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“So Far to Leeward”: Eliza Moore’s Fugitive Cosmopolitan Routes to Freedom in the
Nineteenth-Century Caribbean

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Eliza Moore, an enslaved domestic born in British Antigua in the late 1700s, petitioned for her freedom in 1836 and 1838, using Britain’s 1834 abolition of slavery to facilitate her emancipation from the Danish Caribbean. The article frames Moore’s liberation efforts as “fugitive cosmopolitanism,” a concept emphasizing that enslaved people’s subjectivity within the Black Atlantic was marked by travels across great distances and a hard-won savvy—derived from licit and illicit movements in service of freedom—but also by constant uncertainty and an unguaranteed liberty. The unlikely ways that mid-nineteenth-century enslaved people in the Caribbean learned that their bondage was unlawful reflected the cosmopolitan knowledge they acquired through dangerous acts of fugitivity. Moore’s ultimately successful attempt to assert British subjecthood also depended on the support of her kinswomen in Antigua, as well as the broader and contradictory implications of British abolitionism in an era of continued imperial competition and enslavement elsewhere in the Caribbean. Additionally, her trajectory reveals the multilayered exploitation at work in women’s enslavement, as the risk of rape and sexual servitude remained ever-present in the Danish domestic slavery that Moore endured. The uncertainty that overshadowed Moore’s efforts to self-emancipate made her eventual freedom bittersweet at best, as her return to Antigua as a British subject disrupted her ties to a son who remained enslaved in Saint Thomas.