2. *Home and Belonging for Nancy Prince*

If *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* emerged from the context of West Indian mixed-race female travel within the transatlantic British Empire, the *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Mrs. Nancy Prince*, published in 1850, revised in 1853, and then reprinted in 1856, similarly sheds light on the complex world of African American women who participated in transatlantic travel, in this case in the service of foreign mission. Parallel to and intertwined with the Atlantic slave trade was the circulation of colonial armies, merchants, and inanimate trade goods, enabling some possible spaces for agency among African diasporic subjects. Agency did not mean freedom from financial stress, especially for Black women living and traveling on their own. Still, as transatlantic networks of evangelical Christianity emerged in the late eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth, the need for missionaries unafraid of hard work and traveling to the ends of the earth created opportunities for working-class people, Black and white. My interest in Nancy Prince (1799–1857?), a free but initially impoverished Black New Englander, arises from the ways in which her self-authorization as a missionary and abolitionist through travel writing overlapped with larger American and Anglophone West Indian struggles for economic survival. Though Prince and Seacole never met, they crossed paths in a general way: as Seacole and many of her compatriots left economically depressed Jamaica in 1840s for Central America in hopes of economic opportunity, Prince sojourned in the same period in Jamaica's Saint Anne's Bay. Her goals were twofold: she had a great desire to minister to recently freed ex-slaves,

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and she wanted to assess the island as a possible homeland for free Blacks socially and economically crushed by racism in the United States. But long before she could accomplish any of this, she had to attend to her own family's grinding poverty and the dearth of opportunities open to her as a woman. Ironically, both Prince and Seacole justify their travels by pointing to their usefulness to larger communities. According to *Wonderful Adventures*, Seacole's raison d'être was to sustain and care for the British military (and, through this institution, white Britons themselves). In Prince's *Life and Travels*, however, her service is entirely on behalf of Black Atlantic populations.

Little is known of Prince beyond what she chose to reveal in her deceptively simple *Life and Travels*. Prince began life in 1799 in Newburyport, Massachusetts, a multicultural, mixed-race seafaring community made up of colonial whites, to be sure, but also Native Americans, Africans, and colony-born people of African descent. Though little is known of her father, Prince acknowledged that she was the granddaughter of a Native American woman and an African ex-slave who was a veteran of the American Revolution. When her biological father died, her mother married an African ex-slave and sailor. Acute poverty plagued her family, leaving Prince and her sister no choice but to go into domestic service, while a brother entered the merchant marine. This period of soul-crushing domestic labor finally came to an end in 1824 when Prince married a Black sailor and traveler named Nero Prince (figure 2.1). Employed at the court of the Russian czar, Prince's new husband relocated her to Saint Petersburg, where she remained for almost a decade. Giving the Russian winters as the excuse, in *Life and Travels* Prince recounted returning alone to the United States in 1833. Some years later she undertook two missionary journeys to postemancipation Jamaica, one in 1840 and then in 1842.

Whether in Russia or Jamaica, Prince undoubtedly encountered conditions that enabled particular forms of agency that would not have existed in the United States. These new conditions emboldened her to demand that her opinions be taken seriously, that she receive fair treatment from whites, and that she be given an opportunity to earn a living wage. But these expectations were fulfilled unevenly, in part because of racism and in part because, unlike Mary Seacole, Prince sometimes had difficulty adapting to the new and unfamiliar, even when she was among other people of African descent. As would have been the case with any traveler, Prince's experiences abroad were shaped not only by cultural difference (both in Russia and in a hemispheric context) but also by geographic and material conditions. In Russia, Nancy Prince seems to have enjoyed an unprecedented shift in social status, running her own business as a seamstress, letting out rooms in her home to students, and working for both

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On Sunday afternoon, at the African Church, by the Rev. Thomas Paul, Mr. Nero Prince, Chief Butler to the Emperor of all the Russias, to Miss Nancy Gardner, of Salem.

FIGURE 2.1. Marriage announcement for Nancy Gardiner and Nero Prince in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 21, 1824.

religious and social reform among Saint Petersburg's Protestants. However, according to her narrative, problems seemed to ensue once she returned home to the United States in 1833. By 1840 she had learned of Nero Prince's death in Russia, and in the capacity of respected widowhood she decided to investigate the British colony of Jamaica, in the wake of British West Indian emancipation. She hoped to gather information for African Americans at home about the possibility of emigration to the postslavery British islands and to help lift Jamaican ex-slaves—especially women and children—toward domesticity and a religiously ordered life in freedom.

Her second trip to Jamaica was cut short due to ill-health, yet despite this and other setbacks, upon her return to the United States she was very active in abolitionist circles. Indeed, though she omits any mention of it in *Life and Travels*, there exists an independent story about her passed down to the late nineteenth century by the National Association of Colored Women, that in 1847, after returning from Jamaica for the last time, she single-handedly attacked a slave catcher who had entered a home in Smith Court (a cul-de-sac that was a haven for runaway slaves, since the local residents were all Black). Physically hauling him out of a house, she then led a group of irate Black women and children who chased him out of the area for good.[1] If the story is true, Prince was a reformer who eschewed a life of female forbearance and religious piety, opting instead for a fierce antislavery activism. Her dedication to abolition was also evident at the Fifth National Women's Rights Convention in Philadelphia in 1854, where she protested the mistreatment of slave women.[2] Beyond these public activities, the years after 1847 seemed to have been particularly hard, and Prince apparently never regained the level of prosperity she had achieved as a businesswoman during her time in Russia. Indeed, both her travel narrative and her autobiography might be considered not only as texts that mark her engagement in African American emigration debates and international abolition but also as

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attempts to earn extra money. After the December 2, 1859, issue of the *Liberator* announced her death at the age of sixty, Prince disappeared from public record until 1894, when the National Association of Colored Women published the recuperative biographical essay mentioning the Smith Court incident.

As represented in *Life and Travels*, Prince's successive quests for social fulfillment as a domestic worker, wife, reformer, self-employed seamstress, and missionary referenced the political ebb and flow of a Black female authority often unevenly and precariously constructed in a variety of political and geographical locations, where disease and natural disasters shaped everyday life, and in relation to networks of male and female and Black and white social power. Along the way, Prince achieved a trajectory beyond her initial life in service and thus redefined her public image through an unending set of negotiations that involved her alternately challenging and embracing specific race, class, and gender norms, conditions of mobility, and patterns of religious authority emerging within and (if we include Russia) outside of the so-called Black Atlantic. Consequently, Prince's story demonstrates how different locations reframed each component part of her identity and how each reframing affected her relations with the communities she encountered. Nevertheless, her manner of textual self-presentation—in both the 1850 and 1853 versions of her travel narrative and in her 1841 stand-alone description of Jamaica titled *The West Indies: Being a Description of the Islands, Progress of Christianity, Education, and Liberty among the Colored Population Generally*—reveals a determination to define her roles within the perimeter of her own desires, even at the risk of alienating herself from those among whom she resided. These tensions emerged through her writing which, rather than providing a textual space to resolve and meditate on issues, reinforced this alienation and the resulting need for total self-reliance.

Clearly, Nancy Prince's shaping of a complex public identity within the confines of wifehood, a female reform tradition, travel, and missionary work challenges us to think deliberately about the gendered history of Black diasporic activism and intellectual engagement among nineteenth-century African Americans.[3] On the face of it, *Life and Travels* addresses Prince's classed and raced subject position as an American-born free Black woman searching for a place to fulfill her potential as a missionary and reformer. However, part and parcel of Prince's struggle to find a (proto)national space that validates her projected self-representation is her active participation in mid-nineteenth-century Black American debates about emigration as the only real solution to racial self-determination. From the early 1830s until the Civil War, free Blacks in the North held a series of conventions in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York to address not only the abolition of slavery but also the prospect of emigration.

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By the 1830s, the largely white-run American Colonization Society (ACS) had already established Liberia as an official African "home" for Black Americans. However, the fact that Prince published *The West Indies* in 1841, years before *Life and Travels*, proves that she saw herself as a credible voice within the emigration debate and thought that her observations were objective enough to be valuable to fellow American Blacks who, like her, imagined that the key to survival might be to leave the United States altogether. In this sense, her trajectory from New England to Russia and then to Jamaica makes her unique among free antebellum Black Americans, the vast majority of whom lacked both the money and the circumstances for emigration or simply for independent travel.

Though Prince's narrative has a solipsistic quality about it, the existence of *The West Indies* and its later revival in the pages of *Life and Travels* put Prince in dialogue with men such as Henry Highland Garnet, the ex-slave turned minister who at one point in his career advocated strongly for emigration, whether to the Caribbean, Central America, Canada, or West Africa; the pro-emigration minister Alexander Crummell, who later moved to Liberia; the Jamaican-born John Russwurm, who toward the end of his life worked for the ACS and relocated to Liberia; and Martin R. Delany, the early Black Nationalist and sometime emigrationist who sought a destination beyond Liberia. Each of these men worked at some point to extend their political activism through overseas travel, using their experiences in Britain, the Anglophone West Indies, and West Africa as evidence of and object lessons in the particular strategies they urged their Black audiences back home to adopt. Written for related purposes and to some of the same audiences, Nancy Prince's travel texts can also be placed alongside Zilpha Elaw's *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, and Ministerial Travels and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, an American Female of Colour* (1846), Mary Ann Shadd Cary's *A Plea for Emigration; or, Notes of Canada West* (1852), and the speeches of Maria W. Stewart, all of which put forth important visions of how African Americans might project themselves into the world, not simply for their own salvation but for the benefit of other African diasporic communities.[4] These individuals did not necessarily agree with one another, but they did take it upon themselves to travel and report on potential homelands. Indeed, Mary Ann Shadd Cary published *A Plea for Emigration* after moving to and living in British Ontario: in what is essentially a handbook for those who wanted to move to Canada, Cary urged her readers to turn away from West Africa for the more healthful (or at least more familiar) climate of Canada, where they would avoid deadly tropical diseases such as malaria.

Additionally, because of her focus on the Caribbean, it is tempting to see Prince's 1856 reprinting of *Life and Travels* in conversation with an attempt

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by the freeborn Episcopal minister James Theodore Holly to persuade his fellow African Americans to abandon the United States for independent Haiti. In 1854, Holly had been a delegate at the National Emigration Convention of Colored People held in Cleveland. The following year, he lectured on the advantages of moving to Haiti "before a Literary Society of Colored Young Men" in New Haven, Connecticut, making the same case again before audiences in "Ohio, Michigan, and Canada West [i.e., Ontario] during the summer of 1856."[5] To guarantee an even wider circulation for his views on Haiti as a Black American destination, Holly published the lecture in 1857 under the provocative title *A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government, and Civilized Progress, As Demonstrated by Historical Events of the Haytian Revolution; and the Subsequent Acts of That People since Their National Independence*. Whether or not Prince had an opinion about Haiti, in theory her final reprinting of *Life and Travels* in 1856 would have allowed for the dissemination of her opinions about West Indian immigration at the same time as both the Cleveland convention and Holly's lectures in New England and the Midwest. Given that Prince's travel writing enabled her to articulate her evolving identity as a missionary, domestic reformer, and abolitionist, her struggle to articulate "home" testifies not only to the gendered nature of early Black emigration debates but also to the role of women in early Black Nationalism.

We must also keep in mind the ways in which Prince's *Life and Travels* merges with *The West Indies* to reference simultaneously three subgenres: an autobiographical account of her life in the United States, a travel narrative describing first Russia and then Jamaica, and finally, a missionary report on Anglophone ex-slaves in the British Caribbean. Thus, if we go back to the earlier question of how we might read the cultural products of a transatlantic Black diaspora, we can use the occasion of *Life and Travels* to consider Prince's relationship to genres of travel writing that are particularly white, male, and middle class; genres that have been identified as foundational to paradigms of imperialist domination; and genres that traditionally inscribe separation rather than identification between the writing subject and the "other" individuals encountered.[6] Though Prince is no Mungo Park or Richard Burton, how much, if at all, do the features of traditionally male narrative forms leave their trace in *Life and Travels*?

In her work on women travelers, Karen Lawrence suggests that in the nineteenth century, "travel *writing* has provided discursive space for women, who sometimes left home to write home, discovering new aesthetic as well as social possibilities." Lawrence argues that the genre "creates a permeable membrane between home and the foreign, [between] domestic confinement and freedom

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on the road."[7] As Prince's *Life and Travels* demonstrates, however, "freedom on the road" was not achievable for working Black women who often had little choice but to be away from home, in quite the same way Lawrence assumes it was achievable for white, decidedly middle-class women. Indeed, Prince's autobiography poses instructive challenges to this liberated reading of the female travel writer, since as an autobiography, travel narrative, and missionary report, *Life and Travels* articulates less a sense of uncomplicated female freedom for Prince than a series of unresolved tensions between individual desire and duty to community, between woman as private domestic subject and woman as public reformer, and between the textual image of a Black female missionary supervising Black Jamaican "wards" and a Black American "sister" finally coming "home" to her Jamaican siblings.

As specifically a nineteenth-century Black woman's text, *Life and Travels* engages with "home" not through direct protests against slavery or Black disenfranchisement, but rather through a claim to the status of overseas missionary, a role which enables Prince ultimately to challenge the authority of white counterparts in Jamaica. And yet, what is subversive in one context might not necessarily carry the same disruptive effectiveness in another.[8] It should go without saying that as a Black woman, Prince had to articulate for herself a domesticity forged through a necessary and painful understanding of the raced and classed discourses of power—especially since in the white imagination, African Americans embodied the Other to be "civilized." Yet, Amy Kaplan reminds us that allied with but generally occluded by the "domestic" has always been the "foreign"; that is, nineteenth-century American domesticity traditionally relied upon "a sense of at-homeness, in contrast to an external world perceived as alien and threatening."[9] Prince's deliberate seeking out of a Black Jamaican community speaks to the ways in which her brand of Black female domesticity challenged any binary between "domestic" and "foreign" with the context of diaspora. However, the text never relinquishes a longing for (and therefore rootedness in) "a sense of at-homeness" within US borders and the need to create a Black community—even in Jamaica—based on moral and religious ideals that emerge out of Prince's first, American context. Therefore, while Prince might have seen her reform activities on behalf of Jamaican women and children as championing the rights of ex-slaves over the authority of their British colonial masters, her role as female missionary inculcated the structure of a US-based Black domestic authority that necessarily enforced and sustained a discourse of difference between her and the ex-slaves, a difference that ironically is also reinforced and enacted through her use of subgenres (the missionary and travel narratives) that function as the discursive pillars of

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western imperialism. Consequently, keeping in mind Kaplan's point, we need to ask how women's own brand of domesticity—white and Black—was deeply intertwined with the rhetoric of nation and empire, at the very moment of an apparent rejection of these concepts.

Importantly, in folding the contents of *The West Indies* into the 1850 and 1853 versions of *Life and Travels*, Prince deliberately reframes Jamaica from a potential site of Black American "home" to one stop on a larger journey from the United States to Russia and then back to the United States. Indeed, the 1853 version of *Life and Travel* does not advocate for Jamaica as a destination after all, suggesting that Prince finally settled on life in the United States. However, the match was as fraught on her return as it had been when she first left US shores for Russia. At the very least, *Life and Travels*, Prince's apparent abandonment of emigration to Jamaica, and her female vision of and responsibility to Black community articulated in the context of transnational mobility require us to think deeply about the relationship of Black subjectivities one to another in the Black Atlantic. How are we to read the balance between the racial unity and cultural difference that structures Black diaspora community? At the very moment that a figure such as Nancy Prince challenged and transformed genres designed to erase her as a Black female subject, should we assume that her struggle for individual visibility within forms of Eurocentric writing would alternately make visible all other Black subject positions within the intersections of histories produced out of New World slavery? In addition, how are we to theorize Prince's dual positioning as a member of the global African diaspora and a figure deeply intertwined with the regional politics of the Black Atlantic?[10] These questions arise from the fact that fully one-third of Prince's *Life and Travels* recounts her nine and a half years in czarist Russia, which was neither involved in the Atlantic slave trade nor connected to the geographic boundary of the Atlantic Ocean. I argue that Prince's engagement with Black Atlantic cultures in the United States and Jamaica is enabled in part by her experiences in Russia, suggesting that "the dialogue of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition, with and against" the presence and idea of a heterogeneous Europe "is almost as complex as the dialogue with" the African diaspora.[11]

NANCY PRINCE AND THE DISLOCATION OF HOME

With its heavily religious overtones and its distressing accounts of poverty and family strife, Nancy Prince's *Life and Travels* is hardly a militant Black separatist statement. However, what Prince shared most profoundly with a number of her Black American contemporaries was a deeply conflicted relationship with

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the United States as a viable homeland. Whereas David Walker deliberately locates his radical and hard-hitting *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) within the larger public debates about slavery, citizenship, and revolutionary discourse, Prince seemingly embraces a more conventional "female" context, choosing to detail personal family issues as a way of commenting on larger struggles. Thus, at the start of the autobiography, the expected genealogical recitation of her childhood family circle centralizes displacement, oppression, and loss but also a resistance against enslavement or confinement of any kind. Prince's story thus encompasses a Native American grandmother who endured servitude under both the British and the Americans; the African grandfather Tobias Wharton, who fought for his freedom at Bunker Hill; and her African stepfather Money Vose, who escaped from a slave ship to enjoy freedom as a merchant seaman, until he was pressed into the British Navy during the War of 1812, finally dying "oppressed, in the English dominions."[12] Prince's matter-of-fact recall of family brings into powerful focus Black and Native American displacement in the "New World" and underscores her understanding of the contradiction of being deemed "free" in a pro-slavery nation. [13] Faced with limited economic opportunities, the death of their stepfather, and the growing mental instability of their mother, Prince, her older sister Silvia, and their brother George eventually join the flow of Black job seekers heading for Boston, their search for employment put into painfully ironic relief by the "migrations" of Prince's youngest siblings to neighboring households.[14] With her accounts of desperate journeys on foot and in open coaches during freezing weather to rescue Silvia from a Boston brothel and deal with a dissatisfied brother who runs away from caretakers, Prince describes a directionless, peripatetic existence that has little or no impact on either her family's prosperity or her personal well-being. In these years, her religious conversion and eventual baptism in 1816 by the Reverend Thomas Paul Sr. stand out as Prince's only moments of solace, though she eventually finds that even her newfound adherence to Christian faith will be challenged by employers who work her almost to death. According to Prince, "after seven years of anxiety and toil, I made up my mind to leave my country" (15), and she abruptly marries the older Nero Prince, a Black American sometime sailor and servant at the Russian court of Alexander I.

As with all things personal, *Life and Travels* offers no details about the courtship of Nancy Gardiner and Nero Prince, beyond the that Nero had been born in Marlborough, Massachusetts, and had made his first trip to Russia in 1810, leaving from Gloucester.[15] It was presumably on a return trip to the United States that, no doubt circulating in what was a small Black community of Gloucester

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seafarers and their families, Nero Prince met Nancy while visiting her mother's house. Since, according to his wife, Nero had already moved from a sailor's life to that of a servant to Alexander I by the time of their marriage in 1824, his visits to the United States were probably few and far between, suggesting that the couple could not have spent much time together before marriage. Still, whatever the conditions of their acquaintance, Prince emphasizes in the narrative that marriage allows an immediate shift in status from struggling servant girl to European traveler, and accordingly the narrative transitions into what appears to be the traditional "manners and customs" account of life in a foreign capital. Importantly, though she never speaks directly or in any detail about her financial circumstances, her new role as traveler involves a class ascent. Unlike Mary Seacole, whose travels take on a boom-and-bust quality as she makes and then loses money time and again, Prince gives the impression that her newfound overseas mobility takes her on an upward trajectory. (In contrast, once she returns to the United States, though she does not need to revert to domestic service, she certainly has to work for a living as a seamstress.)

While one might argue that Prince's marriage rescues her from American poverty, and that travel at the behest of her new husband enables her to experience refuge in Russia, she is absolutely insistent on establishing her agency in the face of dire circumstances. In both the 1850 and 1853 versions of the narrative, the declaration that "I made up my mind to leave my country" establishes her marriage as an act of individual social and economic survival. Curiously, in the 1853 version she changes the phrase "this country" to read "*my* country" (14; italics added). This change to a personal pronoun in the second version acknowledged an equivocal national identification but also some anxiety inherent in the decision to abandon native place, since the decision was tantamount to abandoning her family. Ironically, her departure from New England seems to support traditional scholarly assertions made about white male travelers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Dennis Porter, journey narratives traditionally associated with figures such as Boswell, Byron, and Stendhal "are entangled in the themes of 'the family romance,' foreground the questions of desire and transgression, point to the conflict between the pursuit of pleasure and the path of duty, or waver between sentiments of triumph and guilt."[16] But as a Black woman's narrative, Prince's *Life and Travels* challenges us to come to terms with the different meanings of *home* and *departure* that have resonated in Black-authored texts which traditionally come under the label *travel writing*. Prince's decision to escape through marriage and migration signified an active recognition of the conditions of Black American poverty that brings into vivid relief the kinds of social crises that would drive

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others (and Prince herself) to contemplate and encourage Black emigration. As a woman's narrative, Prince's autobiography literalizes the effects of poverty and disenfranchisement through dysfunctional family relations, so that the rejection of American citizenship is expressed through the rejection of family. She thus provides a measure of how even those African Americans born and living in freedom in the antebellum North might have experienced national affiliation in the nineteenth century as personal and communal crises.

In keeping with the idea of antebellum free Black families in crisis, Prince previously recounted how, under the abuse of their African stepfather Money Vose, she and her sister Silvia vowed as children "when [we] were large enough we would go away" (8). However, Prince's ultimate goal was not the condemnation of Black patriarchy, but rather an understanding of the constraints and legacies of that patriarchy in the context of slavery. Missing from the 1850 narrative, but substantially amplified in the 1853 version, are vivifying details that suggest Prince's unshakable relationship to and understanding of her own history as the descendant of kidnapped Africans—and therefore displaced Black New World subjects reinventing themselves in partial response to the Middle Passage.[17] In the first paragraph of the 1853 *Life and Travels*, Prince narrates an oft-rehearsed family story about Vose's midnight escape with a companion from a slave ship moored in a New England harbor. The story centers not on the Middle Passage itself, but rather on the final self-willed escape from the ship that has just taken him through that horror: "I have heard my [step]father describe the beautiful moon-light night when they two launched their bodies into the deep, for liberty" (2). Prince's narration of and reverence for this moment signified her embrace of a familial tradition of agency and escape from enslavement that resolved the domestic tensions enforced by Vose's mistreatment of his adoptive American family: within the narrative celebration of escape, Vose took a heroic place in her imagination as the African father offering his children a legacy of self-determination. Additionally, his example ties the children back to their grandfather Tobias Wharton, also an African, who fought in the American Revolution to achieve his freedom. Eventually Prince's brother George embraced sea life, first as a way of supporting the family but later, when his mother married a mercenary third husband, as a refuge from domestic strife. Thus, while her economic survival necessitated departure from the site of her nativity, Prince articulated familial connectedness via the enactment of successful escape.

And yet, if her grandfather Wharton, stepfather Vose, and brother George each achieved a tenuous freedom in the Americas through the male occupations of soldiering and maritime life, what does it mean that as a Black woman,

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Prince had to "escape" to Europe, as the wife of a sailor no less, rather than as an entirely unfettered agent? Also, what does Europe as a site of refuge signify in a Black woman's narrative that draws heavily on resistance traditions emanating directly from the African diasporic experience in the Americas? Historians such as W. Jeffrey Bolster have demonstrated that Black men could achieve relative economic and personal independence via a life at sea, and that for early nineteenth-century Blacks as a whole, "maritime rhythms" were thus "entwined in the family life, community structure and the sense of self."[18] Unable to become a sailor herself, Prince married one to take advantage of the full range of mobility denied to her as a woman. And yet, her decision to reject her country also suggests that, despite the economic hardships suffered by all American Blacks in the nineteenth century, the particular site of the United States could not sustain a viable Black female existence, even as it might—potentially—enable a Black male existence in the world of maritime seafaring.

That Prince's escape is undoubtedly an achievement of physical emancipation is signaled by the fact that the narrative itself shifts after the marriage from a story of personal hardship to one of events and wonders in a foreign country. The shift to travel narrative also signals a deepening of Prince's religious rhetoric and transference of agency from her efforts to those of Divine Providence. In apocalyptic language that characterizes much of the autobiography, Prince describes the devastation of a cholera epidemic that carries off 9,255 Russians. Likening the plague to the retribution God visited upon the Egyptians in the Old Testament, Prince clearly underscores her miraculous salvation as one of the Chosen. She achieves a similar effect when she describes her narrow escape from a pit during an earthquake and flood in Saint Petersburg, after having made her way "through a long yard, over the bodies of men and beasts" (21). These stories of desolation in the lives of others shift the focus away from Prince's earlier fixation on her own physical sufferings as a young domestic servant, whose health was broken by long treks in freezing weather to arrange for her siblings' welfare or by cruel overwork in the households of insensitive employers. In contrast, the Russian stories mark Prince's achievement of a new status. Such a narrative strategy bolsters William Stowe's argument that both white and Black American travelers sought "to recast themselves as the kind of narrators, protagonists, and travelers they most wanted to be. Like spiritual autobiographies and saints' lives, travel chronicles attest to certain non-ordinary events, reformulate them to match approved cultural patterns, and depict their protagonists as ideal incarnations of respectable models."[19]

Indeed, Prince specifically formulates a "culturally accredited" voice based on a new role as a respected maternal figure.[20] Though she and her husband

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have no children, she embraces the role of public mother, taking in young student boarders to constitute a "family" and then rescuing them during a flood, an act of bravery that secures her claims to maternal authority. Eventually she goes into business as a manufacturer of infant clothing, crossing paths with the Russian empress, who becomes a patron and customer. Prince also performs missionary work among the Saint Petersburg Protestants and aids in the establishment of an orphanage in the city. As Prince emerges as both the successful provider and domestic figure that neither she nor her mother nor her sister was allowed to be in the United States, her achievements confirm that the wasted domestic desire of her past can come to fruition only beyond the circumscribed circle of Black American life.[21] Importantly, Prince now offers herself as the distinctly Black, nonaristocratic refiguration of true female domestic morality. For instance, she faults the Russians for being too eager to "pay [the empress] homage, and kiss the hands of that lump of clay" (29). In contrast, as the wife of a court servant, Prince constructs herself as an equally devout but more approachable—and therefore more appropriate—maternal figure. This particular strategy of self-presentation also suggests a decidedly Americanized rejection of monarchy, betraying Prince's ideological ties to a distinctly US home, specifically through the language of domesticity. However, there is a double irony in the fact that as a Black woman, Prince can embody an American ideal of democratic true womanhood only at the moment of self-imposed exile, reinforcing the notion that the revolutionary "America" she represents in Russia paradoxically may have engendered her ideal of womanhood but ultimately cannot sustain it.

In his study of American tourist travel, James Buzard suggests that an idealized Europe functions in many travel narratives as the repository of "culture" and emotional meaning, thereby rendering the United States, the site of the American tourist's original "home," as a place of loss: "Physical departure from one's busily modernizing society could take on the ideological appeal of a temporary, revivifying departure from compromised social existence. Invested with pent-up psychic energy, that which lay across any appreciable boundary (Atlantic, Channel, Alps) could be shaped into a vessel for deferred wishes."[22] As a free Black woman, Prince's "compromised social existence" in the United States translated into severe economic and social hardship, and therefore she is not entirely comparable to the elite white tourists to whom Buzard refers. However, as exemplified by her claim to a female respectability denied her in the United States, Prince presents Russia as a site of displaced engagement with the social conditions of her native land. Only in Russia can her true value be acknowledged. On coming to court, for instance, she is received by the czar

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and his empress with politeness and respect and is showered with gifts, since the Russians bear "no prejudice against color" (17–18). Ironically, in a text that eventually describes the author's attempt to embrace a non-American Black community, such implicit comparisons between Russia and the United States in fact centralize rather than decenter the United States as a site of denied ambition. This remains especially true because, with its intense class and ethnic divisions and its political upheavals, Russia never fully functions as the alternate site of equality and social justice that Prince seeks.[23]

Whatever her final feelings about Russia, Prince states in the narrative that by 1833 she was ready to return to the United States, pleading the severity of the Russian winter. (The plan was for Nero Prince to follow his wife back to America, but he seems to have died soon after her departure.) When she next turns to accounting for her life in Boston, Prince describes herself as determined to re-engage with her homeland on different terms. Still, her successful transformation in Russia raised the question of whether this new persona forged outside of the conditions of her youth can be sustained in the United States. According to Buzard, "[Tourist] travel, like culture, offers an imaginative freedom not as a rule available in modern social life; it encourages the fashioning of special identities, good for the duration of the journey and afterwards—identities privately and intensely possessed, which are congruent with that freedom. And though self-designated 'travelers' may tell themselves that they are *truly* the people they become while on tour, the tour, like culture, fosters this belief inside well-marked boundaries; one must always return home, go back to work, resume the identity by which one is recognized among relatives, co-workers, employers."[24] But for Prince, a return to her slaveholding, racially divided American world means a return to degradation. Thus, the "escape" she achieves in Europe—or, more appropriately, achieves in the retelling of her transformative journey within *Life and Travels*—involves much higher stakes than those faced by middle-class white travelers who traditionally exemplify the name *tourist* in nineteenth-century Europe.

The Russian section of the autobiography focuses most strenuously on Prince's self-fashioning as a public icon of domestic respectability, suppressing personal details (for instance, the nature of her marriage, her childlessness, and her mysterious decision to return to the United States). Such representation links Prince's screening of her private life to similar strategies of self-protection in narratives by other Black women such as Harriet Jacobs, Jarena Lee, and Harriet Wilson. There is a similar lack of detail about her return and her engagement with Black life in Boston. Thus, it is just as important to consider the ways in which the strategy of screening restricts both the audience's access

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to Prince's private feelings about her American homecoming and any possible refiguration of herself as anything less than the referent for Black female domestic authority. Indeed, Prince speaks mysteriously about her means of self-sustenance, revealing only that "I passed my time in different occupations" (47), thereby sidestepping the material conditions of her life. Instead, she focuses almost exclusively upon her leadership of and work with committees for abolition, the amelioration of Black community life, and child welfare. Consider, for instance, Prince's description of herself upon her American return as instantaneously involved in reform activities. Taking charge as a community leader, she recounts, "I called a meeting of the people and laid before them my plan" for an orphanage (46). In this sense, then, she fashions a narrative that projects as real and sustainable the "special identity"—that of a socially committed, but ultimately solitary, female reformer—that Buzard suggests is possible only "on tour." Emerging at the very moment of her public engagement in charity work, this solitariness signifies a kind of protective disconnection from an American society that hitherto has been the source of emotional pain and familiar disintegration for Prince.

Not surprisingly, the echoes of familial suffering and social dislocation work themselves into the narrative, such as when Prince reports hearing of the deaths of her mother, her sister Silvia, and her former minister, Thomas Paul and of the turmoil in Paul's First African Baptist Church: "The old church and society was in much confusion; I attempted to worship with them but it was in vain" (46). At the same time, her efforts on behalf of the orphanage are thwarted by poor funding and an eventual petering out of support: "I gave three months of my time. A board was formed of seven females, with a committee of twelve gentlemen of standing, to superintend. At the end of three months the committee was dispensed with, and for want of funds our society soon fell through" (46–47). Up until 1840, Prince does take pleasure in being involved in the American Antislavery Society (AAS)—"until a contention broke out among themselves" (47), which leads to a split in the AAS and the subsequent formation of the alternate American and Foreign Antislavery Society (AFAS). Prince's narrative response to the political turmoil among antislavery activists—turmoil that bitterly divides Black as well as white abolitionist communities—is simply to reject both sides. In so doing, she submerges her disappointment in an apocalyptic rhetoric that, as in the Russian section, removes her from contamination by the hypocrisy of her local surroundings: "Possibly I may not see so clearly as some, for the weight of prejudice has again oppressed me, and were it not for the promises of God, one's heart would fail. . . . This power did God give man, that thus far should he go and no farther; but man has disobeyed his Maker,

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and become vain in his imagination, and their foolish hearts are darkened. . . . The sins of my beloved country are not hid from his notice; his all seeing eye sees and knows the secrets of all hearts" (47–48). This story of her growing alienation from the First African Baptist Church, as well as from interracial abolitionist organizations, makes manifest Prince's sense of American dislocation, such that her repatriation in either Black or white American communities is impossible, even though (according to the narrative) she seems able to assert a new persona as a Black woman reformer. National alienation, then, has been not rewritten but simply removed from the familial context to a more public area of activity. Not surprisingly, in 1840, the year of the abolitionist schism, Prince sets out for a new site to articulate her idealized self-conception, this time as a missionary to newly freed slaves in Jamaica.

Though the text demands that readers move swiftly from Russia to Jamaica, with barely two pages on her life in Boston from 1833 to 1840, some attempt to recover and interpret the silences in the narrative on this moment of failed American communities, Black and white, might help in understanding how Prince's sense of dislocation is tied to her own troubled negotiation of the female authority forged in Russia, but now displaced ironically to the land of her birth. In discussing the failure of the orphanage, Prince chooses not to mention her membership in the interracial Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society (BFASS), with which she collaborated in founding the Samaritan Asylum for African American Children. We ought not to be surprised by Prince's disconnection from the interracial BFASS since, able to neither transcend deep race and class divisions among its membership nor negotiate conflicts about its ultimate goals, the organization fell apart in 1840 "amid confusion, acrimony, and a bitterness that lasted for decades."[25] Prince's declaration in *Life and Travels* that "I do not approve of women societies; they destroy the world's convention; the American women have too many of them" (51) evidences a clear response to the traumatic fall of the BFASS and is thus a resounding rejection of female community, or at least the idea of interracial female cooperation. At the very least, her charge that they "destroy the world's convention" suggests her ambivalence toward women's activism in general as potentially unseemly or immoral. This is a curious statement, given that Prince works to sustain her European-forged identity as a Black activist and public "mother," and it might speak to the way her ambivalence about women's roles in public now surfaces outside of the particular conditions of Russia, in the different, broader context of US women's activism that included antislavery, temperance, religion, and suffrage.

What Prince also fails to mention in *Life and Travels* is the other roles in which she circulated among Blacks in Boston before her trip to Jamaica. Though

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the narrative is unclear about how she supports herself before she departs for the Caribbean, a notice that appeared on October 17, 1843, in the *Liberator* advertised her abilities in "dress and cloak-making, pantaloon-making [and] boys clothes," so one can assume that when in need, she fell back on her skills as a seamstress. Another advertisement in the March 8, 1839, *Liberator* announced a lecture "to be delivered by Mrs. Nancy Prince on the manners and customs of Russia," with an admission price of twelve and a half cents, suggesting that Prince was clearly working (understandably, since she was a self-supporting widow) to derive material benefit from her experience as a world traveler. Frances Foster has suggested that the preface to Prince's revised 1853 narrative explicitly decried any desire for notoriety, demonstrating that Prince "was very careful to establish herself as a respectable woman" who "eschewed publicity."[26] Yet, the fact that the autobiography recorded her reform activities but not a public lecture she delivered on her travels to Russia, complete with an exhibition of drawings depicting Russian cities, suggests not so much that Prince avoided publicity but that she was judicious in what kind of public image she sought to create. Prince's willingness to speak in public bears comparison to three of her contemporaries, the women preachers Jarena Lee and Julia Foote and the political speaker Maria W. Stewart. Lee and Foote earned the ire of the Black religious patriarchy, while Stewart's militant call for Black political empowerment made her unpopular with some Boston Blacks. However, Prince's lectures on Russia took place in Jehiel C. Beman's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and since Beman would later lead the primary opposition against Foote, Prince's public appearance seemed to have been sanctioned by male community leaders.[27] One could speculate, then, that Prince herself might have experienced her return to African American community life not simply as a return to economic struggle, but also as a constant negotiation of her role as an independent-minded female activist, among a Black patriarchy that placed restrictions upon Black women's agency. Since in *Life and Travels* Prince seems to suggest that there is a greater freedom for Black female self-making abroad, it is not surprising that, after brief but disturbing references to disunity and alienation, she quickly moves to her sojourn in Jamaica.

Prince's stubborn commitment to the superiority of her own judgment compares in many respects to a similar belief in personal righteousness expressed by Black itinerant women preachers such as Lee, Foote, Stewart, and later Amanda Berry Smith, all of whom defied male figures of authority and institutional structures in the belief that their resistance to social control was an expression of God's will. Foote and Smith served as overseas foreign missionaries, convinced that their calling was global. All of these women published

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personal narratives outlining their spiritual growth, experiences, and travel. According to Claire Midgley, even within the male-dominant mission movement in Britain, there was an increasing interest in similar autobiographical texts by Christian white women who felt compelled not so much to preach as to serve and assist in foreign missions, alone if necessary, and even, in some cases, to die trying.[28] In light of this fact, one could argue that the works of Prince, Lee, Foote, Stewart, and Smith belong to a particular transatlantic tradition of religious autobiography among women whose sense of divine empowerment exceeded the traditional restraints of social norms.

PRINCE, MISSIONARY WORK, AND JAMAICA AS A POTENTIAL HOME

In discussing her account of Jamaica, modern commentators generally focus on how Prince's representations subvert European ethnographic travel narratives that highlight the alien Other by rigorously refusing to distance or silence West Indian ex-slaves.[29] Yet, the Jamaican section is important not only for its use, revision, or appropriation of conventions of the nineteenth-century ethnographic narrative but also because it represents a narrative struggle for the extension of Prince's complex self-transformation that began in European exile. Her travel writings are clearly also an engagement with antebellum Black anxieties about home, social status, migration, and freedom. Indeed, once she incorporates *The West Indies* into the plot of *Life and Travels*, Jamaica rapidly becomes the site of compromise: neither the North American world where Prince suffers indignities as a member of the underclass nor the European world where she rehearses a displaced dialogue with the United States, Jamaica functions as an idealized New World community where the public persona Prince constructed for herself in Russia might in theory thrive within the boundaries of the Black Atlantic.[30] For those free Blacks who considered migration to the West Indies, Central America, Canada, or West Africa, this desire to thrive in every sense in a non-US Black community was a constant, even for those who could not afford the costs of relocating.

Prince's reform work in Jamaica offers her the chance to bypass both the narrow local politics of American abolitionists and potential Black anxieties about women's public roles, thereby allowing her to place herself within the context of an international antislavery campaign bringing together Britons and Americans. Despite her documented involvement within the US abolitionist movement, Prince's narrative never articulates an aggressive pro-abolitionist stance. Instead, her dedication to abolition finds its expression

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through a personal desire to "aid, in some small degree, to raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants, and teach the young children to read and work, to fear God, and put their trust in the Savior" (50). Though quite modest, her prose echoes the exuberant tones of the ex-slave turned minister Henry Highland Garnet, who declared at an American celebration of West Indian emancipation: "It is the distant voices of the freeborn souls have brought me hither—it is the shouts of the islanders of the sea, that come careening upon every wave that rolls westward. . . . And if these blessings are not *immediately* ours, they are *remotely*. The light which the present epoch of English history shall display among 'ocean's golden isles,' shall reflect over all the dark places of the earth—the dungeons of cruelty—the prison houses of despair, and the tombs of buried rights, shall be illuminated by it."[31] In projecting West Indian emancipation as a hemispheric wave of the future, Garnet speaks in palpable terms about a possibility that many Black Americans had already abandoned. It may well be, then, that such sentiments also motivated Prince to travel to Jamaica in 1841, to see and experience life in the absence of chattel slavery. Probably for the same reasons, postemancipation Jamaica proved to be attractive to many other Black Americans, including Garnet himself, who lived there as a missionary from 1852 until ill-health required his return to the United States; the ex-slave abolitionist and minster Samuel Ringgold Ward, who lived there from 1855 until his death ten years later; and Frank J. Webb, the freeborn author of the 1857 abolitionist novel *The Garies and Their Friends*, who was the island's postmaster from 1858 until 1869. In choosing Jamaica as a destination, therefore, Prince was one of a number of reformers who, temporarily or not, had decided to experience "the blessings" of emancipation firsthand, even if it meant abandoning the United States.[32]

As a stand-alone work, *The West Indies* also locates Prince in the category of transatlantic Black abolitionists in dialogue with distinguished white British counterparts such as James Armstrong Thome and Joseph Horace Kimball, who in 1838 published *Emancipation in the West Indies: A Six Month's Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the Year 1837*; Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, who published *The West Indies in 1837; Being a Journal of a Visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbadoes and Jamaica* in the same year; and the Baptist minister James Phillippo, who published *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State* in 1843. Produced in the wake of British emancipation, such narratives provided eyewitness accounts of the truth about Black freedom, so as to discredit "those Americans who had anticipated chaos and economic ruin as the end result of emancipation" as well as to bear witness to atrocities perpetrated by ex-slaveholders.[33] Thome, Kimball, Sturge, Harvey, and Phillippo were variously

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authorized by their affiliation with British abolitionist and missionary organizations and as white *men* who were already well known not only in metropolitan Britain but also among reformers in the United States. Prince, of course, had neither their name recognition nor their institutional connections, yet she still claimed the right to participate in shaping the public verdict regarding the outcome of British West Indian abolition. Therefore, her texts place her squarely in the middle of an interracial, transatlantic reform discourse, even as they link her to US Blacks struggling for their own survival. This latter connection creates a sense of urgency for Prince, since her role is not as observer, but rather as one of the dispossessed.

Just as British abolitionist investigators do in their texts, in her autobiographical text Prince makes the rounds of Jamaica's jails, churches, schools, and local markets, offering her eyewitness testimony and reporting on her conversations with British clergymen, ex-slaves, colored Jamaicans, and the local American consul. She supplements her narrative with reports on West Indian flora, fauna, and climate. Here she borrows directly from Richard Brooks's *London General Gazetteer*, a popular reference work dating back to 1762 that went through numerous reprintings into the nineteenth century and was available on either side of the Atlantic. By distilling information available in the *General Gazetteer*, Prince maintains the circulation of basic scientific and geographical information, contextualized against her own strong views of what progress had been made since emancipation, to would-be African American emigrants who might still lack knowledge about the Caribbean. Clearly, despite Prince's eventual rejection of American community, in form and content the Jamaican portion of the narrative indexes her connectedness to the free Blacks in the United States. Therefore, *Life and Travels* forestalls the loss of her traveler's identity, buttressing it instead through her role as social and religious investigator for and eyewitness to still-evolving Anglophone Caribbean emancipation.

Yet, while Prince's decision to go to the West Indies set into motion another self-transforming journey, by the time she first published her *Life and Travels* in 1850, Jamaica had ultimately failed as a neutral site, precisely because the island's location at the intersection of Euro-American slavery and abolition enforced social and cultural conditions that could not be left behind in Boston. This failure occurred on two fronts, the first of which was personal. According to the narrative, Prince was recruited for missionary work in Jamaica by white American Congregational missionary David Ingraham. Ingraham had traveled to Jamaica for health reasons in 1837, and during trips back to the United States he had generated great interest among would-be missionaries. Although the Anglophone West Indies already had a strong network of British-based mission-

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ary organizations, most prominently the British Baptists, in 1839 five Congregationalist ministers from Oberlin College, accompanied by their wives, set up a series of missions in Jamaica, all of which were supposed to be entirely self-sustaining. Located primarily in the hills above Kingston, these were the missions Prince set out to join in 1840.[34] It is worth asking in what capacity Ingraham and his colleagues imagined Prince would serve among the Congregationalists. For American missionaries, the issue of whether single white women should be allowed to serve abroad was still unresolved. In 1816 the US-based Board of Foreign Missions approved the widowed Mrs. Charlotte H. White's application to serve as a missionary in Burma, but she would have been expected to work in conjunction with her fellow white American male missionaries and their families. According to R. Pierce Beaver, "the first single woman, not a widow, sent overseas" was the ex-slave Betsy Stockton, who accompanied a white missionary family to Hawaii in 1823, in the capacity of domestic servant. In her earlier employment as a maid to the president of Princeton University, Stockton had been allowed the use of her employer's library, and by the time she arrived in Hawaii, she was allowed to set up her own school. But when the missionary's wife fell ill, Stockton had to return to the United States, suggesting that her role as domestic servant superseded her role as missionary teacher.[35]

We do not know whether Ingraham saw Prince's recruitment as a means of securing "domestic" help for his brothers and sisters struggling in the field. By 1840, the American Congregational missionaries in Jamaica were reduced to slender resources, existing in "distressing circumstances" and no doubt reaching out for whatever help might have been procured for them.[36] As the historian Gale L. Kenny reports, Prince did spend some time employed as a teacher under the British Baptist minister Thomas Abbott, in his Saint Ann's Bay Church. However, when she attempted to correct the theological misunderstandings of her ex-slave charges, their complaints prompted Abbott to fire her.[37] Certainly among the white Baptist missionaries, then, Prince was not a respected figure. Did the American Congregationalists from Oberlin regard her as occupying a lowly state like that of Betsy Stockton in Hawaii? If so, then her claim to the stable middle-class persona achieved in Russia would have been severely undermined. Might Jamaica have become simply another site of displaced struggle between Prince and US conditions of disenfranchisement?[38] Regardless of what actually happened, within and through her narration of Jamaican experiences, Prince clings to the imagined power of a transformative Black diasporic community and makes no reference to her status relative to the island's white American or British missionaries. Rather, she consistently represents herself as

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a free agent on the island, unfettered by organizations and associations, mixing without restraint within her Black community.

In contrast to the Russian portion of her narrative, Prince bypasses the "customs and manners" descriptions that might have rendered the Jamaicans racial and cultural aliens and instead launches an attack on what she sees as a corrupt British Baptist missionary system, with its selling of Bibles at inflated prices, its issuing of membership tickets to enable the efficient collection of the ex-slaves' hard-earned cash and its establishment of a church resembling "a play house [rather] than a place of worship" (51). As the self-appointed spokesperson for the downtrodden ex-slaves, Prince's own judgments appear to be validated by the Black free persons themselves, who dubbed the British missionaries "macroon hunters" (53) after the popular name for Jamaican coinage of the lowest denomination. In defiance of both the British public and Americans at home, who were skeptical of emancipation, Prince bears witness to the industry of Black freeholders in local marketplaces, citing their desire "to possess property" and their ability "to take care of themselves" (54). And, as in both Russia and the United States, Prince's maternal concern for the welfare of destitute girls and children—referencing so poignantly her early family history—becomes part and parcel of her campaign of moral intervention. The apparently uncomplicated community relations that were repeatedly unachievable in Boston appear to be made manifest in Jamaica, specifically in the easy relationship Prince describes between herself and ex-slaves drawn together by a common experience of racial discrimination and by a mutual recognition of the need for Black self-determination in the face of white oppression.

It is precisely in this role as domestic guardian that Prince chooses both to resist white attempts to make her a subordinate and to articulate her solidarity with the ex-slaves. For instance, in one incident that occurs immediately upon her arrival in Jamaica, Prince describes her disembarkation in Saint Ann's Bay: "My intention had been to go directly to Kingston, but the people urged me to stay with them, and I thought it my duty to comply" (50). This is indeed the moment when Prince crosses paths with the British Baptist missionary Thomas Abbott, who hires her as a teacher while also arranging lodgings for her with a Jamaican ex-slave class leader. According to the practice of British missionaries, the class leader would have been a convert from the ex-slave population. However, after spending time with this woman, Prince is appalled by her unorthodox interpretation of Christianity. Equally indignant at the Jamaican woman's authority over her sister from America and irate at a threat of dismissal "unless I would yield obedience to this class-leader," Prince confronts Abbott: "I told the minister that I did not come there to be guided by a poor foolish woman. He

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then told me that I had spoken something about the necessity of moral conduct in church members. I told him I had, and in my opinion, I was sorry to see it so much neglected. He replied . . . that he hoped I would not express myself so except to him; they have the gospel, he continued, and it let them into the church" (51).

The ironic tensions of this moment emerge on several levels. Certainly Prince's anger serves as an indictment of Abbott for neglecting to educate the ex-slaves as to the requirements of Christianity. In her view, the class leader's ignorance reflects the inadequacy of the British Baptist mission and therefore the necessity of her presence as the Black American better able to address the needs of the ex-slaves. But in order for Prince to reinforce her image as the real moral authority on the island, no matter her racial or class status, her assertion of superiority absolutely has to extend over the class leader as well. While Prince achieves here in *Life and Travels* a strategic act of narrative figuration that reverses racialized power relations between herself and Abbott, how are we to assess Prince's equally necessary erasure of the Jamaican class leader as a reinterpreter of European missionary teachings? As historians Mary Turner and Philip Curtin have argued, Jamaican ex-slave converts within British missionary institutions ably negotiated their own power plays with the missionaries, and according to Curtin, they brought certain Christian practices in line with already existing African-derived religious beliefs.[39] As illustrated by this scene, Prince undoubtedly witnesses such complex negotiations but clearly misreads them as signs of a growing waywardness among the ex-slaves. But in so doing, she denies Black Jamaicans religious agency even as she battles with white Baptists she regards as corrupt. Though always conscious of the need for racial alliance with the ex-slaves, and of her own relative lack of education, Prince nevertheless appears at these moments of misinterpretation to resemble, through her own problematic negotiation of authority, the white missionaries she sets out to oppose.

There is further irony in that the Jamaican class leader's desire for authority mirrors Prince's own desire for autonomy and recognition, both in Boston and now in the presence of the British missionary Abbott. Prince implies that the white missionaries are, by birth and race, outsiders to the ex-slave community. Yet, though she shares a racial alliance with them, her identity as freeborn and American also renders her an outsider to the Black Jamaicans, a situation that bears unsettling similarities to Prince's inability to reintegrate within Boston's communities after her time in Russia. Her challenge to white male authority, then, unexpectedly complicates Prince's self-framing as a Black woman reformer, because of the power exerted by the politics of location. Yet despite

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such encounters, Prince never wavers in her desire to provide both education for Jamaican Blacks and relief for destitute women and children. On July 20, 1841, she returns to the United States to raise funds for a Jamaican school (figure 2.2), and less than a year later, in April 1842, she comes back to the island with money obtained from donations as well as from her savings. However, widespread civil unrest almost upends her plans. Prince then identifies her greatest enemies as "these people that I had hoped to serve"—presumably the white American Congregationalist missionaries. She describes them as "much taken up with the things I had brought[;] they thought I had money, and I was continually surrounded; the thought of color was no where exhibited, much notice was taken of me. I was invited to breakfast in one place, and to dine in another, &c. A society was organized, made up of men and women of authority" (64). She is especially enraged when the American missionaries seek her approval for a constitution, the fourth article of which reads, "As we have designed to take care of our sister, *we the undersigned will take charge of all she has brought*" (65). A few sentences later, Prince relates that she gave goods to one missionary, the Reverend J. S. O. Beadslee: "I also gave to others, where they were needed, which receipts and letters I have in my possession. Notwithstanding all this, they made another attempt to rob me" (66).

Struggling since their arrival in 1839 to support themselves on contributions from the equally impoverished local population, the American missionaries would have been in dire financial straits by 1842. (Indeed, the support of a foreign mission to Jamaica was considered to be an unusually expensive affair.)[40] Additionally, the American missionaries had arrived at a moment when the transition from enslaved to free labor saw freed people anxious to farm their own humble plots, rather than continuing to work for their old masters. At the same time, these old masters were unwilling to pay wages to men and women whose labor they had previously taken for granted. Though slave labor on sugar plantations had been supplemented by a small number of indentured workers from India and China before 1834, the supply of such workers increased tenfold after emancipation. But much to the detriment to the ex-slaves who had left the plantations, this emigration increase coincided with a series of droughts, which wrecked possibilities for many small famers. Given that their old plantation jobs had been taken over by imported contract workers, ex-slaves struggled for their economic survival. To make matters worse, the British dropped their protections for West Indian sugar, thereby ensuring widespread economic depression in their Caribbean colonies. By 1840, many Jamaicans of African descent had no choice but to move to Panama to work on an American-sponsored railroad project. Not surprisingly, then, those ex-slaves who were left behind

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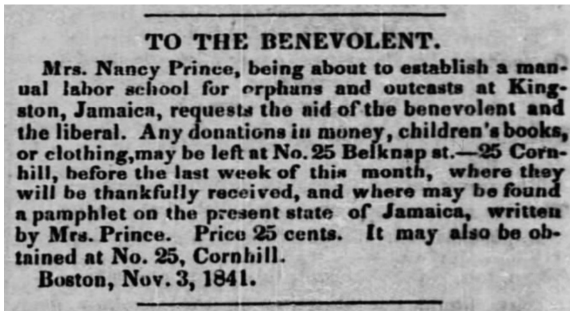

TO THE BENEVOLENT.

Mrs. Nancy Prince, being about to establish a manual labor school for orphans and outcasts at Kingston, Jamaica, requests the aid of the benevolent and the liberal. Any donations in money, children's books, or clothing, may be left at No. 25 Belknap st.—25 Cornhill, before the last week of this month, where they will be thankfully received, and where may be found a pamphlet on the present state of Jamaica, written by Mrs. Prince. Price 25 cents. It may also be obtained at No. 25, Cornhill.

Boston, Nov. 3, 1841.

FIGURE 2.2. Nancy Prince's fundraising appeal in the *Liberator*, November 3, 1841, in support of the Jamaican school for ex-slaves. The appeal continued for at least two more years.

had very little to spare for the sustenance of American Oberlin missionaries. Under these circumstances, the latter's eagerness to take possession of Nancy Prince's resources was, if not entirely excusable, at least understandable. Yet their response clearly heightened Prince's complex struggle to locate sites of community that did not manifest the class and racial hierarchy she so desperately wanted to leave behind. In this particular instance, Prince stood as a Black woman paradoxically empowered by her economic resources, voicing moral outrage at the selfishness of a white missionary class that, even in destitution, attempted to enforce old patterns of racial subjugation. In this sense, Prince's lament about being betrayed by "these people that I had hoped to serve" suggests a definition of "service" that establishes her absolute equality with the white missionaries. At the same time, however, the incident highlights the political conditions of transnational social involvement that had to be resolved before Prince could achieve her goal to be the ideal of the Black social reformer.

Prince's sense of confusion and disappointment only increases when, in these very sections describing her falling out with the white American missionaries, she intersperses equally disheartening evaluations of the Black Jamaicans themselves. Though she remains staunchly supportive of West Indian emancipation, she narrates abuses perpetrated upon the ex-slaves by the privileged mulatto children of former slaveholders. Even as her narrative subdivides the Black population in order to locate, based on color and class, the real community for her labors, she comments (at the same time that she condemns the white missionaries) that the "people are full of deceit and lies, this is the fruits of slavery, it makes master and slaves knaves" (65). Last but not least, she condemns the ignorance of yet another female ex-slave class leader: "This poor deluded creature was a class leader in the Baptist Church, and such is the

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condition of most of the people: they seem blinded to every thing but money. They are great for trade, and are united in their determination for procuring property, of which they have amassed a vast amount" (66).

In addressing her return to Jamaica, Prince's *Life and Travels* fails as a coherent text—indeed, her accounting of betrayals and disheartening encounters revolves more around her discouragement with the general scene on her return than with the particular guilt of either the missionaries or the ex-slaves. The resulting confusion suggests unresolvable conflicts between the intricate local politics of color, class, religion, and culture that structures Jamaican postemancipation society and Prince's need to find a Black community that enables the survival of her transformed identity as a Black woman reformer. What is painfully obvious is that the detachment Prince cultivated in Russia has now given way completely in the face of her palpable disappointment at the failed search for community, either among an emergent free Black population or among white Christian philanthropists. No wonder, then, that in her 1841 *The West Indies*, Prince takes pains to record the words of the American consul in Kingston: "[It is] a folly for the Americans to come to the Island to better their condition; he said they came to him everyday praying him to send them home. He likewise mentioned to me the great mortality amongst the emigrants." Her last words in the 1841 pamphlet condemn the idea of Black American migration to Jamaica: "The colored people of these United States are induced to remove to Jamaica, in consequence of the flattering offers made to them, to induce them to emigrate. Since my return they have been inquisitive to learn from me something respecting the place, and the people I have been among. For these inquiries, I have written this book, that they may have the advantage of what information I have collected, and knowing the truth, they may no longer be deceived."[41]

Expanding on her visit to Jamaica in *Life and Travels*, Prince reinforces her negative comments on Black American immigration to the island. No doubt this view gains further support in the context of her disillusioning experience during her second visit, providing evidence of the difficulties of life for Black Americans in Jamaica. Ironically, Prince concludes the narrative of her disastrous second voyage with the prayer that "with her liberty secured to her, may she [Jamaica] now rise in prosperity, morality, and religion, and become a happy people, whose God is the Lord" (67). However, even at the end she still harps on the corruption of the British Baptists, whose Black "communicants are so ignorant of the ordinance, that they join the church merely to have a decent burial" (76). It is significant, then, that in the autobiography Prince ends her discussion of Jamaica by reversing her narrative stance toward the island and its Black in-

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habitants to one that is detached, impersonal, and at times even tending toward a condemning bitterness, as if to signal a final, demoralizing recognition of her failed hopes. The narrative itself ends soon after, with Prince's harrowing journey back to the half-slave, half-free United States and her negotiation of economic uncertainty as a free Black woman.[42]

Despite the keen sense of emotional disappointment and betrayal from American missionaries and Jamaican ex-slaves alike, Prince records one endearing memory in her *Life and Travels* that provides both herself and her readers with a curious image of successful diaspora community that belies the reality of intraracial strife and allows for the ideal of resistant Black agency. At the same time she despairingly and angrily relates the negative encounters of the second voyage, Prince mentions the 1841 return of Maroons who had been deported to Sierra Leone in 1795 for their defiance of British authorities. Undoubtedly aware of their origins as fierce and independent descendants of slave rebels, Prince comments, "They had not forgot the injuries they had received from the hands of man, nor the mercies of God to them, nor his judgments to their enemies. Their numbers were few, but their power was great; they say the island, of right, belongs to them" (63). Prince might well have been aware of their return to Jamaica before she left the island in 1841 to raise money for her school. However, she mentions their arrival out of temporal sequence, during the account of her failed second trip in 1842. The effect suggests a salvaging of her Jamaican expedition through the vision of at least one Black Atlantic population functioning on the island with a venerable history of colonial resistance, unity, and racial heroism. As diasporic citizens with close ties to Africa who paradoxically achieve a return to their New World place of origin, the Maroons evoke Prince's own transatlantic struggle for acculturation and political identity, a struggle beginning with her displaced African forebears in Massachusetts and her fascination with and reverence for Money Vose's act of self-determination in the face of slavery. The Maroons, of course, maintained ties to an African past, and they immortalized themselves in the imagination of both Blacks and whites by terrorizing European slaveholders in other parts of the Caribbean (especially Jamaica) and in Central and South America. Thus, they are attractive to Prince precisely because they have become figures of heroic exile, apparently able to survive in mobility. Since she declares the Maroons to be the "true" Jamaicans (unlike the now-opportunistic ex-slaves of Prince's *Life and Travels*), their presence inspires her to rewrite Jamaica as potentially still the place of a transcendent Black determination. Consequently, the history figured in their romantic story (versus the current situation of postemancipation Jamaica) provides the imaginative basis of a diasporic connection that suggests

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the possibilities of overcoming intracultural Black difference and entanglements in national frames of antagonism.

After Prince leaves Jamaica, she recounts a horrifying stopover in New Orleans, where she not only witnesses firsthand the hardships of American slaves but is herself almost sold into slavery. Once in Boston, things are barely better: "The first twenty months after my arrival in the city, notwithstanding my often infirmities, I labored with much success, until I hired with and from those with whom I mostly sympathized, and shared in common the disadvantages and stigma that is heaped upon us, in this our professed Christian land. But my lot was like the man that went down from Jerusalem, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounding him, departed, leaving him half dead. What I did not lose, when cast away, has been taken from my room where I hired" (86). In a sense, then, while one of the last lines of the autobiography declares rather mournfully that in the United States "we have no continuing city nor abiding place" (87), the idea of the Maroons at least provides the comfort of a utopian site of diasporic resistance, of the procurement—finally—of a Black home.

JAMAICA FAREWELL

This would, of course, be precisely the time when contemporary critics might be tempted to read the Maroons in Prince's text as the "model of cultural self-determination and recreation of local place for Blacks in the New World," when one could argue that, in spite of intraracial difference, the power of Black diasporic consciousness enables Prince a moment of relief in what, for the most part, has been a story of disconnection and dislocation.[43] In the words of Paul Gilroy, this moment of relief might gesture toward "the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance *and* between the group and its erst-while oppressors."[44] And yet, both for Prince's historical moment and for our own contemporary narratives about Black diaspora, the example of the Maroons speaks as much for the problematic politics of what historian Mavis Campbell has termed a history of resistance, collaboration, and betrayal as it does for cultural resistance in the New World.[45]

However much they were rightfully hailed for their heroic struggles against European slavery, the Maroons were infamous at other moments for their collaboration with Europeans, all in an attempt to secure their own "local place." Indeed, throughout their early history in Jamaica, Maroon groups had signed treaties with the British and, according to Richard Price, "bought, sold and

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owned substantial numbers of slaves, hunted new runaways for a price, . . . gain[ed] the hatred of much of the slave population, and in many respects may have deserved their common post-treaty nickname, 'the King's Negroes.'"[46] Even their exile in Sierra Leone was a complicated affair since, once they were in Africa, the British employed them "as a military force to subdue" other rebellious New World ex-slaves who had been transported from Nova Scotia.[47] It is understandable that in Prince's reading, the Maroons must be romanticized, because she was probably unaware that they signified an alternate history of accommodation and compromise. But while one can appreciate the solace the image provided her, as modern readers we need to think about this encounter between Prince and the Maroons not merely as proof of the uselessness of nationalism as a model of interaction, or as a sign of the transcendent power of imagined Black diasporic unity. Rather, we need to think about such a moment of diaspora "consciousness" as the confluence of desires, anxieties, (mis) rememberings, rewriting, and even representational violations that make such consciousness "possible" or imaginable. My point here is not to attack Prince for her failures of memory, knowledge, or analysis but to demand from contemporary readers a greater awareness of *all* the hidden histories, conflicts, and consequences of a potential racial utopia. Prince's narrative must unwittingly enact an erasure of history, and (almost) of a community of Black people, to create the "imagined community" denied to her in the United States, and indeed denied to her in Jamaica by the very real contingencies of the local.

Nancy Prince undoubtedly felt keenly and protested vigorously against racism. However, just as was the case with her Black contemporaries, this life of protest was contingent upon her own submersion and final investment in a flawed American cultural citizenship, a citizenship constructed and buttressed by the desire for, and complicated denial of, diasporic identity. Thus, Prince's *Life and Travels* is significant not because it is an example of diasporic transcendence, but because it is one of many nineteenth-century narratives that display moments of rupture, moments rife with troubling discontinuities. Ironically, in her efforts to abide in and contribute to the postslavery world of the British West Indies, Prince is overconfident in her objective ability to "read" the ex-slaves, their socioeconomic condition, and their cultural motivations. As noted by Amber Foster, the result is a pejorative attitude toward her racial brothers and sisters in Jamaica that ultimately defines her position as almost alien, relative to a Black community in which she had invested so much hope.[48] Indeed, her return to the United States at the conclusion of *Life and Travels* strikes a grim note, though her subsequent revision and reprinting until 1855 of the text suggest her larger commitment to self-sustenance, as well as full political

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engagement on the ongoing question of emigration among many Black communities in the United States.

Despite its ending, this is fundamentally not a narrative about "failure," but rather one that dramatizes Prince's negotiation of complex racial and class possibilities that have opened up because of her ability to finance her own travel and so remain relatively independent. Prince encounters in Jamaica an ex-slave population dealing with the colonial conditions of emancipation, *as well as* the paternalism of different British and American missionary groups vying for converts. As an American, she can identify to a certain extent with the ex-slaves, but the colonial West Indies is simply not another version of the United States, and as the text taken from her 1841 *The West Indies* demonstrates, she continues to look on with the eyes of a sojourner, not a resident. Additionally, as a self-declared Black female missionary, Nancy Prince is at once working in conjunction with and in resistance to male-dominated religious structure on the island. She has a sense of racial commonality with the ex-slaves, but that commonality is, if not fully mediated, then at least refracted through the power structures that enable mission work in the first place. Whether she struggles with the British Baptists or the Oberlin missionaries, Prince relies—as they do—on the assumption that her charges must live up to her standards. The difference she makes is in her focus on the instruction of women and girls, a point of view which must have almost certainly reminded her of her early days of familial poverty and her struggles with first an insane mother and then a fallen sister. In many ways, then, even as her experience as a Black American woman creates points of commonality with the ex-slaves, transatlantic abolition, empire, and Christian evangelism necessarily impinge upon and help shape the experience of this commonality.

In fact, with the exception of Mary Seacole, for the figures in *Moving Home*, Christian mission becomes the important site of diasporic encounter. Indeed, Prince's heroic Maroons, recently returned from Sierra Leone, function as one link in the transoceanic chain between West Africa as the eastern edge of the Black Atlantic and New World locations such as Jamaica. The Maroons may have been deported to the British colony of Sierra Leone as punishment, but once there they become settler-colonialists as part of the African diaspora being reshaped by indigenous responses to a related pattern of British imperial expansion, British abolition, and British Christian mission. In Sierra Leone they share space with indigenous populations, with Blacks from Britain and Nova Scotia, and with a group of displaced African ex-slaves whose emancipation tells an entirely different story from those to be found in the West Indies and the United States. If in her *Life and Travels* Prince explored her role as the Black American

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traveler struggling to engage across class, culture, politics, and geography with Jamaicans, the West African convert Samuel Ajayi Crowther faced a different challenge—that of reframing the meaning of his identity from the category of former slave to that of a Christian Yoruba missionary and colonial Sierra Leone citizen. Indeed, both Crowther's biography and his travels allow us to explore what it meant to be a Christian convert and simultaneously a missionary.

As the next chapter reveals, Crowther's life as a native African traveler and missionary was deeply intertwined with the expansion of the London-based Church Missionary Society throughout West Africa. As a member of this large and powerful organization, he was relieved of anxieties related to financing his travels. Also, unlike the texts of Prince and Seacole, Crowther's travel narrative was sponsored by the society, the evangelical arm of the Church of England. Crowther was therefore expected to surrender any independent opinions in support of larger missionary goals. Additionally, his audience was decidedly white and not necessarily in support of African autonomy. What strategies did he employ, then, both to enable his own voice and to invest personal meaning in travel writing designed to bolster an institutional cause?

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