fractal Repair offers a theory and method of history making from the time space of late twentieth-century Jamaica. This is a critical period in the country's cultural political formation across colonial, post-independence, and neoliberal eras that occurred immediately before the emergence of the island's global reputation as "the most homophobic place on earth." Chapter 2

illustrates the workings of queer fractals as a mode of narrating the past by providing historical context for this book. It represents the history of Jamaica from the first arrival of the Spanish to the end of the twentieth century. Given the vast multiplicity of what could count as “queer” and “Jamaica” in the past, I do not seek to perform a historical inventory or accounting. Instead, this chapter gestures to the repetitive shape—in a necessarily partial and limited way—of Jamaican queerness over time. This tentative narration fleshes out the multiple dimensions of Jamaican gender and sexual peculiarity in the shape of transnational race relations, especially as they articulate with questions of labor and capital accumulation.

The next four chapters explore the question of repair through a queer turning to the past. Each chapter brings the method of queer fractals to an archive of repair. Where an archive is understood as being a “system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events,” archives of repair index those systems that generate reparative statements as events.⁸⁷ *Fractal Repair* thus turns its attention to archives that materialize different moments in which Jamaican individuals, communities, and institutions sought to redress the injuries of history. In keeping with the figuration of the Caribbean as a porous region with permeable boundaries, the geographic reach of each archive extends beyond Jamaica’s shores. The geometric approach of using queer fractals for history making facilitates this kind of inquiry because it confronts questions of both time and space. Yet far from being random or haphazard, the nature of these scalar moves runs parallel to the spatial imaginations that cohere within each historical moment under consideration.

The archives of repair that I assemble draw from a wide range of sources. While I detail the construction of each archive in the chapters that follow, it is worth noting that in this book I bring together Kamau Brathwaite’s injunction to “develop a discipline of social arts to work along with (and sometimes run counter to) the social science” with Jack Halberstam’s scavenger methodology that advocates combining methods that are often at odds with each other.⁸⁸ For this reason, *Fractal Repair* produces archives that weld together newspaper articles with photographs, oral history interviews with performance video footage, and government reports with novels. In this process of bricolage, conflict arises not only in comparing the content of these sources and the conditions under which they were produced and circulated, but also in the process of bringing together the diversity of their forms. For instance, newspapers and novels are different kinds of texts that perform differently in the world according to the conventions of their genre. Rather than flattening these differences, I seek to mobilize the productive

tension that arises from holding them together in the same analytic frame. The archives that emerge from this far-reaching assemblage, much like the processes of repair that they index and seek to produce, are syncretic, heterogeneous, and internally contradictory.

The chapters are organized in two pairs. Chapters 3 and 4 attend to the question of historical continuity. If queerness takes shape as a site of rupture within patterns that repeat, it indexes not only iterations of difference but also the stable backdrop that makes this difference legible. Indeed, the very materialization of queerness as difference relies on the continuity/sameness of what surrounds it. These two chapters mobilize queerness to lay bare the durability of archival effects. Chapter 3 attends to the repair of knowledge within the framework of empire. The mid-twentieth century marked the institutionalization of a “native” tradition of social science inquiry in Jamaica and across the English-speaking Caribbean at least partly in response to colonial epistemologies that pathologized working-class Afro-Caribbean kinship patterns. By investigating intimate relations that departed from North Atlantic models of nuclear family, these academics produced knowledge that nationalists later mobilized in support of claims of Caribbean distinctiveness. In this chapter I construct an archive of this anticolonial response to consider how it narrated queerness. More specifically, I investigate how the workings of coloniality make distinctions among various gender and sexual peculiarities by analyzing the kinds of historical evidence (if any) they leave behind in their wake. I contend that interrelated workings of color, class, gender, and nation structure the ways that queerness is inscribed in, and as, Jamaica’s past. Same gender intimacy and gender nonconformity within the Afro-Creole spiritual tradition of Pukumina persist in the margins of Jamaica’s institutionalized archival collections that are overwhelmed by the omnipresent figure of the foreign white “homosexual.”

Chapter 4 takes on bodily repair. Here I focus on the outbreak of HIV/AIDS in the Anglophone Caribbean, which was first reported in Jamaica in 1982. Very quickly this illness was understood to be transmitted through sex, which compelled Jamaicans to publicly grapple with sexuality in new ways. In this chapter I examine how HIV/AIDS comes to be an occasion to produce knowledge about sexuality and especially about same-gender-desiring subjects, who are most associated with the illness. In contrast to the social scientists discussed in chapter 3 that operated within the framework of empire, the public health workers that take center stage in this chapter are oriented toward the well-being of the national body. These workers found themselves navigating the epidemic through the dual imperatives of surveillance (pro-

ducing knowledge for institutions to combat the epidemic) and care (seeing to the needs of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS). The decisions they made about what, how, and among whom they shared the intimate knowledge they generated through their relationships with their patients were consequential, not only for the well-being of individuals and the general population, but also for how the archives of sexual health take shape. Hierarchies of color, class, and gender shaped Jamaican frontline health workers' knowledge-making practices, such that the same-gender-desiring subjects they most associated with HIV/AIDS were poor and working-class Black men.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the potential for historical rupture. In chapters 3 and 4, queerness showed up as a way of highlighting the persistence of archival infrastructures; in chapters 5 and 6, it materializes to construct narratives of the past that depart from existing historical accounts. Chapter 5 explores the repair of performance in response to the debasement of Caribbean cultural practices that contravened racialized colonial codes of gender and sexual propriety. It focuses on Jamaica's National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), which became one of the country's most prominent cultural ambassadors after its founding in 1962—the year of the island's formal independence from Britain. Whereas Caribbean social scientists of the 1950s operated in the discursive space of empire, and Jamaican health workers of the 1990s directed their attention to the national body, Jamaican and Caribbean cultural workers of the 1960s functioned within the problem space at the juncture between region and nation. The dance company sought to create a distinctively Jamaican and Caribbean dance form by combining the movement vocabularies of Jamaican and Caribbean folk traditions with North Atlantic and African dance forms. In this chapter I present a close reading of NDTC's early performances and their reception on the island, within the region, and across the North Atlantic. I argue that the company's performances and how they were interpreted highlight the pervasive but covert way that same-gender intimacy and gender nonconformity were foundational to how Jamaicans sought to understand themselves in the wake of independence. This narrative unsettles existing historical accounts of Jamaica's immediate post-independence period, which emphasize the twinning of overpopulation and national development discourses in the promotion of Euro-American forms of kinship.

Chapter 6 turns to the question of political repair. With the election of Michael Manley as Jamaica's prime minister in 1972, Jamaicans experienced a sense of political possibility in which they could challenge various forms of national and international inequality. The island occupied a position of

leadership in challenging unequal arrangements of power on the global stage while the flourishing of Black Power, feminist, and labor movements in Jamaica indexed an intensive participation in local public life. In this chapter I take up the work of Jamaica's Gay Freedom Movement (GFM)—the first self-proclaimed gay activist organization of the English-speaking Caribbean, which came into existence in 1977. In chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively, empire, region/nation, and nation marked the discursive terrain for social scientists, health workers, and performers; for the activists in chapter 6, the discursive frame is nation/transnation. Closely attending to GFM's work, I argue that this small grassroots organization positioned same-gender erotic autonomy as a defining feature of Jamaican cultural identity and situated the island as a key node of international gay activism. In this chapter I offer a narrative that expands existing accounts of the period in which heterosexuality marked the limits of Jamaican struggles to transform national and international relations around gender and sexual inequality.

In the epilogue I conclude *Fractal Repair* with a brief meditation on the implications of queer fractals for thinking about futurity. What conceptions of the future are forthcoming from nonlinear approaches to temporality that spurn the illusions of liberation? I engage this question by revisiting the first moment of modern globality—the European conquest of the New World. I focus on the letter Diego Álvarez Chanca wrote to the Municipal Council of Seville as physician to Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to the Americas. Written in 1494, this letter's account is often considered to be the first written natural history and ethnography of the Americas. Chanca's representations of Caribbean Indigenous gender and sexual relations as “beastly” inaugurates racialized discourses of deviancy that justified conquest in the nascent workings of transatlantic capital. A queer reading of this text unsettles discourses of progress that envision the future as a clean break with this past by moving with the recursive temporalities that characterize Caribbean and queer realities. The future takes shape, not through a linear departure from the past, but instead as a ruptural space of indeterminacy that accompanies patterns of history that seem to repeat. The future will not yield an end to the modernity of racial capitalism that has simultaneously violated and shaped Caribbean subjects. If this is the case, futurity may lie in the practice of moving with the loops of history while holding fast to the (queer) promise that each iteration can never be the same.