Irish Lives in the British Caribbean: 
Engaging with Empire in the Revolutionary Era

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis examines the Irish experience of empire in the British Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era by means of ten individual biographies of Irish sojourners. The thesis builds upon Irish historiography which addresses Ireland’s place in the British Empire, and also seeks a place within British imperial historiography, which has often neglected the role of Irish people in the Empire. Each chapter focuses on a separate social sphere—the Military, Commerce, Administration and Humanitarianism, and includes profiles of non-elite men. The thesis explores the relationship between the men’s Irish identities and the imperial structures within which they fashioned their Caribbean lives. For most, a connection with Ireland was important, but as the men were involved in an array of imperial projects, their Irish identity was just one of a number of interlocking cultural spaces they inhabited.

The thesis interrogates how biography enables the historian to advance an argument about the past and suggests that combining a spatial approach with biography can provide thorough, multi-dimensional contextualisation. The thesis adapts the geographer David Harvey's spatial model and analyses the absolute, relative and relational spaces the sojourners inhabited, and the tensions within and between those spaces. A close study of the spaces the men inhabited, the networks and exchanges that shaped their lives, and the internal spaces of their ideas and emotions, produces a nuanced understanding of the imperial world in which they lived, and their experience of empire.
The Irish sojourners navigated family, mercantile and administrative networks, as well as broader British and trans-imperial connections in the region. Although not exclusively Irish characteristics, the men in this thesis shared a tenacious nature and the ability to withstand conflict. Many pursued trans-imperial opportunities and engaged with more than one empire simultaneously. Their experiences confirm the porous nature of imperial boundaries in the region, the contingent and varied experience of imperial rule, and the asymmetries of power that existed across different sites in the British Caribbean.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

__________________________
Date: 27 February 2018

Jennifer A. McLaren
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I acknowledge the financial support provided to me by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship, and by the Macquarie University Faculty of Arts which enabled me to attend academic conferences to share my work, and to undertake research in Dublin and Belfast. My research
trips to Dublin were made even more enjoyable by the hospitality provided by the Rennick family in Dublin. Thank you.

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Most of all, thank you to my husband Richard and my daughter Emily for your love, patience, encouragement and support throughout.
## Abbreviations

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<td>Church Colonial Union, Jamaica</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIC</td>
<td>East India Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>MHS</td>
<td>Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore</td>
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<td>NMM</td>
<td>National Maritime Museum, London</td>
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<td>PRONI</td>
<td>Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast</td>
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<td>RHS</td>
<td>Royal Humane Society</td>
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<td>RIA</td>
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<td>SMS</td>
<td>Scottish Missionary Society</td>
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Introduction

In the summer of 1802, Irish businessman John Black wrote from his plantation in Trinidad to his brother George in Belfast. John was musing, not for the first time, on a return to Ireland. In the end he dismissed its likelihood, observing

that when a man has passed upwards of 10 years in the West Indies he can never brook living anywhere else and I have invariably seen it turn out so, with all the Old Stagers I have seen attempt to stay at home. They all soon become disgusted with the European formalities and return, to our good West India hospitality in which all formality and ceremony has been long abolished.¹

This thesis examines the Irish experience of empire in the British Caribbean by means of ten individual biographies of Irish settlers and sojourners during the Revolutionary Era. Each chapter focuses on a separate social sphere—the military, commerce, administration and humanitarianism.

Scholarship on Ireland and empire has developed apace over the past decade, since Michael de Nie and Joe Cleary declared that “Ireland and empire is now one of the most vibrant fields of inquiry in Irish Studies.”² Within the field, there is a growing body of scholarship on the Irish in the Caribbean. However, on the whole, this scholarship has focused on mercantile links, and is skewed

¹ John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
towards the early modern period. Aside from Nini Rodgers’ *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, there is little historical analysis dedicated to the Irish presence in the Caribbean during the transformative ‘imperial meridian’ from the 1770s to the 1830s. This thesis builds upon Rodgers’ work but expands the ‘type’ of Irishman studied—to include administrators (and not just elites), military men, a missionary, a medical doctor, as well as two mercantile men—one a small-time linen merchant, the other a member of a prominent Atlantic mercantile family but who is virtually unknown to scholarship. By seeking out life stories of Irishmen engaged in different arenas beyond the mercantile, this thesis provides new insights into the diversity of Irish engagement with the Empire, and the relationship between the various men’s Irish identities and the structures within which they fashioned their Caribbean lives.

Irish engagement with the British Empire in the Caribbean was multiple and often overlapping. This echoes the findings of scholars of the Irish at other sites of empire. Many of the men profiled here related to more than one of the spheres into which this thesis is divided—the chapters are a way of arranging the life stories, they are not intended as silos. Connections were forged across different social spheres. For example, Edward Despard the soldier and John Black the sugar planter both participated in imperial administration; likewise,

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magistrate Richard Madden could just as easily be profiled alongside the humanitarians John Crawford and Hope Waddell.

Just as individuals breach the boundaries of the chapters of this thesis, so they demonstrate the multiplicity of networks which they navigated in the course of their Caribbean sojourns. Much of the existing scholarship on the Irish in the Caribbean during this period focuses in one way or another on networks—whether family, religious, or mercantile networks. In the course of researching this thesis, it has become clear that the Irish people who managed to carve out a successful Caribbean sojourn were those who excelled at maintaining—and manipulating—multiple networks. In addition to the traditional Irish familial and mercantile networks, the Irish men and women in this thesis were generally adept at navigating imperial networks too—and not just British ones.

**Sojourners and their Sources**

This thesis focuses on people who travelled to the Caribbean with the intention of establishing homes or businesses on a temporary basis, before returning to Ireland (or in many cases, to Britain). In his work on “transient migrants” from Scotland to Jamaica and the Chesapeake, Alan Karras co-opted a sociological term—sojourners—to describe his historical subjects.\(^6\) The people he studied left Scotland intending to return to their homeland with increased wealth.\(^7\) This label aptly describes most of the Irish emigrants who populate this thesis. Indeed, according to Nini Rodgers, “the most consistent and pervasive Irish


\(^{7}\) Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun*, 1.
presence” in the Caribbean during this period (she called it “the age of sugar and slaves”) was the sojourner. Rodgers acknowledges, all the same, that this was a permeable state—many sojourners died in the unfamiliar climate; some returned quickly home; and others remained so long they became settlers, establishing a creole family, as John Black did. Caribbean contacts, particularly in the mercantile classes, were coveted such that returned (or deceased) sojourners were often succeeded by family members from the next generation. Only two of the men profiled in this thesis remained in the Atlantic world: John Black settled in Trinidad, and John Crawford emigrated permanently to the United States rather than returning to Ireland. In both cases, however, the close ties they retained to Ireland press their case for inclusion in this thesis. In the quote which opened this Introduction, John Black made light of the prospect of returning home to Ireland after an extended Caribbean sojourn, but his letters reveal that he was often homesick for Ireland and not always as confident of his place in the Caribbean.

When originally planning this project, I had hoped to include biographies of women as well as men, but it become evident early on that although Irish women did sojourn in the Caribbean, the archival traces they left are fleeting. Primary sources for research into the lives of white women in the Caribbean in general are rare. Even so, of the ten men profiled, only four were accompanied on their sojourn by their wives: Lord Macartney, Richard Madden, Hope Waddell and John Crawford. And of these four, only Crawford’s

8 Rodgers, *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, 82.
9 Rodgers, *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery*, 82.
wife Mary Crawford was Irish. To recover the stories of the wives who sojourned with their husbands (or indeed other female family members) is a separate research project from the one I ultimately undertook, but wherever possible I have drawn what I can from the archival record to shed light on these women’s experiences. The most visible woman in this thesis is Jessie Waddell, the Scottish wife of Hope Waddell, a Presbyterian missionary. Waddell described in some detail his wife’s work on his Jamaican mission station, and it has been possible to speculate as to her day-to-day life on the basis of a diary kept by her contemporary, Alison Blyth. Similarly, fragments of a diary kept by Harriet, the English wife of magistrate Richard Madden, record some of her activities (and observations) during the couple’s Jamaican sojourn.

The aim of this research project was to delve into the Caribbean lives of sojourners across a range of social spheres. Pragmatism played a role in the selection of biographical subjects—thus most of the subjects in this thesis are men for whom archival or published material was readily accessible online. Private and official correspondence, memoirs and published works form the basis for most of my biographies, together with corroborating evidence from newspapers, and other observers where this is possible. Doubtless, an extended spell in the National Archives in London or in various Caribbean archives would reveal further detail of some of the men’s lives, but such work was beyond the scope of my project. As Nini Rodgers has acknowledged, historians of Ireland and the Caribbean face difficulties “in a context in which, on the Irish side, two centuries of Irish public history was lost in the Custom
House fire of 1922, while in the Caribbean, related problems of material record and the preservation and survival of the archive are at play.”¹¹ But this thesis has explored the evidence bases that do exist in this context, some of which have until recently “remained methodologically marginal,” including travel and life writing.¹² I have not made use of other types of sources suggested by Fionnghuala Sweeney, which include French and Spanish language material, literature, musical works, the religious or visual representations.¹³ All of these present opportunities for further study.

To describe the process of ‘finding’ the men for this thesis: clues gleaned from Rodgers’ work revealed Edward Despard, Richard Madden and Samuel Watt as possible subjects.¹⁴ The Dictionary of Irish Biography directed me to Hope Waddell, John Crawford and Marcus Rainsford; and my research on the West India Regiment (for which Rainsford recruited) led me to the most elusive character in this thesis, Daniel O’Meara, the leader of a troop of African rangers in St. Lucia. The cache of letters written by John Black to his brother in Ireland, held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, also pointed me to Lord George Macartney, a fellow Ulsterman. Finally, reading about one of the most famous Irishmen of the late eighteenth century, Edmund Burke, revealed his younger brother Richard’s somewhat complicated Caribbean connections.

¹² Sweeney, ‘Common ground,’ 513.
¹³ Sweeney, ‘Common ground,’ 513.
¹⁴ Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery.
Situating the Subject: Time, Place, Themes and Questions

The earliest case study in this thesis covers Richard Burke’s sojourns in Grenada and St. Vincent between 1764 and 1771. Richard Madden and Hope Waddell’s sojourns in Jamaica take the thesis through to the mid-1830s. Initially I adopted the years Christopher Bayly termed the “imperial meridian” (1780—1830) as the temporal frame for this thesis. Bayly noted that this period, characterized by the “massive expansion of British dominion, of techniques of governance and exploitation,” had been neglected by historians of British imperial history. He argued that examining the imperial meridian in its own right better illuminated the political, social and cultural processes at play during what was otherwise often seen as “simply a hiatus between the irresistible waves of liberal reform.” Bayly depicted the imperial meridian as a period characterized by a series of attempts to establish overseas despotisms, supported by an “imperial style which emphasised hierarchy and racial subordination, and by the patronage of indigenous landed elites.” This depiction is pertinent to the British Caribbean.

Given that the case studies in the thesis extend beyond the limits of Bayly’s imperial meridian, however, the epithet ‘Revolutionary Era’ has been adopted instead. Granted, Bayly argued that the European “Age of Revolutions” was only one part of the world crisis at the time. But it is clear that the tumult of the Revolutionary Era around the globe during the late eighteenth and into the

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15 Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.
19 Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 164.
nineteenth century was a pervasive influence in the lives of the men I researched. Their Caribbean lives were set against a backdrop of revolution—they observed (often from afar) the ruptures of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland, the French and American Revolutions and the Revolution in Saint-Domingue. Hope Waddell was caught up in the tumult of the Baptist War in Jamaica in 1831-2. As such, at a micro level, this thesis reflects each man’s reckoning with the political, social and economic transformation wrought by war and imperial reform, with its attendant violence and disjuncture. As will become evident through this thesis, the effects of revolution presented many sojourners with opportunities which might otherwise have been unavailable to them.

The Age of Revolution has emerged in recent years as a “new-old field of study” (in Michael McDonnell’s words), in which insights from Atlantic and transnational history are being applied to revolutionary experiences across an increasing range of contexts, including Atlantic, American, imperial and global. The Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era was the site of intense inter-imperial rivalry. This thesis focuses on the British Caribbean as the site of Irish engagement; however, as will become clear through the thesis, exactly which islands and colonies were part of the British Caribbean at any one time was frequently subject to change. The lived reality of the region during this period was that European empires were not “hermetically sealed systems,” and nor was imperial power hegemonic. Empires overlapped, islands changed hands between France, Spain, the Netherlands and Britain, and it was

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impossible for British subjects to avoid engaging with these other European powers. As Eliga Gould reminds us, the interconnected system of empires in the Caribbean was “fundamentally asymmetric”—the balance of power was not always with Britain. It is important to bear this in mind when examining at close range the behaviour of Irish men and women during their Caribbean sojourns. At the edges of the British world in the Caribbean—in places like Honduras, Demerara or Trinidad—imperial histories were deeply entangled, as the experiences of Edward Despard, John Crawford and John Black especially demonstrate.

In addition to a diversity of experiences which are surveyed in this thesis, a broad sweep of Caribbean sites is covered, including islands, and colonies on the Central American mainland. The thesis ranges across Barbados and Jamaica, Britain’s ‘oldest’ colonies; the ceded Islands of Grenada and St. Vincent; and Trinidad, Demerara and St. Domingo. The historical context of each of these islands is covered in the relevant chapters in so far as this is necessary to explain the context of the life stories detailed.

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Figure 1. A New Map of the Caribee Islands in America, 1761. Plate to Vol. III of Tobias Smollett, Continuation of the Complete History of England. London: Richard Baldwin, 1761. Map author’s own.23

23 Note that only the Eastern portion of St. Domingo is shown on the map, and Jamaica is not included. Jamaica is to the West of St. Domingo.
Following a trend which has emerged over the past decade (at least) in imperial history, this thesis uses the lives of individuals to elucidate wider historical processes. Put another way, biographical case studies provide us with a “lens through which to explore an endlessly complex world.”24 A key contribution of this thesis is the fresh perspective it provides on the operation of the British Empire in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era. By observing the Irishmen’s Caribbean lives at close range (and catching glimpses of the women and enslaved around them), the thesis makes clear that the nature of imperial power in the British islands and colonies was by no means assured. Stephen Howe recently noted that the written records and maps left behind have “too often blinded historians” to the reality of European empires’ “authority on the ground.”25 To this can be added the traditional imperial biographies which (unlike this thesis) focused on prominent individuals and operational matters, and which took for granted British imperial hegemony. The way that the men I have studied interacted with imperial structures and systems varied, but in general most were often manoeuvring and negotiating across imperial lines, hedging their bets as to which European empire might win out in the short- to medium-term. The benefit of studying Irish lives in this context is that at times they were able to push the boundaries of the British Empire in ways that their English (and possibly Scottish) counterparts could not. This is particularly true of those men on the edges of the Empire in places such as Demerara, Trinidad and Honduras.


Irish identity has been central to my research. Through the process of researching the lives of the men in this thesis, I have been confronted by what Orla Power describes as the “deep complexities associated with the concept of Irishness.” In considering Irish identity, I have been guided by Barry Crosbie’s findings in his study of Irish imperial networks in India, that “a single unifying sense of Irishness was never really a defining feature of the Irish in the Empire.” He attributes this to the presence of “multiple ethnic and religious divisions within nineteenth-century Ireland.” Historians of the Irish in the Caribbean too, have noted that differences in religion, class and motivation for travelling have ensured that the Irish in the Caribbean were by no means a homogenous group. My discoveries about the Caribbean experiences of the men in this thesis have allowed me to explore the nuances of Irish identity. Crosbie argued in *Irish Imperial Networks* that the notion of Irishness must be thoroughly nuanced “to recognise that the Irish comprised a multiplicity of communities, often with very different, sometimes contradictory or competing sets of aims and imperatives.” This thesis reveals not only that such nuance has often gone unrecognised by historians but that it was also rarely understood by those around the Irishmen. Others may have viewed the Irish as a homogenous group, but the Irishmen did not perceive themselves as such.

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There are examples in this thesis of Irishmen taking advantage of this perceived homogeneity, by mobilising different aspects of Irish identity as a way of navigating difficulties or availing themselves of opportunities within the Empire. Put simply, not all Irishmen abroad were Protestant, or Catholic, and some (like John Black in Chapter Two) were distinctly ambiguous when it came to their religious identity. This ambiguity served him well as he emigrated from Grenada to Spanish Trinidad in the 1780s. Similarly, not all Irishmen were either for or against the Empire, and the assumption that to be Catholic was incompatible with loyalty to Britain and empire is simplistic. Catriona Kennedy has shown that in the military context, to be Irish (and even Catholic) and loyal to the British Crown were not necessarily in tension.\textsuperscript{30} The careers of the O’Meara brothers (see Chapter One) with the Irish Brigade demonstrate the “mutable nature of Irish military identity” in the eighteenth century, as they shifted their loyalties (and identity) between France and Britain, and back to France again.\textsuperscript{31} Another aspect of identity which has emerged in this thesis is that Irishness was only a part of a man’s identity, which interacted with other identifiers, such as ‘missionary,’ ‘doctor,’ or ‘abolitionist.’

An underlying theme of this thesis is the complexity of the Irish experience of empire. Could the Irish push the boundaries of the British Empire in ways that their English and Scottish counterparts could not? Were there opportunities


available to Irishmen that were unavailable to others, as a result of the ambiguity of Irish identity? Was a certain flexibility of identity a marker of the Irish experience of empire? The editors of *Ireland in an Imperial World* observed (in relation to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) that Irish men and women “engaged numerous imperia simultaneously, and they had no single response to that rich diversity, often seeing no contradiction between benefiting from empire while despising or rejecting it in part or in whole.”  

The thesis also considers the extent to which the men’s Irish backgrounds and connections influenced their careers in the Caribbean, and also considers the men’s attitudes towards empire, or what empire was to them. I uncovered very little explicit engagement with the matter of Anglo-Irish or Irish-Imperial relations in my research, except for some commentary by John Black and John Crawford in the wake of the 1798 Rebellion. If anything, the men covered in this thesis were more inclined to place Ireland within a broader revolutionary or Atlantic context, than to consider it in isolation. In a British context, this thesis considers whether the presence of Irish people in British imperial spaces challenges the traditional dualism of metropole and periphery in imperial histories.

Finally, this thesis reveals some little-known histories, which have been uncovered via the experiences of the men profiled. My research on Daniel O’Meara and Marcus Rainsford in Chapter One highlights the little-studied practice of arming slaves, which included Britain’s purchase of thousands of

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men from Africa at a time when politicians in London claimed the high moral ground in moves towards abolition. The presence of Africans in eighteenth-century Ireland was raised by snippets of information in the letters of Samuel Watt and John Black in Chapter Two. Edward Despard’s marriage, and comments in a letter by John Crawford also raise the question of European men’s bonds with African and creole coloured women (Chapters One and Four). Active Irish involvement in the slave trade is slowly being revealed by historians. Despite oblique references to John Black’s activities as a slave-trader, it was hard to assemble evidence to prove this (Chapter Two). Given the difficulty of doing so in this case, it is possible that Irish involvement in slave-trading during this period may have been more widespread than acknowledged.

Methodology

In order to explore the world as experienced by ten Irishmen in the British Caribbean, my biographical approach incorporates elements of spatial analysis. I pay particular attention to the spaces the men made, and moved through, during their Caribbean years. Geographers have come to understand space “not as a fixed entity that we move through, but rather as something that gets made by people and their contexts.”33 By paying close attention not just to the places in which the Irishmen lived, but also the networks and exchanges that shaped their lives and the internal spaces of their ideas and emotions, it is possible to better understand the imperial world in which the men lived, and their experience of empire.

Lives

For each man profiled in this thesis, I provide a biographical overview which offers a sense of his life as a whole. Although each of the men is of interest primarily because of his Caribbean experiences, to focus solely on this portion of their lives would be to suggest, as Jonathan Wright has put it, a “disjointed biography...a career pursued in discrete colonial and metropolitan contexts.”34 By placing the men’s Caribbean experiences within the broader context of their lives, it is possible to detect the complex and multifaceted nature of imperial experience.

In introducing a 2015 collection on networks in imperial history, Gareth Curless and his co-editors noted that “life writing” had emerged as a fruitful methodology in imperial history.35 They argued that by “making the experience of imperialism personal, life writing makes the complex spatiality of imperial networks easier to visualise by following individual trajectories of people...as they travelled along and between many intersecting global networks.”36 In doing so, Curless and his co-editors distinguished between biography (which they posited as relating to an exceptional person, one who influenced historical processes directly) and life writing, which concerns “ordinary individuals,” often subaltern.37 This distinction is perhaps too finely-drawn—I use the terms interchangeably throughout this thesis. And whilst the editors make a valid point—that individual lives have much to offer to the question of imperial

36 Curless et al, ‘Editors’ Introduction,’ 725.
networks, and imperial experience—they did not seek to explain precisely how it is that life stories do their historical work. What follows here is an overview of biography as an historical method, its pitfalls and benefits, and an attempt to articulate exactly how this method achieves its objective.

In the past, academic historians were somewhat ambivalent about the genre of biography, sceptical of its capacity to convey the kind of “analytically sophisticated interpretation of the past that academics have long expected.”

In an American Historical Review ‘Roundtable’ on biography, Barbara Taylor noted some of the features which had made biography controversial: its “belletristic” origins, “its emphasis on individual agency at the expense of larger historical forces,” and its “flattening of complex causal connections to fit a linear life narrative.” Taylor noted that these features are less pronounced today than in the past, and as Jill Lepore had previously observed, biography has become increasingly sophisticated, and self-conscious about such concerns.

The output of the Roundtable, and the recent volume of biographical works by historians, suggest that the suspicion of biography is waning in academic circles. Having said that, the historiography of biography still contains little theoretical engagement with the question of how biography enables the historian to successfully advance an argument about the past. Many historians use individual lives as a way into writing about the past, but very few reflect on how this approach works, or what is to be gained by

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examining individual lives. Some critical discussion about the place of biography has, however, taken place within the historiography of microhistory.

In her ‘Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,’ Lepore observed that any attempt to define microhistory is vastly complicated by the fact that very few works of scholarship ever label themselves microhistory.\(^{41}\) Even scholarship which does use the label comes in many different forms, and the scholars who led the way in the field have themselves understood the approach variously.\(^{42}\) In general, though, microhistory involves an “intensive historical study of a relatively well defined smaller object,” such as a place, event, community, or individual.\(^{43}\) István Szijártó went on to propose two additional essential features of microhistory: it must always address a “great historical question,” and it must emphasise agency.\(^{44}\)

Another key characteristic identified by historians reflecting on the practice of microhistory is contextualisation—placing the small unit of study in a broader context.\(^{45}\) The leading historian of the genre, Carlo Ginzburg, recently observed that the key to the extended case study typical of microhistory is that the intensive study of the case leads to a “better generalisation,” and to deeper (often unexpected) questions.\(^{46}\) In a recent discussion of big history and local

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\(^{41}\) Lepore, ‘Historians Who Love Too Much,’ 130.
\(^{44}\) Szijártó, ‘Introduction,’ 5.
history, Andy Wood noted in microhistory’s defence that the intensive nature of microhistorical case studies often produces “fresh archival finds in which moments of contestation, embarrassment, anger and inversion...reveal something of wider social structures, sensibilities and understandings.”

Wood’s conception of microhistory accords with my own approach, that is, in “studies of particular moments, or other small communities...we often find larger worlds revealed to us.”

In imperial studies, examples of microhistories abound—particularly those which focus on individual lives, as opposed to an event such as the interrogation of Ginzburg’s miller, Mennochio. In ‘The Life of Alexander Alexander and the Spanish Atlantic,’ Matthew Brown traced the Caribbean travels and writings of Scottish Mr Alexander, in order to explicate the wider Spanish Atlantic world in which he moved in the early nineteenth century.

In ‘True Brittons and Real Irish’ Catriona Kennedy drew on the fragmentary narrative left by Captain Peter Jennings, an Irishman born in France who fought in both the French and British armies. A close study of Jennings’ career provides insights into the complex set of allegiances generated by his religion, his loyalty to the Bourbon dynasty in France, and his service in the British army. Orla Power and Mark Quintanilla’s work on the Irish merchant

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51 Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish.’
community in St. Croix and the Ceded Islands respectively constitute microhistories which shed light on Irish connections with the eighteenth-century Caribbean.\textsuperscript{52}

Other examples of microhistories (particularly within the fields of transnational and global history) group together a number of life stories, allowing historians to cast their analytical net wider.\textsuperscript{53} For example, each chapter of \textit{Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity} contains the life story (or, more often, a partial life story), of an individual whose life transcended national borders. The editors maintain that the book demonstrates the ability of individual life stories to “radically explicate the worlds in which they lived.”\textsuperscript{54} In similar vein, Miles Ogborn’s \textit{Global Lives} collates over 40 life stories from individuals in disparate parts of the British imperial world, many of whom are not well-known.\textsuperscript{55} I will return to why Ogborn adopted this approach, but his book serves as an example of microhistory being used to study what Ogborn calls “processes of global connection.”\textsuperscript{56}

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\textsuperscript{53} Tanya Evans and Robert Reynolds, ‘Introduction to this Special Issue on Biography and Life-Writing,’ \textit{Australian Historical Studies} 43 (2010): 1.
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A commonly cited pitfall of biography is the focus on the individual as “the intellectual and analytical centre of the argument,” but I would argue this tends to be an issue only where the main point of the biography is in tracing and interpreting a life story; with that as the end-goal. According to Szijártó’s definition of microhistory, a defining characteristic of the genre is the desire to answer a “great historical question.” As Lepore noted, microhistorians tend to treat their biographical subject as a device, always drawing the reader’s attention away from the subject and to the surrounding culture. This pitfall can be further addressed by working to uncover and explore the relationships, networks and the wider context around the individual life.

Contributors to Transnational Lives advocated examining the relationships and interconnections between lives as a way of understanding the world the person lived in, but also as a way of ensuring that the light does not shine too brightly on one single individual. This focus on the individual and his or her singularity tends to skew any assessment of that person’s agency in their world. In order to avoid over-emphasising the role that a biographical subject may have played in his or her world, the microhistorian/biographer must attend to the contextual examination of the structures within which that individual operated, and the ways in which he or she did (or even whether he or she could) deal with those structures. Those historians who do reflect upon

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59 Lepore, ‘Historians Who Love Too Much,’ 142.
what they gain from using individual lives, often point to their desire to reinstate human agency into accounts of the past.

Miles Ogborn noted that one of his aims in adopting a biographical approach in *Global Lives* was to illuminate the effects “of human action, and the effects on human action,” of the networks and webs of connection he identified in his study.⁶¹ As Tanya Evans wrote in *Fractured Families*, life stories allow the historian to “explore closely the construction of power on both an individual and structural level;” that is, lives can help the historian to reconcile the effects of broader social structures on one hand, with individual agency on the other.⁶² To quote from the *AHS* editorial on biography Evans wrote with Robert Reynolds in 2010: “Seeing how people have lived through history allows us to gain a better understanding of the interplay between an individual and social forces beyond one’s control.”⁶³

Another erstwhile criticism of biography as historical method is the question of representativeness, or establishing general patterns. But it is clear that historians who have employed this method do not seek to establish general patterns, rather they seek to learn something new about the world in which the subject lived. Biographical case studies can offer new perspectives on historical processes and phenomena; they provide a way of exploring cultures and societies “from the individual ‘upwards,’ rather than from the social structure

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 Armed with an historical question, and taking care with context, it is possible to use the biographical subject as a conduit into the past, and to make arguments about processes and phenomena we discover about the past.

**Spaces**

A key component of a successful microhistory is an analysis which relies upon “thorough, multi-dimensional contextualisation.” In order to explore the context surrounding the Irishmen in this thesis, I have turned to a form of spatial analysis—as proposed by Tamson Pietsch, who in turn drew upon the scholarship of geographers in relation to the social and material production of space. The combination of biography and spatial analysis is not without precedent; Jonathan Wright’s study of Peter Finnerty is a recent example. However, I seek in this thesis to explicitly analyse the spaces occupied by the Irishmen in order to comprehend the Irish experience of empire. The men’s experiences and actions tell us much about their life in empire; but by drawing out the ‘spaces’ they occupied—“mapped, respectively, by ideas and emotions, by networks and exchange, and by specific sites of empire”—we can attempt to access more fully the complex world they inhabited.

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64 Michael Rustin quoted in Jonathan Jeffrey Wright, ‘An Anglo-Irish Radical in the Late Georgian Metropolis: Peter Finnerty and the Politics of Contempt,’ *Journal of British Studies* 53 (2014): 662. See also Nick Salvatore, ‘Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship,’ *Labour History* 87 (2004): 190: “no desire to posit a biographical subject as “representative (whatever that may mean), but rather what it is that we might learn from a study of a specific life.” Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It,’ *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 21. Ginzburg described his approach (that is, writing about the anomalous rather than the analogous case) as seeking out a hidden reality; more recently, he explained that the intensive study of the case study permits “better generalisations:” ‘Fear, Reverence, Terror: An Interview with Carlo Ginzburg.’

65 Brown, ‘Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge,’ 12.

66 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World.’

67 Wright, ‘An Anglo-Irish Radical.’

68 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 441.
In her assessment of the state of ‘British World’ scholarship, Pietsch explored the utility of frameworks developed by geographers in relation to “the social and material production of space,” and proposed an approach for imperial historians interested in the history of the global. Pietsch took as a case study the 1903 Allied Colonial Universities Conference. By paying close attention to the voices of the men who attended the Conference, she noted that they identified not one, but three different kinds of British world space—which aligned with the tripartite approach suggested by the geographer David Harvey. In outlining his view of space in relation to time, Harvey explained that space operates across two dimensions. The first comprises “three distinctive ways of understanding space and time: absolute, relative, and relational;” and the second (“the Lefebvrian”) dimension concerns space as “materially sensed, conceptualized, and lived.” Harvey argued that space is constituted by the integration of (and tension between) all these definitions. Pietsch drew upon Harvey’s first dimension in formulating her framework for historical analysis, and I have employed this throughout my thesis. These spatial constructions enable the life stories to explicate the British Caribbean world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and permit us to draw conclusions about the men’s experience of empire.

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69 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 447.
70 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 452.
71 David Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 134-141.
72 Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom, 141-144. The ‘Lefebvrian dimension’ was summarised by Harvey as follows: “a tripartite division of material space (space as experienced through our sensed perceptions), the representation of space (space as conceived), and spaces of representation (space as lived).”
73 Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom, 134.
Harvey described ‘absolute space’ as “fixed and immovable,” relative space as the space of “processes and motions,” and relational space as the space within people—the space produced by human experiences, memories, fears and dreams.\textsuperscript{74} He concluded that none of these frames alone is sufficient to explain the world and people’s experience of it, rather they exist in tension with each other.\textsuperscript{75} In highlighting Harvey’s work, Pietsch argued that historians of Britain and its empire have much to gain by considering not just the places people lived, but also the networks and exchanges that shaped their lives and the emotions and feelings that created internal landscapes of longing and belonging.\textsuperscript{76}

The islands and colonies which appear in this thesis are the most obvious element of ‘absolute space.’ The specificity of place plays an important role in these absolute spaces, as well as the geopolitical constraints of these spaces. Where the sources permit it, I also examine the men’s domestic arrangements as an element of the absolute space they occupy during their Caribbean sojourns.

For most of the men I have researched, the Irish networks they so depended upon are the most evident ‘relative space’ in their lives. Other networks and exchanges at play include administrative, religious and political networks, as well as the pervasive culture of ‘white sociability’ in the British Caribbean.

\textsuperscript{74} Harvey, \textit{Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom}, 134-139.  
\textsuperscript{75} Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World’, 449.  
\textsuperscript{76} Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 447.
David Harvey noted that the internal, “relational terrain is a challenging and difficult terrain to cultivate successfully.”77 Where I have access to documents in the men’s voices, for example the private letters of Lord Macartney, or Hope Waddell’s account of his years as a missionary, it is possible to reach conclusions about the men’s inner lives—but even then, their voices are tempered by the conventions of letter writing and the genre of missionary publication, respectively.

In paying close attention to the role played by spaces and places in the life stories that follow, I have also been guided by historians who have engaged with the spatial in their work. In Irish historiography, Jonathan Wright has examined Peter Finnerty, an Irish-born radical and parliamentary journalist, and the role played by location in shaping and informing Finnerty’s anti-authoritarian actions.78 Wright traced the way that Finnerty set about establishing himself in a variety of discrete, but overlapping, metropolitan spaces in London, including the “unruly ranks of the parliamentary press pack” and the city’s radical underworld. By exploring the various spaces Finnerty occupied, Wright demonstrated the multifaceted nature of Finnerty himself, as well as the communities of Irish journalists and radicals, and London’s radical underworld more broadly. Wright drew upon historians of science, who have explored the varied ways in which locations, both discursive and institutional, have informed the construction of knowledge.79

77 Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom, 139.
James Epstein (whose work on Trinidad features in Chapter Two of this thesis) suggested “the spatial” was “critical for understanding how political meanings are ordered, lives are lived and how alternative social worlds are imagined.”

Epstein tested this approach with his case study of the 1792 trial of John Frost for uttering “seditious words.” He concluded that the sites which featured in the trial (including the tavern, coffee house, courtroom, prison, and the streets of London) were not simply passive contexts, or backgrounds to the production of meaning, rather the spaces were part of “an ‘active ordering and organizing’ of subjective identities, social relations and meaning.” In order to understand Frost’s case, Epstein argued that we also need to know something about the sites of assembly through which his story circulated, and came into being. Epstein was particularly interested in the relationship between the discursive and “pre- or non-discursive social practices” and the impact space had on these, however his approach has been instructive for this thesis in highlighting just how apposite space is to action.

**Historiography of Ireland and Empire**

In identifying Ireland and empire as “one of the most vibrant fields of inquiry in Irish Studies” in 2007, Michael de Nie and Joe Cleary outlined the different ways that historians were pursuing the question of Ireland’s relationship with the British Empire. This has included tracking settlement patterns and career paths, network analysis, and the development and influence of Irish opposition

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82 Epstein, ‘Spatial Practices/Democratic Vistas,’ 301.
84 de Nie and Cleary, ‘Editors’ Introduction,’ 6.
to British imperial expansion. But de Nie (and his fellow editors) argued recently that despite growing interest in the study of Ireland and empire, most historians of the British Empire “have almost entirely ignored Ireland,” nor, in their view, have historians of Ireland incorporated the accumulating insights regarding empire into the Irish story. The editors’ call for a dialogue between imperial and Irish “historiographical streams” echoes de Nie’s earlier call to take new imperial history over the Irish Sea.

*Ireland in an Imperial World*, which focuses on the nineteenth century, constitutes the latest intervention in the field of Irish empire studies. While not detracting from the editors’ argument, it must be acknowledged that scholarship on Ireland and empire—employing a range of methodologies—has accumulated. A major stumbling block had been what Stephen Howe has described as “the bad question—or rather, a question often badly posed”—that is, “Was Ireland a colony?” Taking Howe’s interventions as a guide, this review will trace the historiographical developments which have enabled historians to begin to tease out the complexities of the Irish experience of the Empire.

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Howe has been vocal in decrying the effects on Irish scholarship of “the bad question.”⁹⁰ Over the course of the current century he has encouraged scholars to ask new questions and adopt different approaches, with the aim of complicating—rather than reproducing—stereotypical views about the relationship between Ireland and empire.⁹¹ Howe has at times charged historians in the field with producing scholarship which was “scanty...often notably simplistic,” and which tended “to assume...a ‘naturally’ dominant strain of anti-imperialist solidarities among the Irish.”⁹² He initially suggested that historians of Ireland look to the work of literary and cultural studies scholars, who examined Ireland’s relationship with empire using “a battery of concepts” drawn from poststructuralism, postcoloniality and colonial discourse. He also suggested that a way forward then for understanding “the North Atlantic archipelago and its constituent parts” may lie in “trying to configure simultaneously the multiple interrelationships of national, racial, regional and other imaginings...the compound identities developing beyond nationalism.”⁹³ In his view, such interdisciplinary insights would enliven historical writing, which he argued was generally “empiricist” in nature, and “too often fixated upon a bilateral relationship with England.”⁹⁴ In similar vein, Howe asked whether adopting ‘new imperial history’ and paying close attention to economic and social history might encourage a focus on “a series of questions that relate intimately to, but crosscut and complicate, the query:

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⁹⁰ Howe, ‘Questioning the (bad) question,’ 138.
⁹³ Howe, Ireland and Commonwealth, 240.
⁹⁴ Howe, Ireland and Empire, 240.
‘Was Ireland a colony?’ A year later, he acknowledged that the intellectual landscape was transforming “with striking and welcome speed,” with the publication of de Nie and Cleary’s Éire-Ireland volume, Nini Rodgers’ Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, and a number of works on Irish connections with India. Howe praised Rodgers’ book in particular, as “impressive ground-breaking” scholarship, with “much that is new to say about Ireland’s relations to empire as well as to slavery.”

Most recently in Ireland in an Imperial World, Howe suggested broadening the scope of what ‘empire’ means, to consider the “multiplicity of forms of empire itself.” He noted that the ongoing debate around perceptions of Irish history, in its relations to empire, as “peculiarly hybrid, ambivalent, complex, exceptional, or anomalous”—which he conceded may be “frustrating in their indeterminacy” but are not necessarily misplaced. Again, Howe concluded with a suggestion for future directions—one which is pertinent to this thesis. He suggested that the “analytical diversity” evident in relation to Ireland and empire studies perhaps reflects “the multiplicity of forms of empire itself: not merely variation across time, but the coexistence of very different kinds of empire within the same system, at the same time.” That is, he suggested historians consider “Irelands and empires, with imperial formations, degrees of imperial sovereignty, multiple kinds of transnationalisms.” In this thesis,

95 Howe, ‘Questioning the (bad) question,’ 145.
96 Howe, ‘Minding the Gaps,’ 136.
97 Howe, ‘Minding the Gaps,’ 142.
98 Howe, ‘Afterword,’ 291.
100 Howe, ‘Afterword,’ 291.
this multiplicity manifests in the diversity of the sojourners’ motivations for embarking for the Caribbean, and their experiences once there. The different imperial projects in which they were involved gave rise to different meanings of empire.\textsuperscript{102}

\textit{Transnational History}

A key development in the historiography of Ireland and empire has been the increasing determination of historians to detach their scholarship from contemporary debate surrounding the nature of Ireland’s relationship with the British Empire.\textsuperscript{103} As Barry Crosbie noted at the outset of \textit{Irish Imperial Networks}, much scholarship on the Irish within an imperial context has been weighed down by debate surrounding the nature of Ireland’s historical relationship with the Empire—largely centred on the character of its constitutional and political ties with Britain.\textsuperscript{104} This question has dominated scholarship on Ireland and empire until recently, and in combination with a preoccupation with the nation as the unit of analysis, has resulted in a “narrow interpretation of an island that was far more open in the modern period than is generally admitted.”\textsuperscript{105} Indeed, the focus on the nation state has meant that

\textsuperscript{104} Crosbie, \textit{Irish Imperial Networks}, 8.
histories of modern Ireland often “believe the significance of Ireland’s imperial past.”

Tony Ballantyne (among others) has observed that the approach adopted within the historiography of medieval and early modern Ireland, which locates Irish development in contexts that transcend the borders of the modern nation, can fruitfully be applied also to more recent periods. Nicholas Canny’s work is oft-cited in this regard. By locating early modern Ireland within the broader context of a British Atlantic world, Canny demonstrated the significance of Ireland to the construction and maintenance of the first British empire. More recently, Christopher Bayly demonstrated the value (for the modern era) of weaving formerly discrete national histories “into a broader narrative of ‘interconnectedness’ and ‘interdependence’.”

Niall Whelehan and Enda Delaney have been at the forefront of theorising transnational methodologies as they relate to Irish history. Delaney maintains that transnational methodologies can transform the history of late modern Ireland (his area of specialization) from an island-centric story to a

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106 Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks*, 4-5.
108 Canny, *Kingdom and Colony*.
109 Crosbie, *Irish Imperial Networks*, 4-5.
110 Citing Isabel Hofmeyr, Delaney noted that a key claim of a transnational approach “is its central concern with movements, flows, and circulation, not simply as a theme or motif but as an analytic set of methods which defines the endeavor itself,” and that that it is the movement itself that influences the individual, artefact, object, or institution, so it “is not simply that historical processes are made in different places but that they are constructed in the movement between places, sites, and regions;” Christopher Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol and Patricia Seed, ‘AHR Conversation: on transnational history,’ *American Historical Review* 111(2006): 1444. See also: Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography,’ 83-105. Whelehan, ‘Playing with Scales,’ 7-29. Whelehan, “Ireland beyond the nation-state,” 5.
more inclusive global one—by means of investigating topics or themes across national boundaries.\textsuperscript{111} In this regard, he has urged scholars to integrate the Irish diaspora within Irish historical writing, as although the diaspora “is widely seen as one of the most vigorous original areas of historical inquiry,” on leaving Ireland, migrants had become the preserve of a separate historiography (that of immigration or ethnic history).\textsuperscript{112}

Historians of the diaspora have been studying the participation of Irish people in the empire for some time. Piaras Mac Éinrí noted in 2000 that very little research existed on Irish participation in the building of the British Empire, and suggested that—in addition to the dominance of American scholarship in Irish migration studies—this reflected a “certain reluctance in Irish circles to address the role of the Irish, not as the colonised, but as participants in the colonising process.”\textsuperscript{113} Hiram Morgan and Donald Akenson had noted this dearth of scholarship in the mid-1990s. In ‘An unwelcome heritage,’ Morgan wrote that “no history book records Irish involvement in the British empire, largely because its memory is of little political value to modern Unionism or Nationalism;”\textsuperscript{114} and in Akenson’s view, most historians of the diaspora had remained silent on the fact that “the Irish have actually been among the greatest supporters of the second British empire and the Commonwealth.”\textsuperscript{115}

\textsuperscript{111} Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography,’ 83-85.
\textsuperscript{112} Delaney, ‘Directions in historiography,’ 84-86. This call reflects Delaney’s interest in the influence these large diasporic communities have had on the evolution of late modern Ireland.
\textsuperscript{115} Donald Harman Akenson, The Irish Diaspora: A Primer (Toronto: P.D. Meany & Co, 1996), 142. According to Andy Bielenberg, introducing his edited collection also entitled The Irish Diaspora, Akenson’s book was the only comprehensive survey of Irish migration and settlement throughout the
Identifying and tracing connections between imperial sites is another means by which scholars have applied transnationalism to the field of Ireland and empire. Recourse to ‘networks,’ ‘webs’ and ‘systems’ has enabled historians to successfully trace “narratives of linkage and reciprocity in imperial/global history.”\(^{116}\) In his examination of Irish connections within the context of the nineteenth-century British empire in India, Barry Crosbie applied these approaches to the question of whether Ireland or the varieties of Irishness of its imperial servants and settlers made a specific difference to the experience of empire.\(^{117}\) Whelehan praised Crosbie’s book for its use of “more enabling cross-cultural or transnational approaches that move beyond ‘coloniser-colonised’ models,” in his study of Ireland’s “multidirectional involvement’ in empire.”\(^{118}\)

**New Imperial History**

Just as new imperial history connected domestic and imperial history for Britain, historians of Ireland have argued that connecting the history of the Irish abroad and at home within a single analytical frame will deepen the understanding of Irish history.\(^{119}\) In declaring that “the moment has come for the new imperial history to cross the Irish Sea” Michael de Nie noted the “striking” absence of Irish Britons from new imperial history.\(^{120}\) New imperial

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\(^{117}\) Barry Crosbie, ‘Networks of Empire: Linkage and Reciprocity in Nineteenth-Century Irish and Indian History,’ *History Compass* 7 (2009): 993.

\(^{118}\) Whelehan, ‘Ireland beyond the nation-state,’ 11.


\(^{120}\) de Nie, “Speed the Mahdi!” 884. He did acknowledge that Christine Kinealy’s chapter constituted an exception to this absence: Kinealy, ‘At home with the Empire: the example of Ireland,’ in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonja O. Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 77-100.
historiography, which originated in a debate over British identity at the end of the twentieth century, has focused on the impact of empire on Britain, seeking synergies between Britain’s domestic and imperial pasts.121 Scholars including Catherine Hall, Kathleen Wilson and Antoinette Burton pioneered the exploration of the way Britons viewed their empire, the empire’s influence on British society and national identity, and, at its most complex, new ways of theorising difference in the imperial context.122

A persistent criticism of new imperial history has been the potential for its focus on metropolitan cultures to result in little more than a replication of the relations of empire, and in the process displacing the study of the colonised.123 Advocates of the new imperial history have sought to address this criticism by arguing that new imperial history does not need to take the form of a simple metropole (i.e. London) and colonies model. Catherine Hall and Sonja Rose have argued that in challenging the traditional focus on centre and periphery relations, scholars have sought to emphasize the importance of connections


122 Initially, new imperial history was characterised by its interdisciplinary nature, incorporating scholarship from literary criticism, cultural studies, ethnography, and human geography, as well as focusing on issues that were typically marginalised or neglected by traditional approaches to imperial history, such as race, gender and identity. The approach of new imperial historians has always been grounded in the cultural turn; they placed “fresh emphasis on the role of culture in thinking about the making of the British past, and in so doing they uncovered an empire forged through discourse as much as it was ever built by arms, trade, or bureaucracy.” Kate Fullagar, ‘Popular contests over empire in the eighteenth century: the extended version,’ History Australia 13 (2016): 68. See in general: Catherine Hall, ‘Introduction: thinking the postcolonial, thinking the empire,’ in Cultures of Empire, A Reader: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 16. See also: Kathleen Wilson, The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.) Kathleen Wilson, ‘Introduction: histories, empires, modernities,’ in A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1660—1840, ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-10.

across empire, the webs and networks which have operated between colonies, and the significance of centres outside the metropole.\textsuperscript{124} By considering connections not just between metropole and colony, but between colonial sites, and by including non-metropolitan voices, the historiography has moved towards a far more nuanced view of the place of empire in Britain’s past, and indeed the place of empire in other imperial sites. As Zoë Laidlaw has noted, recent works influenced by new imperial history range far beyond dissections of metropolitan society and culture, focusing on interactions between widely separated colonial sites, juxtaposing micro and macro, and questioning the relationship between the remarkable and the everyday.\textsuperscript{125}

\textit{Empire at Home}

A number of scholars in recent years have succeeded in producing historical accounts of Ireland and empire which have almost entirely reformed the question of Ireland’s colonial status—resulting in the kind of work that perhaps Howe craved; that is, scholarship which manages to confront the “complexities and crosscurrents involved in relationships between Ireland and the British Empire.”\textsuperscript{126} Vincent Morley and Padhraig Higgins’ books, separated by almost a decade, are both works of political history which adopt cultural historical methods.\textsuperscript{127} Benjamin Bankhurst recently hailed the work of such historians as

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\text{\textsuperscript{124}} Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, ‘Introduction: being at home with the empire,’ in \textit{At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World}, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8. \\
\text{\textsuperscript{125}} Laidlaw, ‘Breaking Britannia’s Bounds?’ 811. \\
\text{\textsuperscript{126}} Howe, ‘Questioning the (bad) question,’ 140. \\
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having “broken the spell of 1798;” that is, their work has managed to tease out what had been previously barely acknowledged—that Irish Protestant imperialism in the eighteenth century sits uneasily alongside the contemporaneous emergence of modern Irish nationalism towards the end of the eighteenth century.¹²⁸ In Irish opinion and the American Revolution, 1760–1783, Morley examined Irish reactions to the American Revolution, concluding that Irish patriotism in the later eighteenth century did not indicate a desire for complete national independence. Rather, it called for a recalibration of imperial influence at the centre that would better represent Irish interests within the imperial system as a whole.¹²⁹ Higgins examined the process of popular politicisation in Ireland between 1774 and 1778; a central element of which, he argued, was conflict over Ireland’s place in the British Empire, particularly with regard to trading rights.¹³⁰ The scholarship of Morley and Higgins plays an important role in the developing historiography of Ireland and empire. Both books address political history within Ireland, but by incorporating cultural and social historical practices into their studies of politics, they bear out Howe’s assertion that a combination of historical approaches can yield scholarship which broadens our understanding of the relationship between Ireland and Britain, whilst successfully de-centreing the “bad question.”

¹²⁹ Bankhurst, Ulster Presbyterians and the Scots Irish Diaspora, 9.
Irish Caribbean Studies

Scholarship in the field of Ireland and the Caribbean is accumulating, but to date has been dominated by the early modern period, and by work which relates to mercantile connections. In a recent historiographical survey, Nini Rodgers positioned Aubrey Gwynn’s research as the foundation upon which later generations of scholars have built their work. Richard Dunn and Richard Sheridan both observed an Irish presence in their economic histories of the Caribbean, but Irish connections with the Caribbean were largely neglected until the 1990s, when Hilary Beckles, Donald Akenson and Nicholas Canny took up the question for the early modern period. Beckles’ article on the “riotous and unruly” Irish indentured servants and freemen in Barbados during the seventeenth century was considered a ground-breaking work of ‘history from below.’ Donald Akenson’s If the Irish Ran the World was a provocative work which examined the backgrounds of the first Irish arrivals in Montserrat. Akenson revealed the brutalities inflicted upon the island’s slaves by white hierarchies. The theme of racial difference in the early modern Caribbean has been taken up again recently by Jenny Shaw, in her


33 Hilary McDowell Beckles, ‘A ‘Riotous and Unruly Lot’: Irish Indentured Servants and Freemen in the English West Indies, 1644-1713,’ William and Mary Quarterly 47 (1990): 503-522. Beckles explored the suspicions harboured by imperial officials of collusion between the Irish population and enslaved Africans but concluded that prevailing standards of race and colour triumphed, and any such co-operation was “brief and impermanent.”

34 Donald Harman Akenson, If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).
examination of the “indeterminate place of Irish Catholics,” and the role that their presence played in defining difference in the imperial Caribbean.\textsuperscript{135} In ‘Subjects without an Empire,’ Shaw and Kristen Block argued that the history of the Irish in the Caribbean had become “solidified as a story of bitterness and exploitation”—but that this was too simplistic.\textsuperscript{136} They compared English and Spanish sources to illustrate the nuances of the Irish experience in the early modern Caribbean, which was characterized by inter-imperial negotiation, and the realization that Irishmen of all backgrounds had more in common with their former English masters than they did with enslaved Africans.\textsuperscript{137}

Nini Rodgers brought Irish and Caribbean connections firmly into focus in \textit{Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery}, in which she examined the roles of slavery and abolitionism in Irish history—fields which had hitherto been “quite astonishingly neglected.”\textsuperscript{138} The book—which has served as a useful foundation for my research—covers slavery from Saint Patrick in the fifth century to indentured servitude and slavery in the British Caribbean, as well as providing detail of Irish individuals and families who ventured to the Caribbean, and the abolitionist movement in Ireland. The sections of the book most relevant to this thesis are the chapters which focus on sojourners, slaves and stipendiaries, in which Rodgers drew upon first-hand accounts and archival resources to explore Irish connections with Caribbean slavery. In assembling what she described as the “transatlantic jigsaw puzzle,” Rodgers

\textsuperscript{135} Shaw, \textit{Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean}.
\textsuperscript{136} Kristen Block and Jenny Shaw, ‘Subjects Without an Empire: The Irish in the Early Modern Caribbean,’ \textit{Past and Present} 210 (2011): 33.
\textsuperscript{137} Block and Shaw, ‘Subjects Without an Empire,’ 34.
\textsuperscript{138} Howe, ‘Minding the Gaps,’ 142.
argued that slavery had a dramatic impact both on the Irish who emigrated across the Atlantic and upon the economy at home.\textsuperscript{139} Her work demonstrates that Irish engagement with the Empire, at least in the realm of slavery, was deeper than has been previously been acknowledged in Irish studies.

In common with imperial historians more broadly, historians interested in Irish engagement with the Caribbean have drawn upon the study of networks to examine the range and scope of connections—for the most part, the networks studied are familial. In introducing a volume dedicated to Irish and Scottish mercantile networks around the maritime rim of Europe, David Dickson noted that the Scots and the Irish were very active participants in pre-industrial maritime trade—although when the volume was published, far more was known about Scottish than Irish traders in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{140} This gap has been addressed by the work of Craig Bailey, among others. Bailey examined the role of social networks in the Irish and Caribbean context, first in a study of a network of professional Irish migrants which included the family of Edmund and Richard Burke; and then in relation to the Nesbitt family, who invested in Jamaica and elsewhere in the Atlantic world.\textsuperscript{141} Bailey primarily addressed the role of social networks and how they interacted within the large scale of the empire; he found that in relation to the eighteenth century, Irish networks were flexible enough to permit “dialogue, disagreement and change”

\textsuperscript{139} Rodgers, \textit{Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery}, 2.
\textsuperscript{140} David Dickson, ‘Introduction,’ in \textit{Irish and Scottish Mercantile Networks in Europe and Overseas in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries}, ed. David Dickson, Jan Parmentier and Jane H. Ohlmeyer (Gent: Academia Press, 2007), 1.
and durable enough to transcend time and space.\textsuperscript{142} In the course of these two studies (and complemented by his work on London-based Irish networks) Bailey revealed the support systems which aided the sojourns of the sons of mercantile and legal families of Irish origin in the British Caribbean.\textsuperscript{143} Orla Power has also investigated the question of family networks, in relation to the Irish community at Saint Croix, in the Danish West Indies.\textsuperscript{144} Power interrogated whether the concept of the kinship network—which heavily influenced scholarship on Irish mercantile groups abroad during the early modern period—was equally applicable during the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{145} She concluded that for the Irish community in St. Croix, it was important to remain focused on commercial relationships based on kinship, but that those which lay beyond traditional familial ties began to take on greater importance as the geopolitical landscape in the Caribbean shifted.\textsuperscript{146} More recently, Power contributed a chapter to \textit{Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History}, in which she explored the relationships which existed between groups of Catholic, Huguenot and “Scots from Ireland” at St. Croix.\textsuperscript{147} She noted that as scholars strive to achieve an Irish perspective on transnational stories, it can be tempting to focus on the experiences which bound Irish individuals together—but her research on an episode involving the lucrative trade in contraband in St. Croix during the 1760s demonstrates that although members of the Irish community had much in common, they were by no means a

\textsuperscript{142} Bailey, ‘Metropole and Colony,’ 161.
\textsuperscript{145} Power, ‘Beyond Kinship,’ 207-214.
\textsuperscript{146} Power, ‘Beyond Kinship,’ 213.
\textsuperscript{147} Power, ‘Friend, Foe or Family?’
homogenous group.¹⁴⁸ Power has sought out Irish experiences in the Caribbean in regions beyond British control. Work on Irish connections with other European empires in the Caribbean is a flourishing field, although not one relevant to this thesis.¹⁴⁹

Alongside studies of networks, scholarship on Irish and Caribbean connections has been undertaken by means of biographies or life studies. Mark Quintanilla’s article-length study of Michael Keane, an Irish lawyer who became attorney general of St. Vincent in 1782, posits the Irish experience of empire as a complicated one.¹⁵⁰ Based on Keane’s letterbooks, Quintanilla provided fascinating detail of Keane’s personal and business relationships, as well as the networks he constructed (similar to his British counterparts) to assist ambitious business partners, family, and associates.¹⁵¹ It is notable too that by means of his fine-grained study of Keane’s career, Quintanilla was also able to provide a history of St. Vincent (and by extension, the ‘Ceded Islands’) from a different perspective—which Power also achieved in relation to St. Croix.

I will now turn to the military, mercantile, administrative, and humanitarian spheres into which this thesis is divided, to explore the individual experiences

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¹⁴⁸ Power, ‘Friend, Foe or Family?’ 30.
¹⁵⁰ Quintanilla, ‘From a Dear and Worthy Land, 60.’
¹⁵¹ Quintanilla, ‘From a Dear and Worthy Land,’ 63.
of the ten sojourners. Each chapter addresses questions specific to that particular sphere. Throughout all of the chapters I will address the overarching concern of the thesis, that is, the matter of the Irish experience of empire in the British Caribbean, the nuances of the sojourners’ identity, and the way that this interacted with the social structures within which they fashioned their Caribbean lives.
Chapter One

Engaging with the British Military:
Irish Soldiers in the Service of the Crown in the Caribbean

[At Burgos, Spain, Colonel] William O’Meara met there his twin brother, Colonel Daniel O’Meara, who was the commander of the town of Burgos at the time. The meeting of the brothers in a foreign land is another instance of the misfortunes of poor Ireland; had she been allowed to govern herself, those brave officers would have been an ornament to her commonwealth, in place of wandering abroad to seek their fortunes.¹

The O’Meara twins, both officers in the French Army, were reunited in northern Spain during the French revolutionary campaign against the British Army in 1809.² Their military careers are illustrative of the contradictions inherent in much modern Irish history. The twins were born in Dunkirk, France, to Irish parents.³ They and their father served in the French Army’s Irish Brigade, but after the French Revolution William joined the émigrés and entered the British service in the Irish Brigade and served in the Caribbean.⁴ According to Byrne’s Memoirs, William and Daniel were reunited in the

¹ Miles Byrne, Memoirs of Miles Byrne, ed. Mrs Byrne (Dublin: Maunsel & Co, 1907), 2: 57.
² Byrne, Memoirs, 2: 51.
³ Richard Hayes, Biographical Dictionary of Irishmen in France (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, Ltd, 1949), 244. The twins’ father John was a captain in Clare’s Irish Regiment with the French Army and was originally from Tipperary.
French service in the nineteenth century.5 As unusual as this criss-crossing between the British and French militaries may seem, the O’Meara brothers were by no means unique.6 The historiography of eighteenth-century Irish soldiers is dominated by the story of the ‘Wild Geese,’ the Catholic soldiers who fled Ireland in 1691, and the generations of soldiers who succeeded them.7 Those Wild Geese who served for a time in Britain have, however, received far less attention.8 I opened this chapter with the story of the O’Meara twins to illustrate the mutability of Irish identity in the turbulent years of the Revolutionary era.9 This chapter will follow the lives of an Irish relative of the O’Meara twins—also called Daniel O’Meara—as well as two other Irish-born British soldiers who served in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary era, Edward Despard and Marcus Rainsford.10

Edward Despard enlisted in the British Army in 1766; Rainsford and O’Meara joined in the late 1770s. The trajectories of these soldiers’ careers demonstrate the complexities and precariousness of life in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary era. In order to carry out their military duties, and survive the unfamiliar environment, each man drew upon the overlapping systems of life

5 Byrne, Memoirs, 57.
6 Ciarán McDonnell recently traced the establishment of the British Army’s Irish Brigade in the wake of the French Revolution: McDonnell, ‘A ‘Fair Chance?’
9 McDonnell, ‘A ‘Fair Chance?’ 166
10 Despard was born in Queen’s County in 1751. Rainsford was born in County Kildare in 1758. O’Meara was born in County Tipperary, probably in the late 1750s (his exact date of birth is unknown).
in the Caribbean—the military, imperial administration, slavery, the settler and planter communities, and interacted with other imperial powers in the region. A close study of the men’s Caribbean careers demonstrates that Irish experiences in the British military were unexpectedly diverse; they confound the stereotype of the anti-imperial Catholic foot soldier, or the Anglo-Irish officer upholding the Ascendancy. The nationalistic tone Myles Byrne adopted in recounting the French O’Meara twins’ reunion serves as a reminder of the assumptions which have overlaid perceptions of Irish service in the British military. As this chapter will demonstrate, to be Irish and in the service of the British crown was not necessarily as paradoxical as Byrne’s account would have us believe.

It is also notable that despite the diversity of their experiences in the Caribbean, Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara all operated on the peripheries of the British Empire in the region—geographically and figuratively. They were all career soldiers, but in the absence of the patronage networks available to their English (and perhaps Scottish) counterparts, they all obtained promotion by venturing to the edges of empire. Despard went to Honduras, once described as a “colonial fragment of the British Empire;”\textsuperscript{11} and Rainsford and O’Meara were associated with the controversial practice of arming slaves.

Despard and Rainsford were public figures in Britain after their Caribbean sojourns—the former as a convicted traitor, and the latter as a chronicler of the

\textsuperscript{11} Archibald Gibbs, \textit{British Honduras: An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Colony from its Settlement, 1670} (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1883), 53.
revolution in St. Domingo. Despard is the subject of a number of biographies, and Rainsford’s publications have recently been revisited—providing a secondary literature with which to engage in this chapter. Notably though, the Caribbean aspect of Despard’s life has received less attention than the final phase of his life. O’Meara, the most obscure character in this study, is new to scholarship. Few primary sources exist to illuminate his life, but an examination of what there is leads back to the close connections between France and Britain in times of peace and war, including the Wild Geese, a prominent theme of Irish military history during this period.

**Irish Soldiers in the Caribbean**

In her landmark study of the Irish in the Caribbean, Nini Rodgers noted that the presence of Irish soldiers and sailors in the “Black Atlantic” is well documented, but that she had ignored them in her study, in favour of planters and traders. In fact, although the widespread participation of Irish men in the British Army is well understood, there is very little scholarship focused on Irish soldiers or sailors in the Caribbean, either for the Revolutionary era or any

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12 ‘St. Domingo’ is the name the British used for the French colony of Saint-Domingue on the island of Hispaniola. For a short period during 1795-96 British troops controlled Port-au-Prince and occupied the southern and western provinces of St. Domingo. ‘Santo Domingo’ was the Spanish colony on the Eastern area of the island, ceded to France in 1795, and now known as the Dominican Republic. After the Revolution, St. Domingo/Saint-Domingue was re-named Hayti, now spelt Haiti. This thesis will generally use the name St. Domingo but will also refer to Hayti or Haiti where the context dictates.


other. Despite the Caribbean’s role as a major theatre of operations for the British Army during the long eighteenth century, there is also very little scholarly engagement with the everyday, non-operational, British military presence in the Caribbean at all.

The British Army’s military operations in the Caribbean are well documented, originally and most notably in Sir John Fortescue’s multivolume History of the British Army, and more recently by Michael Duffy in Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower. These works are invaluable in explaining the progress of military operations, but they do not focus on the experiences of individual soldiers, nor do the narratives in these works linger long ‘on the ground’ in the Caribbean—they are more concerned with the military operations themselves. Some retired officers wrote of their experiences of military service in the Caribbean during the wars of 1793 to 1815, among them Sir John Moore, whose “comprehensive and reflective” diaries provide useful background for the study of soldiers’ experiences. The scholar who has done the most to fill the historiographical gap is Roger Buckley. In his examination of British forces in the West Indies, he lamented that although British military operations in the region are well documented, the garrison, once a “vital part of Britain’s

15 By about 1813, the British Army was estimated to be one third Irish: J.E. Cookson, The British Armed Nation 1793—1815 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126-127.
imperial military network” has been “ignored by scholars and lay people alike.” Buckley embraced ‘new military history,’ and focused on three main themes: the British garrison as a society; its association with the civilian population of the West Indies; and its relationship to its physical surroundings. Buckley suggested a number of reasons for the lack of scholarship on the British garrison: the traditional focus in British military history on Europe and North America; the continued (justified) focus by scholars of the Caribbean on the economic and social aspects of plantation slavery and abolition; and a general lack of interest among historians in military history. Buckley also believed that the region suffered in comparison with India and the East Indies, which he believed had “captured the public’s imagination” and was a fertile ground for scholarly work. He also noted the inferior status occupied by the West India garrison within the hierarchical structure of the British Army. Very little scholarship has followed in Buckley’s wake—perhaps for the same reasons he outlined to explain the gap prior to his own work.

As will be explored in the studies of Marcus Rainsford and Daniel O’Meara, a remarkable feature of the British garrison in the West Indies during the 1790s was the establishment of the West India Regiments, comprised of enslaved African men, many of whom were purchased by the imperial government in

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19 Buckley, *British Army in the West Indies*, xiv.
21 Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, viii.
22 Buckley, *British Army in the West Indies*, xv-xvi.
the years leading up to British abolition of the slave trade. Buckley pioneered scholarship on these regiments and the associated recruitment practices, but they remain an understudied aspect of the Caribbean past. It is worth noting here, however, that an ongoing research collaboration between Warwick University and the British Library (‘Africa’s Sons Under Arms’) promises to deepen our understanding of the history and impact of the WIR.

In a review article aimed at re-casting academic military history a decade ago, William Tatum argued that the work during the 1990s of scholars such as Stephen Conway and Linda Colley had shifted the focus in military history away from the experience of soldiers and from the army (as a social institution), to the social phenomenon of war, and in the process relegating the soldier (and the army) to a role as “a mere supporting actor.” In order to shift the balance in military history from this ‘war and society’ approach, and to address the perceived “neglect of the soldier,” Catriona Kennedy and Matthew McCormack have more recently suggested that socio-cultural history and military history have much to gain from interdisciplinary engagement.

My close study of the Caribbean experiences of Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara

23 West India Regiments is hereinafter abbreviated to ‘WIR.’
24 Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats. Buckley, ‘The British Army’s African Recruitment Policy.’ Brian Dyde, a retired Royal Navy Commander, published a history of the WIR in 1997, which provides some useful operational detail, but adds little to Buckley’s scholarship. Brian Dyde, The Empty Sleeve: The story of the West India Regiments of the British Army (St John’s, Antigua: Hansib Caribbean, 1997). Michael Joseph recently published an article on the medical history of British military operations in the West Indies which focuses on the establishment of the WIR: Joseph, ‘Military Officers, Tropical Medicine.’
25 ‘Africa’s Sons Under Arms: Race, Military Bodes and the British West India Regiments in the Atlantic World, 1794–1914’ is a four-year research project, which commenced in October 2014. It uses the WIR to explore the relationships between the arming of people of African descent and the changing nature of racial though from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries. http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/research/projects/asua/
applies a social history approach to the men’s military careers, and in the process sheds light on the “green redcoats.”

The Caribbean during the Revolutionary era was the site of ongoing hostilities between European imperial powers, in particular Britain, France and Spain. In the aftermath of the American War, Britain was on constant alert for potential attacks on its Caribbean possessions, then at the close of the 1780s, the French Revolution echoed around the Atlantic, with French interests in the Caribbean splintering between the revolutionaries and royalists. The combination of war between the European powers and internal insurrections among the region’s racially oppressed groups led to enormous disruption in the Caribbean. Sovereignty over islands and parts of Central and South America changed hands repeatedly, and most colonies suffered either foreign invasion or internal revolt between 1793 and 1802 (and with lesser intensity to 1815).

From 1793, Britain and revolutionary France were locked in a struggle for dominance, which played out in Europe and in the Caribbean. Unprecedented numbers of men, amounts of matériell and sums of money were committed to

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29 In preference to the terms common in American historiography—‘War of Independence,’ ‘American Revolution’ or ‘Revolutionary War’—this thesis will refer throughout to the ‘American War.’ This was the terminology most often used in contemporary writing and aligns the thesis more closely with British historiography.


31 Geggus, ‘Slavery, War, and Revolution,’ 2. The 1814 Treaty of Paris brought the long period of warfare in the Caribbean to an end; most Caribbean colonies were restored to their pre-1793 sovereigns, although Britain won Tobago from France and Trinidad from Spain: Raye R. Platt, ‘A Note on Political Sovereignty and Administration in the Caribbean,’ *Geographical Review* 16 (1926): 632.
the contest by both sides. For the British, Irish recruits were vital in enlarging the armed forces. Intensive recruitment of Irish men—Catholic and Protestant—resulted in as many as one in five of the Irish adult male population seeing service of some sort between 1793 and 1815. Since the early eighteenth century, Ireland had housed a large proportion of Britain’s standing army, quartered in a countrywide network of barracks. As a result, the opportunity for employment in the military was highly visible, and, after 1771 the army was as attractive a source of employment for Catholics as it was for Protestants. Despite the official prohibition on Catholics from bearing arms, the British Army had been enlisting Catholics into the rank and file since the 1750s. By 1790, recruitment of Irish Catholics was relatively routine, on the basis that Catholic recruits were intended for overseas service, and hence posed no threat to the internal security of Ireland. For Protestant families of gentry stock, a military career for at least one member per generation was the norm—by 1780 men from this background held one-third of the commissions in the British Army.

In his 1983 study of the “green redcoat,” Peter Karsten noted that “the Irish soldier in the British Army is an understudied figure,” and this remains the case today, particularly in relation to the Caribbean sphere of operations for

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36 Catriona Kennedy, “True Brittons and Real Irish”: Irish Catholics in the British Army during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,” in Kennedy and McCormack, Soldering in Britain and Ireland, 40.
the British Army.\textsuperscript{39} In her 2007 overview of the Irish in the Caribbean, Nini Rodgers wrote that Irish soldiers were involved in “countless colonial wars in the West Indies” between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, but the scholarship she identified relates to the better-known involvement of Irish soldiers in the Spanish and French militaries.\textsuperscript{40} Rodgers’ only reference to participation in the British Army concerns the WIR. As already noted, the historiography of eighteenth-century Irish soldiers in general, is dominated by this story of the ‘Wild Geese.’ Catriona Kennedy’s chapter on ‘True Brittons and Real Irish’ represents the most recent scholarship on Irish soldiers in the British Army, but her focus has remained on Europe. Kennedy utilised the fragmentary memoirs of Captain Peter Jennings (who fought for both France and Britain), to explore the extent to which the army functioned as a crucible of Britishness for Irish Catholic men.\textsuperscript{41} Her conclusion is instructive for this thesis. She argued that by the late eighteenth century, rather than enforce a single, unitary model of identity, the British Army allowed its Irish recruits to express a range of affiliations: Irish, Catholic and European.\textsuperscript{42} She refuted the pre-existing assumption that Irish service in the British Army constituted a paradox.\textsuperscript{43} During the time that Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara enlisted in the British Army, the rapidly shifting political and military landscape meant that to be Irish (and even to be Catholic Irish) and loyal to the British Crown were by no means in tension.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{39} Karsten, ‘Irish Soldiers,’ 32.
\textsuperscript{41} Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish,’ 39.
\textsuperscript{42} Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish,’ 39.
\textsuperscript{43} Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish,’ 39.
\textsuperscript{44} Kennedy, ‘True Brittons and Real Irish,’ 39.
In this chapter, I will first detail the Caribbean the lives of Despard, Rainsford, and O’Meara, and then I will explore the way that they experienced the British Caribbean by examining the spaces they moved within. Each life story will illustrate the inter-connectivity of lives in the Caribbean. Despard’s career demonstrates the close connection between the military and colonial administration which existed around the Empire at this time, as well as the unavoidable connection between free European men, and enslaved and coloured people. All three men’s careers show the extent to which they had to negotiate across imperial lines in the region, by engaging with the French and Spanish. The men’s experiences also reveal Britain’s often tenuous hold on power. It is clear that during the Revolutionary era, Britain was by no means destined to take control.

Edward Marcus Despard

Edward Despard is known to history because of the dramatic end to his life. In February 1803, he was convicted of treason for his part in the so-called ‘Despard Conspiracy,’ a plot to lay siege to key sites around London and assassinate King George III. The details of the conspiracy remain confused, but the consensus among scholars now is that the prosecution exaggerated the advanced state of the plot; and that Despard was a somewhat peripheral figure, unlikely to lead a revolution. Nonetheless, Despard was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered—the last person in Britain to receive this gruesome sentence. Despard protested his innocence throughout his trial, and

46 As it transpired, part of the sentence was remitted, so that he was hung, and then beheaded, along with six co-conspirators: George Angus (printer), A Particular Account of the Behaviour and
continued to do so in his final speech from the gallows, when he claimed to have been “a friend to truth, to liberty, and to justice...to the poor and oppressed.”

The speech was widely reported in the newspaper press, and pamphlets were printed detailing his trial and execution.

It was Despard’s notoriety as a member of London’s radical underground which brought him to the attention of historians including E. P. Thompson, Marianne Elliot and Iain McCalman. Thompson plucked Despard from obscurity when he argued that the Despard affair constituted an incident of “real significance in British political history,” and placed it within the context of the struggles of Irish nationalists, the grievances of London labourers, and of croppers and weavers in the north of England. Thompson described the conspiracy which came to take Despard’s name as “the last flaring-up of Jacobinism of the 1790s,” which suffered, along with Despard, “a most serious defeat.”

Despard’s place in British historiography appeared settled then, as the ‘unfortunate Colonel Despard,’ associate of Irish and English radicals in 1790s London, and conspiratorial namesake. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, however, placed Despard in a broader context—the revolutionary Atlantic.

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47 Contemporary works which emerged around the time of his trial and execution include: Angus, A Particular Account of the...unfortunate Colonel Despard.

48 Contemporary works which emerged around the time of his trial and execution include: Angus, A Particular Account of the...unfortunate Colonel Despard. A. Swindells (printer), Memoirs of the Life of Col. E.M. Despard, with his Trial at Large, and his Twelve Associates, for High Treason (London: A Swindells, 1803). W. Flint (printer), The Whole Proceedings of the Trials of Col. Despard. (London: W. Flint, 1803).


They devoted a chapter in *The Many-Headed Hydra* to Despard and his wife Catherine, arguing that it was during his time in the revolutionary Atlantic of the 1770s-80s, spent amongst enslaved Africans, indigenous Americans, and African Americans who had freed themselves during and after the American Revolution, that Despard became a political radical.\(^{51}\) They attributed a role in his struggle against authority towards the end of his life to his wife. Very little is known about Mrs Despard, although she was reported in the London press as a tenacious advocate on her husband’s behalf during his imprisonment. Catherine, a black woman of unknown heritage, accompanied Despard on his return to London in 1790. Co-habitation with a free (or enslaved) African or mixed-race woman in the Caribbean was not unusual, nor was it necessarily unusual for British men to send their Caribbean children to Britain to be educated; but marriage and co-habitation in Britain was out of the ordinary.\(^ {52}\)

After Despard’s death, Catherine was shunned by his family, but was protected and provided for by the Irish politician Lord Cloncurry. According to Cloncurry’s memoirs, she lived in his family home in County Dublin for some years, affording her “an asylum from destitution.”\(^ {53}\)

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\(^{53}\) Valentine Cloncurry, *Personal Recollections of the Life and Times with Extracts from the Correspondence of Valentine, Lord Cloncurry* (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1849), 48.
Despard’s earlier life and career have received far less academic attention. As Despard himself declared during his gallows speech, he had “served [his] country faithfully, honourably, and usefully...for 30 Years and upwards.”54 His military career was spent largely in the Caribbean, and was at times adventurous and noteworthy; a military historian of the region has even argued that the campaigns Despard led contributed to the shaping of the destiny of Central America.55 Despite such claims, however, Despard remains a little-known figure, canvassed only by scholars of radicalism in late-eighteenth-century England, a handful of biographers, and historians of Honduras. Although the question of how he progressed from military and imperial administrator to supposed revolutionary leader is not the subject of this chapter, it is possible that the seeds of his radicalism were sown during the course of his Caribbean life.56 A striking element of his administration in Honduras was his egalitarian approach—which was extremely unusual for the time. In allocating land grants in Honduras, he used a lottery system which made “no distinction of race, position or colour.”57 Despite the many successes in his Caribbean career, this novel approach rankled with the white settlers, and ultimately led to his removal from office.

54 Angus, A Particular Account of the...unfortunate Colonel Despard.
56 Linebaugh and Rediker, Many-Headed Hydra, 281.
Despard was born in 1751 in Queen’s County (now County Laois), Ireland. He was the youngest of eight surviving children of William Despard, a protestant landowner, and his wife Jane. He was educated at the Quaker school in Ballitore, Co. Kildare, then the military academy at Dublin Castle. The family’s connection to the Protestant Ascendancy is apparent, as at the age of eight, Despard was placed as page to Countess Hertford, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. According to the memoirs of Despard’s niece, even as a young child, Despard was good-tempered and mild mannered, known as a

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59 Linebaugh and Rediker, Many-Headed Hydra, 257. This is possibly incorrect, as Hertford was not Lord Lieutenant until 1765, when Despard was 15.
Latin and French scholar, and a “great belle letter person,” although he did loathe the Bible, which he was required to read aloud to his grandmother. In their investigation of his early life, Linebaugh and Rediker noted that the young Despard grew up in a country of “intense social antagonism,” when “violent class struggle over the common lands and their associated culture was renewed.” In doing so, they mobilized the question of Ireland’s colonial status, characterizing the Despards (a landowning family) as part of the “military junta,” on the front line of the class struggle between the coloniser and the oppressed. Whether this is how Edward Despard saw himself—either as a young man, or at the end of his life—can only be speculated upon.

In 1766, Edward followed five of his older brothers into the British military, joining the 50th Regiment of Foot as an ensign. His family’s dispersal within the British military illustrates the pervasiveness of this career choice for Irishmen. While his eldest brother remained on the family’s property in Ireland, Despard’s four other brothers served respectively: thirty years in the British Army; forty years in the Royal Navy; fifty years in the army (rising to the rank of Major General in America), and thirty-five years with the army. Edward Despard was sent to Jamaica with the 50th in 1772, but the regiment did not fare well in the tropical climate, and was “comprehensively ravaged” by

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64 Despard to Nelson, February 15, 1803, NMM CRK/4/8. Transcription in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’ Despard also wrote in the letter that his eldest brother had “raised a small corp of volunteer cavalry during the late Rebellion in Ireland.”
disease by 1776.\textsuperscript{65} Despard was transferred to the 36\textsuperscript{th} Regiment in Jamaica, and was occupied with constructing defensive engineering works. According to his niece, he “was an accomplished draughtsman, mathematician and engineer.”\textsuperscript{66} As Linebaugh and Rediker noted, he must also have been a skilled strategist, able to organise and direct crews of workers for tasks from hewing wood and drawing water, to major building projects—which involved mobilising large teams of sappers, miners and slaves.\textsuperscript{67} In 1778 Despard briefly returned to England, during which time he was appointed quartermaster and given command of a company of the newly-created Liverpool Blues (the 79\textsuperscript{th} Regiment). He returned to Jamaica with this regiment in 1779.

For the next five years, Despard was involved in various civil and military expeditions and assignments on what was called the ‘Spanish Main,’ the areas of the Central and South American mainland claimed by Spain. The next (and final) phase of his Caribbean career comprised his six years as the British Superintendent in Honduras (modern-day Belize) after which he returned to London with his wife and young son. I will focus in this chapter on these years Despard spent in Honduras, which (aside from his treason trial) is the best-documented period of his life. Some letters drafted by Despard in his official capacity survive, as well as a petition he wrote to the King in 1803 as he awaited sentencing.\textsuperscript{68} Major Sir John Burdon, a nineteenth-century Governor-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[65] Jay, \textit{Unfortunate Colonel Despard}, 30.
\item[67] Linebaugh and Rediker, \textit{Many-Headed Hydra}, 260.
\item[68] ‘The Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King.’ Transcription in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’ There is also a narrative drafted by Despard, which Linebaugh and Rediker cited, but I have been unable to obtain a copy of the document from TNA: Edward Marcus Despard, ‘A Narrative of the Publick Transactions in the Bay of Honduras from 1784 to 1790,’ March 8, 1791, TNA CO 123/10.
\end{itemize}
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General of British Honduras, compiled a collection of British archives relating to Honduras, comprising largely government records. The documents in Burdon’s collection undoubtedly reflect his own bias as a former government envoy, but they represent a useful timeline of events, and include correspondence to and from Despard, various governors of Jamaica, and officials in London. Another useful contemporaneous source is the memoir published in 1799 by Despard’s former secretary in Honduras, James Bannantine. None of Despard’s personal papers are accessible. Linebaugh and Rediker used a collection of Despard family papers, but these are no longer available.

**Honduras and the Mosquito Shore**

Not long after returning to Jamaica in 1779, Despard was appointed chief engineer on a British expedition to capture a Spanish fort on the San Juan River, which runs from the Caribbean Sea to Lake Nicaragua on the Central American mainland. The goal of the wider campaign was to capture the Spanish settlements on Lake Nicaragua, and bring British naval power closer to the Pacific Ocean. The expedition was a failure (as was the entire campaign) but Despard emerged with his reputation as a leader, tactician and engineer enhanced. He fought alongside Horatio Nelson, then a Captain in the Royal Navy. In a letter published in the *London Gazette*, the commander of the

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70 The whereabouts of the Despard Family Manuscripts, which were cited by Linebaugh and Rediker in Many Headed-Hydra are unknown after they were sold to a private buyer by Bonhams (London) in 2010.
71 The Mosquito coast, or shore, historically comprised an area along the eastern (Caribbean) coast of modern-day Nicaragua, Honduras and Belize. Britain had established settlements in the region from the 1740s. Today, the San Juan River is the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.
72 Conner, Colonel Despard, 38-39.
expedition reported that “there was scarcely a gun fired but was pointed by [Captain Horatio Nelson] or Lieutenant Despard, Chief Engineer, who exerted himself on every occasion.” Following the San Juan expedition, Governor Dalling of Jamaica appointed Despard to the post of Commandant and Commander in Chief of the Island of Rattan, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel and field engineer. Rattan is a small island (today known as Roatan) in the Bay of Honduras between Jamaica and the Central American mainland. Despard’s stay there was short; on his arrival in Rattan, he discovered that the island was “much in want of stores and necessaries for its defence,” so he returned to Jamaica for provisions. His return to Jamaica coincided with reports of an imminent Franco-Spanish attack on the island, so he remained to oversee the construction of defence works. Admiral Rodney’s victory over the French fleet at the Saintes in April 1782 dispatched the threat of invasion.

In August 1782, Despard obtained a period of leave of absence, during which time he returned to the Mosquito Shore “on his private affairs.” It seems that he had returned there to collect “his luggage,” although Linebaugh and Rediker speculate that his wife Catherine was from this region, so it is possible that he had also returned there to visit her. The Mosquito Shore, which runs along the East coast of Central America from the Bay of Honduras south to the San Juan River between modern-day Nicaragua and Costa Rica, was where he had been based for the 1780 San Juan River expedition. It seems that Despard arrived at

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73 ‘Extract of a Letter from Captain Polson to Governor Dalling, dated St. John’s Ford, April 30, 1780,’ London Gazette, July 18, 1780.
74 Bannantine, Memoirs, 9-10.
75 Bannantine, Memoirs, 9-10.
76 Bannantine, Memoirs, 11. ‘Jamaica, October 10, 1782,’ London Gazette, November 30, 1782.
Cap Gracias a Dios on the northernmost tip of the Mosquito Shore around the same time as a force of British soldiers, who were assembling for an expedition to re-capture the Black River settlement (on the Mosquito Coast of Honduras) from Spain. When Despard arrived, the British superintendent of the Mosquito Shore offered Despard command of the expedition. Governor Campbell of Jamaica later reported that “the little Army...consisting of Eighty American Rangers under General Campbell, Five Hundred Shoremen, Free People of Colour, and Negroes, and Six Hundred Mosquito Indians, under their respective Chiefs” elected as their leader Lieutenant-Colonel Despard. The expedition was a success, with the Spanish swiftly surrendering the Black River garrison. Campbell praised Despard “for having cheerfully, at the Request of the Shoremen and Indians, taken the Command of the Land Forces, when he was merely on that Coast with a View to recover Part of his Baggage, which had escaped the Enemy’s Hands at Rattan.”

Despard’s popularity resulted in the British settlers (known as the ‘Baymen’) in Honduras Bay appealing to Governor Campbell for his appointment as their Superintendent. In support, Campbell informed Lord North in London that “the merits of Colonel Despard are so well known to me,” and furnished copies of resolutions of the Council and Assembly of Jamaica recommending Despard for promotion following his successful construction of defences for Jamaica in

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77 Bannantine, Memoirs, 11.
78 ‘Jamaica, October 10, 1782,’ London Gazette, November 30, 1782.
79 A resolution by the Jamaica House of Assembly described the expedition as follows: “with a small undisciplined and inferior force he attacked and took the Spanish Garrison at Black River on the Mosquito Shore, made between seven and eight hundred of the enemy prisoners and rescued hundreds of our fellow Subjects from captivity, and restored them to their possessions;” ‘The Humble Petition.’ Transcription in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’
80 ‘Jamaica, October 10, 1782,’ London Gazette, November 30, 1782.
81 Bannantine, Memoirs, 17-18.
1779, and retaking the Mosquito Shore in 1782.\textsuperscript{82} Although Honduras was a distant “fragment of the British Empire,” it was a valuable source of mahogany and its strategic location on the Central American mainland heightened its appeal to Britain and Spain.\textsuperscript{83} Geographically, the region was a combination of dense tropical forest and mangrove swamps, protected by the largest coral barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere.\textsuperscript{84} Despard visited Honduras in his capacity as a commissioner appointed to mark out and take delivery of “the Lands allotted for the cutting of Logwood,” pursuant to a peace treaty signed at Versailles between Britain and Spain in 1783.\textsuperscript{85} During the course of this visit, Despard realized that there was a considerable misunderstanding between Spain and Britain regarding the interpretation of the Versailles Treaty on the ground—and that Spain was preparing a military force to seize the territory by force. Despard was sent to London to appraise the British government of the misunderstanding. The ensuing negotiations between Britain and Spain staved off war and resulted in Britain ceding the Mosquito Shore to Spain. In return, Britain received additional territory in Honduras, and the valuable right to log mahogany there.\textsuperscript{86}

Despard was officially appointed Superintendent to the Bay Settlement in Honduras in December 1784, although he remained in Jamaica for almost

\textsuperscript{82} Governor Campbell, Jamaica to Lord North, 23 January 1784, CO 137/84, Archives Honduras, 1: 141-142.
\textsuperscript{83} Gibbs, \textit{British Honduras}, 53.
\textsuperscript{84} Linebaugh and Rediker, \textit{Many-Headed Hydra}, 268.
\textsuperscript{85} E.M. Despard, Richard Hoare, James McAulay and James Bartlett to Governor Campbell, May 31, 1784, CO 137/84, \textit{Archives Honduras}, 1: 143.
\textsuperscript{86} ‘The Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King.’ Transcription in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’
another two years.\textsuperscript{87} His delay in leaving Jamaica was a foretaste of things to come. Lord Sydney (British Home Secretary) advised Despard when he was appointed that he need not travel to Honduras “at least until the alarms and apprehensions which Our Settlers and the Native Indians are under from the hostile appearance of the Spaniards shall subside.”\textsuperscript{88} The settlers were impatient for Despard’s arrival, but he insisted that it “would be useless for me to go there until a police is formed,” and requested “authority from home to establish a Police or Government for the Bay” before he would consider going.\textsuperscript{89} Despard clearly understood the delicate balance between the interests of Spain and the British settlers. Major Hoare, a magistrate of the settlement, wrote in September 1785, that Despard’s delay was “much to be lamented,” and reported that the inhabitants of the settlement were disregarding the boundary lines drawn between Britain and Spain. He argued that the settlement was “an open Receptacle for Out-Laws, Felons, Foreigners, and all such Men as fly from Justice, or are fond of a licentious life.”\textsuperscript{90}

When Despard finally arrived in Honduras in June 1786, he was soon joined by some two thousand British evacuees (including enslaved people) from the Mosquito Shore settlement, who had been evacuated under the terms of the Versailles Treaty between Britain and Spain. Lord Sydney instructed Despard to be “particularly attentive” to the evacuees’ situation and “to afford them

\textsuperscript{87} Lord Sydney, Whitehall to Lieutenant Governor Clarke, Jamaica, December 1, 1784, CO 137/84, \textit{Archives Honduras}, 1: 149-150.
\textsuperscript{88} Lord Sydney, Whitehall to Lieutenant Governor Clarke, Jamaica, December 1, 1784, CO 137/84, \textit{Archives Honduras}, 1: 149-150.
\textsuperscript{89} Colonel Despard, Jamaica to Under-Secretary Nepean, 3 December 1785, CO 137/86, \textit{Archives Honduras}, 1: 152.
\textsuperscript{90} Major Hoare, Bay Settlement, September 8, 1785, CO 123/3, \textit{Archives Honduras}, 1: 151-152.
Despard later wrote that he “exerted every nerve” in attempting to balance the interests of the evacuees and the established settlers, but his actions in this regard proved widely unpopular. He allocated the entirety of an extra portion of the Honduran land recently granted by Spain to the new arrivals. He knew that this would be controversial amongst the pre-existing British inhabitants; in fact, he wrote to the Governor of Jamaica that “the countenance of a warship would be indispensable” for executing his plan. As he expected, petitions and protests ensued. It appears Despard not only upset the original British settlers in the Bay region (who missed out on the newly-released land), but also the recent arrivals from the Mosquito Shore, as “he made no distinction of race, position or colour in the allotment of lands and mahogany works...so that the meanest mulatto and free negro has an equal chance, title and interest with the late Superintendent on the Moskito Shore.” Further, Despard deprived original settlers of land they had been occupying (albeit illegally) in these new areas prior to the Spanish making over the land, and prior to Despard allocating it. Lord Sydney wrote to Despard that his actions in allocating land to the new arrivals had met with the King’s Royal Approbation, but that “it is rather to be wished that these people might not be deprived of the benefit which they have derived from those Lands however properly or improperly the possession of them may have been acquired.”

91 Lord Sydney to Colonel Despard, July 31, 1786, CO 137/86, Archives Honduras, 1: 157.
93 Superintendent Despard to Governor Clarke, December 1, 1786, CO 137/86, Archives Honduras, 1: 159.
94 ‘Many Memorials of Settlers, 1787,’ Co 123/6, Archives Honduras, 1: 161.
95 Lord Sydney to Superintendent Despard, June 27, 1787, CO 123/5, Archives Honduras, 1: 162.
They were only to be dispossessed if there was not enough land to accommodate the newcomers.

By the time Despard received Lord Sydney’s letter, he had already acted—he replied that “it is totally out of my Power to execute his royal Intentions.” Subsequent correspondence between Despard and Sydney dwelt often upon the question of Despard’s authority and his increasing frustration with the settlers who continued to disregard the terms of the treaty with Spain. Despard was locked in a struggle with Spain too. He was under pressure to dismantle the magistracy which Spain claimed “has now for two years been established in this country contrary to the convention,” but the magistracy was in the hands of a powerful group of the original settlers. Spain was also unhappy about the settlers’ growing food supplies. The treaty permitted only logging, not the growing of food crops—at one point the Spanish destroyed the settlers’ subsistence plantations. Eventually, the Spanish conceded that the British settlers could cultivate provisions but had to pay a levy to do so.

James Bannantine was Despard’s secretary in Honduras. On his account, Despard developed a cordial and respectful relationship with his Spanish counterparts, and struck up a close friendship with Colonel Grimarest, the Spanish Commissioner responsible for monitoring British activities under the Convention. Bannantine quoted a letter from Grimarest, in which he asked Despard “what will you say to my silence?” (Grimarest had been on a journey

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96 Superintendent Despard to Lord Sydney, October 31, 1787, CO 123/6, Archives Honduras, 1: 166.
97 Superintendent Despard to Lord Sydney, May 25, 1789, CO 123/7, Archives Honduras, 1: 172.
to Mexico), and concluded “I hope every thing will in like manner be granted, which can contribute to the comfort of the settlement, but more particularly to your satisfaction, having that as much at heart as if it were my own benefit, from the cordial friendship which units us since our being together.”

Bannantine published his *Memoirs* around the time of Despard’s imprisonment in London in 1799—it is difficult to see how this demonstration of Despard’s friendship with the Catholic King of Spain’s servants might have helped matters; but for present purposes, it demonstrates Despard’s ability to negotiate across imperial lines, and if Bannantine’s account is to be trusted, to foster friendship too.

Despard was thus preoccupied with navigating the jurisdictional issues between his post as Superintendent, and the settlers’ magistracy, but it was also incumbent upon him to manage the tense relationship with Spain. Indeed, he regarded maintenance of peace between Britain and Spain in the region as “the principle (sic) object” of his office as Superintendent. In the process, however, he alienated the original British settlers, and many of the new settlers who had relocated to Honduras from elsewhere on the Mosquito Shore. By the early nineteenth century, many sites around the British Empire were riven with conflict over the nature and scope of the power wielded by middling authorities—such as Despard’s Superintendency, and the settlers’

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99 ‘The Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King.’ Transcription printed in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’ Despard wrote that “the principle object of this office was to prevent a recurrence of those disputes and contentions which had produced one War, and repeatedly involved the Courts of England and Spain in unpleasant and acrimonious correspondence.”
magistracy. Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford have described this internal wrangling as a common occurrence across the Empire. On the one hand were the colonial elites (in Honduras: the established settlers or Baymen) who perceived threats to order from a surfeit of power over them by middling officials, as well as the ungovernability of subordinates such as free coloured and enslaved people; on the other hand was the imperial centre which attempted to impose administrative order via Despard, as Superintendent. In the context of the case studies identified by Benton and Ford, Despard was engaged in the same struggles as colonial administrators elsewhere in the empire, but it seems unlikely that the struggles of other administrators emerged from the type of egalitarian approach adopted by Despard in Honduras. Despard’s record indicates that he was a talented and capable engineer, and a popular military leader: however, he struggled to maintain an equilibrium amongst the various parties amidst the diplomatic manoeuvring between Britain and Spain, and the commercial ventures which he perhaps did not fully comprehend.

Despard’s military and administrative career came to an abrupt end in April 1790, when Lieutenant Colonel Peter Hunter arrived in Honduras from London with the news of Despard’s suspension from his post as Superintendent. Burdon’s archives indicate that the settlers had appealed to

102 Note that Despard’s tenure in Honduras was earlier than the case studies (in other areas of the Empire) examined by Benton and Ford.
103 ‘Notice to the British Settlers in Honduras by Superintendent Hunter,’ April 12, 1790, CO 123/9, Archives Honduras, 1: 184.
Jamaica and London for Despard’s removal. Secretary of State Grenville informed Despard in a letter that his suspension was not “conclusive upon his future situation,” but the strongly worded nature of the letter can have left little hope that Despard would be reinstated.104 Despard took up Grenville’s offer to return to England, and sailed from Honduras in late May 1790, with his wife and son.105 By the end of the year, the World newspaper reported from London that he had “arrived in town to settle accounts with government.”106 It was two years before the investigation into Despard’s administration of Honduras was completed. He was eventually notified that there was no charge against him worthy of investigation, but that the office of Superintendent had been abolished, otherwise he would have been reinstated.107 Despard remained in London, cut adrift by the military and colonial administration.

In order to successfully carry out his military and administrative duties in the Caribbean, Despard built relationships and networks within the overlapping systems of life in the region—across colour lines, with indigenous and settler communities and with other imperial powers in the region. Despite his two decades as a successful military engineer, tactician, and leader, Edward Despard’s reputation in the Caribbean was defined by his turbulent tenure in Honduras, and in particular, by his insistence upon an egalitarian land distribution model there. We have nothing in Despard’s voice to explain why he adopted an egalitarian approach so much at odds with British Caribbean

104 Secretary of State Grenville to Despard, November 10, 1789, CO 123/8, Archives Honduras, 1: 179-180.
105 Bannantine, Memoirs, 27.
107 Bannantine, Memoirs, 28.
norms, but it is reasonable to speculate that it was the cumulative effect of his experiences in the Caribbean—fighting alongside and commanding men from diverse backgrounds (including enslaved, free coloured, indigenous and British men), administering an evolving colony which incorporated a multiplicity of interests. Despard’s tenure as Superintendent began as the American colonies secured their independence from Britain—the revolutionary wars were the backdrop to much of Despard’s time in the Caribbean. Perhaps is it too much to speculate that he was influenced by the growing calls for civil rights in France—but it is clear that at a local level, he was influenced by the revolutionary fervor of the era. He was intent on treating the residents of the British outpost in Central America as equals, regardless of class or colour.

**Marcus Rainsford**

Marcus Rainsford spent most of his military career in the Caribbean and published two works on St. Domingo (modern-day Haiti). The first was a pamphlet published in 1802 entitled *A Memoir of Transactions that took place in St. Domingo, in the Spring of 1799.* This was followed three years later by *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti,* which was the first account in English of the thirteen years of war in St. Domingo that ended in independence.¹⁰⁸ Little is known about Marcus Rainsford himself, but his published work on Haiti has endured and continues to be cited in scholarship on the Haitian Revolution. *Black Empire* was one of very few first-hand,

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contemporaneous accounts of the Haitian Revolution published, and the engravings in the book (two depicting Toussaint L’Ouverture) remain the best known contemporary representations of the Revolution.109 The only scholarly treatment of Rainsford’s life is in an essay by Paul Youngquist and Gregory Pierrot, who recently edited and annotated Black Empire.110 In reviewing this new edition of Rainsford’s book, Marlene Daut observed that the editors had ironically succeeded in establishing Rainsford as a “perhaps more interesting subject of study” than his book, and that he has emerged as a “necessary object of inquiry in his own right.”111

This chapter reveals some intriguing new information about Rainsford, although some aspects of his Caribbean life remain unresolved. He provides a window into St. Domingo at a time when Britain, France and Spain were vying for influence in the aftermath of the slave revolt, which became the Haitian Revolution. Rainsford also provides a means of examining the British Army’s recruitment practices in relation to the WIR. Similar to Despard, Rainsford’s career in the Caribbean illuminates Britain’s attempts to gain influence in contested parts of the Caribbean during the Revolutionary era—just as we saw Despard negotiate across imperial lines with Spain, so Rainsford’s experiences highlight the entangled nature of imperial power in the region.

Little is known of Rainsford’s early life. He was born in about 1755 in County Kildare, the youngest of three children, and he graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1773.\textsuperscript{112} At around this time, he married Abigail Handcock, and they had a daughter Susanne.\textsuperscript{113} Rainsford’s sister Frances married a British Army officer, Welbore Ellis Doyle in 1774, a match which was to benefit Rainsford for

\textsuperscript{112} Emily A. Buckland, \textit{The Rainsford Family with Sidelights on Shakespeare, Southampton, Hall and Hart} (Worcester: Phillips & Probert Ltd, The Caxton Press, 1932), 228. He had two older siblings, a brother Edward and sister Frances. His father’s name was also Edward, but his mother’s name is unknown: Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ xxiv.

most of his life.\textsuperscript{114} At some point in the late 1770s, Rainsford followed Doyle into the British Army to North America, to fight against the rebellious American colonists. Doyle initially served with the 55\textsuperscript{th} Regiment of Foot, but in America was appointed as Lieutenant-Colonel of a new regiment, the ‘Volunteers of Ireland,’ which comprised Irish-born deserters from the American forces. Rainsford purchased a commission as an ensign in this regiment in 1778, and participated with the regiment at the siege of Charleston in April 1780 and the battle of Camden four months later.\textsuperscript{115} Rainsford then “unfortunately” (as he put it) left the Volunteers of Ireland, to join the “provincial” Duke of Cumberland Regiment, which was also known as the South Carolina Rangers.\textsuperscript{116} The Rangers were raised in the American colonies, and comprised mostly rebel prisoners taken at Charleston and Camden, as well as enslaved Africans.\textsuperscript{117}

The South Carolina Rangers transferred to Jamaica in August 1781, and Rainsford was promoted to captain there soon after. The Regiment was short-lived, however, as it was disbanded two years later in August 1783. After being released from duty on half-pay, Rainsford returned to Britain. His military career did not resume until almost a decade later in 1794, when he again followed his brother-in-law Doyle, this time to the expedition against France in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{118} I have uncovered little of Rainsford’s life during the decade between his Jamaican and Netherlands expeditions, although the \textit{Evening}

\textsuperscript{114} Arthur Doyle, \textit{A Hundred Years of Conflict} (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 52.
\textsuperscript{115} Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ xxiv.
\textsuperscript{116} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, 3.
\textsuperscript{117} Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ xxv.
\textsuperscript{118} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, 4-5.
Mail reported in January 1794 that he had been indicted for “giving a challenge” to a general of the Marines in Portsmouth.\textsuperscript{119} Of more note was his first attempt to launch his literary career, with the anonymous publication of the first part of an epic poem—entitled “The Revolution; Or, Britain Delivered”—on the topic of England’s Glorious Revolution. Youngquist and Pierrot note, however, that as a “bid for literary distinction...it proved disappointing,” and was universally ignored by reviewers.\textsuperscript{120}

Doyle’s patronage secured Rainsford his next military posting, as a recruiter for one of the newly-established “black corps” (the WIR) in May 1795.\textsuperscript{121} Before he left for the Caribbean, Rainsford executed a will in Portarlington, County Kildare. The main beneficiary was his granddaughter Cordelia Carey, to whom he bequeathed £1,000 once she reached 21 years. He also left a smaller sum to William Handcock (the brother of Rainsford’s wife Abigail), and the remainder to his daughter Susanne. To his “kinsman” Richard Espinage, Chancellor at Law, he left all his freehold and leasehold interests in Dublin and Portarlington.\textsuperscript{122} The will was superseded by his final will executed in 1818, and there is no record of Rainsford having any further contact with his family or friends in Kildare.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{119} ‘Portsmouth, January 21,’ \textit{Evening Mail}, January 24, 1794. Nothing further seems to have been made of the indictment.
\textsuperscript{120} Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ xxv.
\textsuperscript{121} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, 5.
\textsuperscript{122} Buckland, \textit{Rainsford Family}, 237-238.
\textsuperscript{123} Cordelia Carey, Rainsford’s grand-daughter, died a wealthy spinster in Dublin in the 1830s. Her will was the subject of a legal challenge, as she left her estate to Richard Espinasse (a barrister), with the remainder to various charities: ‘Sick and Indigent Room Keepers’ Society,’ \textit{Freeman’s Journal}, January 25, 1840, p.3. See also: \textit{Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests v Richard Espinasse and Jane his Wife} 3 (1841) IER 324, \textit{Irish Equity Reports} (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1841), 3: 324-328.
In mid-1796 Rainsford arrived in St. Domingo, which was partially controlled by British forces, charged with mustering soldiers for the Third WIR.\textsuperscript{124} Rainsford took some literary licence in recounting his activities in St. Domingo in his \textit{Memoir} and later book.\textsuperscript{125} In any case, it is clear that his role as a recruiter afforded him mobility in the region, which he took advantage of. His regiment was sent back and forth between St. Domingo and Jamaica between 1795 and 1797, but for much of his time with the WIR, he was marked as “absent by leave.”\textsuperscript{126} He went to England in 1797 to recover from yellow fever; and it was on his return journey to rejoin his regiment that the adventures detailed in his \textit{Memoir} transpired.\textsuperscript{127}

Rainsford dedicated his \textit{Memoir} to Toussaint L’Ouverture, the former slave who had risen to become Lieutenant-Governor of St. Domingo. He described Toussaint as “a singular man, who in the possession of extraordinary power, did not use it unworthily.”\textsuperscript{128} Rainsford recounted that en route to Martinique (where he hoped to rejoin his regiment), the Danish schooner on which he was travelling was dismasted in a “violent hurricane,” and was driven “under the

\textsuperscript{124} The War Office directed that four of the eight WIR were to be raised in British West Indian islands, and four in St. Domingo: Buckley, \textit{Slaves in Red Coats}, 25.
\textsuperscript{125} Particularly problematic was his alteration of the timing of his visits to St. Domingo as recorded in his published works. Per Youngquist and Pierrot, the muster records for HMS \textit{Hannibal} show that Rainsford arrived at Mole St. Nicholas, St. Domingo on 24 October 1797, and received payment there in December as a captain of the 3rd WIR, then remained in St. Domingo for part of the following year. By November 1798, however, he had returned to London, appealing to the War Office for back pay and compensation. This account of Rainsford’s movements contradicts his \textit{Memoir of Transactions}—which placed him in St. Domingo in 1799, after the British withdrawal from the island. This discrepancy led some contemporary observers to suggest that he was a British spy, venturing far behind enemy lines during the British occupation to observe the Haitian military. Youngquist and Pierrot conclude that “beyond his frequent and emphatic denials, no hard evidence exists that Rainsford was in fact a spy. His lost sketches of enemy fortifications and troop deployments attest to little more than the fact gathering of any blue-blooded officer of His Majesty’s army.” Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ xxxiv.
\textsuperscript{127} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, 5.
\textsuperscript{128} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, i.
walls of Cape François,”¹²⁹ which was the main settlement of the northern province, at that time held by France under Toussaint’s leadership. The consensus on board the schooner was that the only way for Rainsford to avoid being taken a prisoner of war was to pass himself off as an American. Rainsford described meeting Toussaint on arrival at the “American Hotel,” and then playing billiards with him later: “I played with him and found nothing to dissipate the pleasure which the novelty of the scene inspired.”¹³⁰ Rainsford remained at Cape François for three weeks, and recorded in his Memoir his observations of the parlous state of the settlement, but was impressed by the strict discipline to which Toussaint’s military—comprising “blacks and mulattoes”—adhered.¹³¹

When the schooner was repaired, Rainsford set off again in search of his regiment. Unfortunately, on the third day after leaving, the vessel sprung a leak, and they were obliged to put in at Fort Dauphine, about forty miles from Cape François. The vessel hoisted its Danish colours and anchored under a small fort. On landing with the schooner’s master, Rainsford was arrested on suspicion of espionage and was informed that he was to be “tried and condemned” the following day.¹³² He was imprisoned, tried by a military court, and condemned to death. He then waited two weeks for Toussaint’s sanction for the sentence to be carried out, however, instead of confirming the sentence, Toussaint ordered Rainsford’s release and immediate departure from the

¹²⁹ Rainsford, Memoir, 6.
¹³⁰ Rainsford, Memoir, 9.
¹³¹ Rainsford, Memoir, 17-18.
¹³² Rainsford, Memoir, 23-24.
island, adding that he “must never return to this island, without the proper passports.”

Rainsford’s observations on life in the French-held areas of St. Domingo at this time conjure a remarkably egalitarian and functional military, operating in the midst of a town in ruins. In describing the scene in the American Hotel when he arrived, Rainsford noted that he beheld “for the first time a perfect system of equality!,” in which officers and privates sat “at the same table indiscriminately,” and that Toussaint also joined, but did not sit at the head of the table “from the idea (I was informed) that no man should be invested with superiority but in the field.” Rainsford attended a military review, which impressed him enormously; he noted that “I have more than once seen sixty thousand of them reviewed, at one time, on the plains of the Cape, in complete subordination in the field, and whose untied determination against an invading enemy, would be victory or death!” He noted “no coercion is necessary among them,” and no punishment inflicted. Rainsford’s stated aim in the Memoir was to demonstrate “the real character of its black governor, Toussaint L’Ouverture, and the safety of our West-India Islands from Attack or Revolt.” In his view, Britain had nothing to fear from the Haitian military, as he did not believe they contemplated extending their possessions in the region. Rainsford described Toussaint as “worthy of imitation as a man—he excites administration as a governor—and as a general,

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133 Rainsford, Memoir, 28-29.
134 Rainsford, Memoir, 10.
135 Rainsford, Memoir, 8-9.
136 Rainsford, Memoir, 16-17.
137 The subtitle of Memoir includes the following: “affording an idea of the present state of that country, the real character of its black governor, Toussaint L’Ouverture, and the safety of our West-India islands from attack or revolt.”
he is yet unsubdued without the probability of subjection!” and as “a perfect black...of a venerable appearance, but possessed of uncommon discernment” and “suavity of manners.”¹³⁸ He acknowledged, however, that it was “hostile to received opinions” to consider him as anything other “than as a fortunate Brigand.”¹³⁹

Despite his admiration for Toussaint, Rainsford was no abolitionist.¹⁴⁰ He made it clear in Black Empire that he did not oppose “the practice of the slave-trade,” and subscribed to the view that the “situation of colonial-slaves...is, in many respects, superior to that of the labourers or the artizans of Britain.”¹⁴¹ He adopting a paternalistic stance, arguing that to liberate “the poor bird long nursed in domestic comfort, to flutter a little while in solitary freedom,” was to render him “a stranger to his own kind.”¹⁴² In Rainsford’s opinion, the revolution in St. Domingo could have been avoided if the planters had adopted a more conciliatory approach to their enslaved men and women, rather than continuing their exploitative practices.¹⁴³ He warned “the Proprietors of the British colonies...to think of an inducement to some degree of devotion among their slaves an object of importance, with a careful diffusion of morality,” arguing that such devotion would prevent “a spirit of deliberation (the first revolutionary system) among slaves.”¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Rainsford, Memoir, 21-22.
¹³⁹ Rainsford, Memoir, 22.
¹⁴⁰ Youngquist and Pierrot, ‘Introduction,’ lii. See also David Lambert, “Am I not a Man and a Soldier? (Re-)imagine the West India Regiment in the Age of Abolition,’ (Lecture given at the UCL Institute of the Americas, London, September 2015). https://www.ucl.ac.uk/americas/ia-events/archive/AmInotaManandaSoldier
¹⁴¹ Rainsford, Black Empire, 103.
¹⁴² Rainsford, Black Empire, 103.
¹⁴³ Rainsford, Black Empire, 102-103.
¹⁴⁴ Rainsford, Black Empire, 362-363.
Rainsford’s account in the *Memoir* of a relatively ordered society under Toussaint contrasts with his depiction of St. Domingo under French control two years later in *Black Empire*. In 1802 Napoleon ordered generals Leclerc and Rochambeau to reclaim St. Domingo (or Saint Domingue as the French called it)—and the generals were soon renowned for the brutality with which they asserted control. Toussaint was captured (supposedly after being tricked by Leclerc) and sent to France, where he died in a remote prison. Rainsford recounted the atrocities perpetrated by the French and by the black revolutionaries, and criticized the French generals for their failed leadership, which he suggested had led to the French troops’ abhorrent behaviour. On Rainsford’s account, the French generals had not only allowed the acts of barbarity to occur, but their inability to stall the progress of the black revolutionaries had driven the French troops to adopt desperate measures.\(^{145}\)

As James Forde recently argued, at its heart, *Black Empire* was a critique of the way France handled the revolution in its most treasured of colonies, and of colonial governance in general.\(^ {146}\)

*Recruiting for the West India Regiments*

Rainsford was appointed as a recruiter for the Third WIR within three months of the Secretary of State for War and Colonies authorising the establishment of the so-called ‘black regiments’ for the British Army.\(^ {147}\) Lieutenant General Sir John Vaughan, the commander-in-chief of the Windward and Leeward

\(^{145}\) Forde, ‘Saint-Domingue ‘Remembered,’ 4-5.

\(^{146}\) Forde, ‘Saint-Domingue ‘Remembered,’ 3, 5-6.

\(^{147}\) Buckley, *British Army in the West Indies*, 119. The regimental ‘Description and Succession Books’ for the Fourth WIR are the most complete, according to Buckley. Of the fifty-two enleistees of the Fourth, the majority were Irish from chiefly Cork, Dublin, Tipperary, Galway and Waterford. The officers who purchased commissions in the Fourth were mostly Irish or Scottish-born: Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 31.
Islands, had proposed the establishment of the regiments in late 1794, as a solution to Britain’s desperate need for manpower in the Caribbean. As war intensified in the Caribbean, British troops found themselves fighting French forces strengthened by African and creole men recently emancipated from slavery in the French colonies.\textsuperscript{148} Vaughan proposed a corps modelled on a regular British infantry regiment but instead comprised of “the ablest and most Robust Negroes;” in his view, the war in the West Indies could only be prosecuted by “opposing Blacks to Blacks.”\textsuperscript{149}

That British soldiers should work with and rely upon enslaved men and women was not novel. Prior to 1795, large numbers of African slaves were employed in the lower grades of the army as labourers on a variety of military projects.\textsuperscript{150} By 1795, nearly all the British islands had slave-recruited ‘ranger’ regiments, some under colonial control, others under the direct jurisdiction of the British Army. Daniel O’Meara commanded one such regiment—O’Meara’s Rangers—on St. Lucia. When the Secretary of State approved the raising of the black regiments, his preferred option was to recruit free African men, with the assistance of the local assemblies in British Caribbean islands, but it soon became apparent that this was not feasible. The island assemblies were bitterly opposed to the idea of arming slaves to strengthen imperial, as opposed to colonial, sovereignty. In addition, plantation proprietors were reticent to sacrifice the intrinsic economic value of their slaves; most refused to assist with recruitment. As a result, in October 1796 the army began to purchase

\textsuperscript{148} Slavery was abolished by the French National Assembly in February 1794.

\textsuperscript{149} Vaughan to Dundas, No.6, “Secret,” December 25, 1794, W.O.1/83, quoted in Buckley, \textit{British Army in the West Indies}, 117.

\textsuperscript{150} Buckley, \textit{British Army in the West Indies}, 124.
enslaved men directly from merchants and slavers for the regiments. This became the established method of raising and maintaining the WIR until 1807. Between 1795 and 1808, the British government bought an estimated 13,400 slaves for the WIR at a cost of approximately £925,000.

Recruitment for Rainsford’s Third WIR in St. Domingo was directed by Sir Adam Williamson, then the Governor of the British-occupied provinces on the island. In accordance with British policy, Williamson directed that slave-owners were to provide one enslaved man for every fifteen they owned; but unlike their counterparts in the British islands, proprietors in St. Domingo were to reimbursed for the loss of their ‘assets.’ Williamson enraged the War Office in London by enlisting recruits in St. Domingo for a fixed period of five years, after which time they were granted freedom from slavery—which was the basis on which earlier slave recruits had been enlisted into British regiments, but was not the policy for the new WIR. Within a few months, the War Office directed that recruitment for the Third was to be transferred to Jamaica.

By the time Rainsford arrived to commence recruitment, the British Army’s policy of acquiring ‘new’ enslaved men was in place. Rainsford did not record his activities as a recruiter in either of his publications, but it is reasonable to assume that he would have been involved in negotiating with merchants and

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151 Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 53.
slave-traders for the purchase of recruits from Africa for his regiment. An extant contract between the British Army and slave-trader James Bontein of Martinique demonstrates the process behind these purchases. In the contract, the army stipulates conditions such as age, height and state of health for the men to be acquired on its behalf, as well as the requirement that Bontein warrant the proper title to each enslaved man.\footnote{Abercromby to Dundas, January 26, 1797, enclosure No.5, WO 1/86: “Conditions agreed upon between Commander in Chief on the part of the Government, and James Bontein Esqr. by which the latter engages to raise Two thousand five hundred Black, or coloured Men,” quoted in Buckley, “The British Army’s African Recruitment Policy,” 9.} Bontein was assisted by small recruiting parties from the WIR stationed at various depots around the British Caribbean—we can assume Rainsford would have been a member of such a recruiting party.\footnote{Abercromby to Dundas, January 26, 1797, enclosure No.5, WO 1/86, quoted in Buckley, “The British Army’s African Recruitment Policy,” 9.} Army inspectors scrutinised the legal title of each enslaved man (each title document was to be certified by crown lawyers in those islands where the transactions occurred), and ensured that identification information for each slave was registered with the office of the island secretary.\footnote{Abercromby to Dundas, January 26, 1797, enclosure No.6, WO 1/86: Instructions for the Officers and Medical Staff appointed by the Commander in Chief, to Inspect the Men raised for Government by James Bontein Esqr.,” quoted in Buckley, “The British Army’s African Recruitment Policy,” 9.} As a captain charged with recruiting, Rainsford would have been involved in assisting merchants such as Bontein, and inspecting and approving new slave recruits in accordance with the army’s instructions.\footnote{According to Buckley, recruiting efforts for the WIR were “dismally unsuccessful” overall. Rainsford’s regiment only began recruiting at Jamaica around May 1796, and by December 1797, it had recorded just two drummers: Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 36.}


Rainsford’s Post-military career

Rainsford retired from the military in early 1800, although he received a commission ten years later in London with First Royal Veteran Battalion.\(^{160}\) In 1802 his Memoir was published, followed by Black Empire in 1805, both of which were well-received in Britain and Europe.\(^ {161}\) Despite his publishing success, the commission with the Veterans, and a military pension, he was imprisoned for debt in 1813.\(^ {162}\) He was discharged from bankruptcy two years later.\(^ {163}\) Little is known about this period of Rainsford’s life but intriguing glimpses appear in newspaper reports, which indicate that he acted as an honorary representative of the Haitian government in Europe. There were even suggestions that he travelled again to St. Domingo (by then known as Haiti)—although Youngquist and Pierrot cast doubt upon this.\(^ {164}\) His activities in the final years of his life—as well as suggesting a certain eccentricity—signaled a dramatic shift in his attitude towards slavery (or at the very least, a pragmatic ability to move with the times).

By 1814, Rainsford was closely aligned with the Haitian monarchy and military establishment, and was active in the public campaign in Britain to force France


161 The Memoir was published in two further editions in 1802.

162 ‘I, Marcus Rainsford,’ London Gazette, November 6, 1813. According to the notice, Rainsford’s creditors included an “army-accoutrement-maker,” a “navy-agent and slopseller,” an engineer, a carpet-maker, a wine-merchant, a tailor, coal-merchant, bankers and a number of attorneys.

163 ‘An account of the Names, Trades, and Description, of the several Persons, who have applied to be discharged under the acts of Parliament of the 53rd and 54th years of His Present Majesty’s reign,’ (London: Printed by the House of Commons, 1815).

to abolish the slave trade. Remarkably, Rainsford also claimed to have fought alongside Haitian rebels in the Haitian War of Independence (1802-04), and statements by the Haitian Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Monsieur de Limonade, appear to support this claim. Did Rainsford travel to St. Domingo to fight the French after the removal of Toussaint in 1802? If he did fight in St. Domingo during this period, this may explain the change in his attitude from a non-abolitionist, to a public advocate of not only Haitian independence, but abolitionism in general. In early 1815 The Times in London published a letter from Limonade, to “Monsieur Major Rainsford,” thanking him for a speech Rainsford had given the previous July at a public meeting in London with “the purpose of presenting a petition to Parliament for the Abolition of the Slave Trade” (in France). Limonade noted that King Henry of Haiti had been “sensibly affected by the victorious arguments which you employed to support the honourable proposition...sentiments highly worthy of a Briton, and of one who has himself bled in our cause in our own fields!” Soon after, the Royal Gazette of Hayti published an account of a “grand banquet” in Cape Henry (Haiti) “at which all the dignitaries of the kingdom were present.” The report quoted three of the toasts given at the banquet: the first to the “Prince Regent of England,” the second to “the immortal Wilberforce,” and the third to “the brave and virtuous Major Rainsford; he has

165 In November 1803, Toussaint’s revolutionary successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, achieved final victory, driving the French from the island for good. Dessalines proclaimed Haiti independent and installed himself as emperor. He was assassinated in 1806, and was replaced by General Henry Christophe, who was proclaimed king in 1811.
166 ‘Inghilterra,’ Gazzetta di Milano, June 28, 1816. ‘Kingdom of Hayti,’ The Times, January 24, 1815.
167 ‘Kingdom of Hayti,’ The Times, January 24, 1815.
168 ‘Kingdom of Hayti,’ The Times, January 24, 1815.
169 ‘From the Royal Gazette of Hayti, Cape Henry, Nov. 20 1814,’ The Times, January 24, 1815.
only one arm, and he offers it for the cause of the defence of the Haytians; animated with a sentiment so noble, that arm is worth a thousand!”

Later that year, Rainsford’s appointment as a Lieutenant-General “in the service of the King of Hayti” was reported. Limonade advised him that rather than have him travel to Haiti, “it will be much better to place you in London, with an adequate establishment, to defend our cause.” It is possible that some of the debts Rainsford incurred prior to his bankruptcy, which included outstanding payments to an “army-accoutrement-maker” related to fitting himself out as a representative of the Haitian military. The newspaper reports of Rainsford activities over the following years suggest that his role was purely diplomatic. He worked to advance the Haitian cause by entertaining groups of gentlemen in London, Bath and Abergavenny. The Bath Chronicle reported his visit to Bath in May 1816, en route to Ireland “on his Majesty’s service,” and recounted “a splendid entertainment” that he had recently given “at the London Coffee-House, to a numerous and elegant assemblage of gentlemen, interested in the prosperity and happiness of kingdom of Hayti.”

The Gazetta di Milano in Italy printed a translation of the address Rainsford gave at the coffee-house gathering. It was during the course of that address that Rainsford claimed to have fought alongside the Haitians in the “glorious battle that claimed freedom and independence” for Haiti, and that he had “joined

170 ‘From the Royal Gazette of Hayti, Cape Henry, Nov. 20 1814,’ The Times, January 24, 1815. This is the only reference I have come across which refers to Rainsford having lost an arm—if he fought in Haiti, perhaps the injury occurred then?
171 ‘Hayti,’ Morning Post, March 19, 1817. The Morning Chronicle also noted Rainsford’s appointment to a military command in the Haytian Army: ‘The Mirror of Fashion,’ The Morning Chronicle, February 24, 1815.
172 ‘Arrival at The White Lion Hotel,’ Bath Chronicle, May 23, 1816.
173 ‘Inghilterra,’ Gazetta di Milano, 28 June 1816.
their ranks in [his] youth,” to fight for “the cause of justice and liberty, always so dear to the heart of the English.”\textsuperscript{174} Without further research, it is impossible to know whether Rainsford spoke literally or figuratively.

A month later, the \textit{Hereford Journal} described Rainsford’s arrival “at his seat, Govilon, near Abergavenny,” where he “hoisted the Haytean Flag, and fired a Royal Salute of twenty one rounds from an eighteen-pounder, in honour of his most illustrious Majesty, Henry, first King of Hayti.”\textsuperscript{175} He proceeded to dine with local members of the Pitt Club at Abergavenny, “where he was repeatedly cheered by a very numerous and respectable company there assembled.”\textsuperscript{176} In all of these newspaper articles, Rainsford was referred to as “Major Rainsford.” In his bankruptcy notice from 1813, Rainsford stated that he was “commonly called Major Rainsford,” despite the fact that he had never attained that rank during his British military career, and his rank in the Veterans’ Battalion at that time was as ensign.\textsuperscript{177} Is it possible that Rainsford had taken the title of major in the Haitian military prior to 1810, and continued to be known by that name?

Rainsford died in London in 1817. A notice in \textit{The Times} in April 1818 called on Rainsford’s relations or next of kin to contact his executors, from whom they “may hear something to their advantage.”\textsuperscript{178} In his last will, Rainsford mentioned “money...due to me in Saint Domingo in the West Indies or coming

\textsuperscript{174} Translation from: “Entrai nelle loro file sino della mia gioventù” and “combatteti per la causa della giustizia e della libertà, sempre cara al cuore di un Inglese.” ‘Inghilterra,’ \textit{Gazzetta di Milano}, June 28, 1816.

\textsuperscript{175} ‘On the arrival of Lieutenant-General Sir Marcus Rainsford,’ \textit{Hereford Journal}, June 12, 1816.

\textsuperscript{176} ‘On the arrival of Lieutenant-General Sir Marcus Rainsford,’ \textit{Hereford Journal}, June 12, 1816.

\textsuperscript{177} ‘I, Marcus Rainsford,’ \textit{London Gazette}, November 6, 1813.

\textsuperscript{178} ‘The Relations or Next of Kin of Marcus Rainsford,’ \textit{The Times}, 24 April 1818.
therefrom,” which he bequeathed to a woman named Ellen Houghton “in consideration of her faithful attendance on me for the last Eleven years.”

There was no mention of his daughter or granddaughter in Rainsford’s final will.

As Marlene Daut noted, Marcus Rainsford was an intriguing character, worthy of further examination. Rainsford’s Caribbean career and connections provide a fresh perspective on the little-known beginnings of the West India Regiments, British activities in Haiti and early diplomacy by the new nation of Haiti. In tracing his Caribbean exploits, it is clear that Rainsford’s interaction with revolutionaries in St. Domingo, and what he witnessed of the Revolution there had an impact on him. His career demonstrates the complexities of the revolutionary era in the Caribbean. Whether he embraced the complexities is uncertain, but he made the most of the opportunities which emerged—by writing about St. Domingo, and by fostering an enduring connection with the fledgling Haitian monarchy. Rainsford at once respected the black revolutionaries (in particular their leader, Toussaint), but supported slavery and chastised France for its failure to control the island. Back in London, it seems that he supported the new nation of Haiti in its efforts to halt the French trade in enslaved people in the early nineteenth century.

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Daniel O’Meara

This chapter opened with the story of the French-born twins of Irish descent, William and Daniel O’Meara. After France dissolved the Irish Brigade in 1791, both brothers joined the émigrés and served in the British Army. They then returned to France in 1801 to serve under Napoleon. During his time with the British Army, William served for a short period in the Caribbean with the British Army’s Irish Brigade, although nothing is known of his brother Daniel’s years in the British service.\(^{180}\) Of the ten Irishmen profiled in this thesis, the twins’ Irish-born relative—also called Daniel O’Meara—is the man about whom we know the least.\(^{181}\) But the details of his long years of service in the British Army in the Caribbean warrant inclusion here, as he illuminates the changing nature of military service and warfare in the Caribbean. O’Meara was one of a number of senior British Army officers who raised units of African men to fight the French, and he gave his name to one such unit—O’Meara’s Rangers—which was later subsumed into the British Army’s WIR, once the practice of raising black corps became official army policy.\(^{182}\) Unlike Despard and Rainsford, he retired to Ireland after his military career. He was also most likely Catholic.

Daniel O’Meara’s family, from Lissinisky, County Tipperary, traced its roots back to the Eóganacht, an Irish dynasty which dominated Southern Ireland

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\(^{180}\) William was appointed a captain in the British Army’s Fourth Regiment of the Irish Brigade: ‘Commissions signed by His Majesty for the Army in Ireland, dated October 1, 1794—Thomas Conway’s Regiment,’ *London Gazette*, July 18, 1795. In 1796, the regiment was reported safely arrived at Jamaica: ‘Jamaica, July 9,’ *The Sun*, September 7, 1796.

\(^{181}\) Some secondary sources have conflated Daniel O’Meara of Lissinisky with Daniel O’Meara of Dunkirk. To add to my initial confusion while researching the men, French-born Daniel O’Meara commanded a brigade called ‘O’Meara’s Regiment’ within the French Army’s Irish Brigade—not to be confused with the O’Meara’s Rangers which Irish-born Daniel O’Meara commanded in St. Lucia. See John O’Hart, *Irish Landed Gentry* (Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1887), 556.

\(^{182}\) Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, 114.
from the sixth to the tenth centuries. O’Meara was most likely born in the late 1750s, as he enlisted in the British Army in the 1770s. Tracing announcements from the War Office in the London Gazette, O’Meara transferred between three different regiments of foot, and was steadily promoted. As a Major in the 68th Regiment of Foot, he was shipped to the West Indies in 1794. The Regiment was dispersed amongst Martinique, St. Lucia and Grenada. The British had taken St. Lucia from the French in April 1794, and between 1794 and 1797, the island was embroiled in the so-called Brigands’ War. Enslaved Africans withdrew from the plantations and joined the French Republicans in St. Lucia’s interior to defend the colony for revolutionary France against French royalists and British invaders. At St. Lucia, O’Meara was promoted again in May 1796, this time to Lieutenant Colonel. Within a year, the London Gazette reported his move to the 44th Regiment of Foot (Major-General Keppel’s Regiment), changing rank from Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel to Major.

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183 John O’Meara, ‘The O’Mearas of Lissinisky,’ Tipperary Historical Journal 9 (1996): 117. Daniel’s brother Morgan was the last Lissinisky Chief.
184 He was appointed as Lieutenant in the 20th Foot on 20 September 1777: Royal Military Calendar Containing the Services of Every General Officer Lieutenant-General and Major General, in the British Army, from the Date of their First Commission and the Services of Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels, (London: A. J. Valpy, 1815), 1: 322.
185 He was promoted to Lieutenant of the 20th Foot in 1778, then moved to the 98th Foot as Lieutenant-Captain in 1783: ‘War Office, March 31, 1778,’ London Gazette, March 31, 1778. ‘War-Office, January 14, 1783,’ London Gazette, January 14, 1783. In 1785, he transferred to the 68th Regiment of Foot as Captain en Second: ‘War-Office, May 14, 1785,’ London Gazette, May 14, 1785. He was promoted to Major in September 1794: War-Office, July 12, 1796,’ London Gazette, July 12, 1796. (Note that the London Gazette on his next promotion calls him ‘Brevet Major’).
187 Royal Military Calendar, 1: 322.
188 ‘War-Office, April 1, 1797,’ London Gazette, 1 April 1797. NB. In September 1798, the London Gazette reported: “17th Regiment of Foot, Major Richard Stovin to be Lieutenant Colonel, vice O’Meara, promoted to the Command of a Regiment: ‘War-Office, September 11, 1798,’ London Gazette, September 11, 1798. This is possibly when O’Meara took command of the WI Regiment, although this is unclear.
In addition to procuring enslaved men for the WIR, the British Army also charged senior officers with raising and leading smaller units of African soldiers to fight the French in the Caribbean; these units were often known as ‘ranger’ units.¹⁸⁹ Daniel O’Meara raised one such unit at St. Lucia, comprised largely of creole men.¹⁹⁰ Brigadier General Sir John Moore, who took command of the garrison at St. Lucia in 1796, mentioned orders he had given to “O’Meara’s black corps” there in July 1796, and in January 1797 he reported that O’Meara’s corps had successfully taken a strategic fort on the island.¹⁹¹ Moore also commented generally on the performance of the ranger units: “In this country much may be made of black corps...they possess, I think, many excellent qualities as soldiers, and may with proper attention become equal to anything. Even as they are at present, they are for the West Indies invaluable.”¹⁹² The WIR’s service during the Brigands’ War was acknowledged when Abercromby informed West India governors that the regiments were to become a permanent branch of the British establishment for the defence of the islands.¹⁹³ In October 1797, as hostilities drew to a close, O’Meara’s Rangers were subsumed into the WIR, and he was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of the Twelfth WIR.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Moore, Diary, 1: 226, 247.
¹⁹² Moore, Diary, 1: 240.
¹⁹³ Abercromby’s circular to West Indian Governors, January 3, 1797, W.O. 40/9, quoted in Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 94.
¹⁹⁴ Dyde, Empty Sleeve, 69. According to the November 1796 returns, the Ninth and Twelfth WIR numbered 874 men: Enclosure in Graham to Dundas, November 15, 1796, W.O. 1/86, quoted in Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 89.
This period of intense military activity in the region (the Brigands’ War) was followed by a period of relative calm. By April 1798 Britain had secured St. Lucia, and soon after Dominica, St. Vincent and Grenada recovered from the insurrections there. O’Meara returned to Ireland, and married Mary Peacocke, daughter of Sir Joseph Peacocke, of Barntic, County Clare. In January 1805, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel, “on Half-Pay of the late 12th West India Regiment,” and was then promoted to Major General on 25 July 1810. It seems that about 1815, he travelled to Jamaica, as the Royal Military Calendar reported that he had been on half pay for several years, but “was lately appointed on the staff at Jamaica, where he continues at this period.” His final promotion was in 1819, when he was appointed Lieutenant-General.

As for the African men who had been under O’Meara’s command during wartime: the WIR was divided into several detachments and dispersed amongst British garrisons on different islands, and undertook what Buckley described as an “unbroken string of tedious and monotonous garrison duties.” The dispersal of the WIR men was designed to protect plantation proprietors against raids by the men, many of whom remained enslaved. The Twelfth WIR was disbanded in 1803.

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195 Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 93.
198 Royal Military Calendar, 1:322.
199 ‘War-Office, 12th August 1819,’ London Gazette, August 12, 1819.
200 Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 107.
201 Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats, 107.
202 Chartrand, British Forces, 18.
O’Meara’s French-born relative (William O’Meara) also served in the British Caribbean during the 1790s. After the French Revolution, the Irish Brigades were disbanded, and as a result many of the soldiers sought employment elsewhere.\textsuperscript{203} Despite opposition from the establishment in Ireland, the British government announced in 1795 the establishment of an exclusively Catholic Brigade of six regiments, to be raised in Ireland and sent for service outside Britain.\textsuperscript{204} The War Secretary Dundas stressed the importance of this Irish Brigade to Britain, as troops were urgently needed to strengthen British positions in the Caribbean, including at St. Domingo.\textsuperscript{205}

The Irish Brigade served at garrisons in Jamaica, Honduras and St. Domingo. William O’Meara’s Regiment (the 4th) was reported safely arrived at Jamaica in July 1796, together with the 1st: “The two regiments number full 1200 men, all remarkably healthy.”\textsuperscript{206} The Regiments were a novelty in the Caribbean, as evidenced by a report in the \textit{Oracle and Public Advertiser}, which reproduced a report from Barbados that the “unexpected arrival of a small fleet from Ireland, occasioned an alarm yesterday noon, which was however soon after dissipated upon his Majesty’s ship Assurance, of 44 guns, and Bittern sloop of war, its three transports, coming to in Carlisle Bay.”\textsuperscript{207} The transports carried the Second Regiment, who were reported to be in fine health, notwithstanding a passage of sixty-eight days from Waterford.”\textsuperscript{208} Reports of the regiments of

\textsuperscript{203} McDonnell, ‘A Fair Chance,’ 152.
\textsuperscript{204} The opposition within Ireland was based on fears that raising an exclusively Catholic brigade would threaten the internal security of Ireland.
\textsuperscript{205} Dundas to Portland, Secretary at War Out-letters, February 13, 1795, quoted in McDonnell, ‘A Fair Chance,’ 159.
\textsuperscript{206} ‘Jamaica, July 9,’ \textit{The Sun}, September 7, 1796.
\textsuperscript{207} ‘Barbadoes, January 28,’ \textit{Oracle and Public Advertiser}, April 18, 1797.
\textsuperscript{208} ‘Barbadoes, January 28,’ \textit{Oracle and Public Advertiser}, April 18, 1797.
the Irish Brigade at Honduras in the same year illustrate the challenges for troops in the Caribbean. The Superintendent of the Bay Settlement reported on the state of the troops sent there in 1797: “23 of the Irish Brigade died of yellow fever on the voyage, and 2 artillerymen of other illnesses.”\footnote{Superintendent Barrow to Governor Balcarres, October 12, 1797, CO 137/99, Archives Honduras, 1: 238.} An even more sombre report followed ten days later, when the Superintendent reported that “the present detachment of the Irish Brigade is totally inadequate to defend the settlement;” of the 210 men who embarked at Jamaica, “Dead 25, Sick, 65, Leaving 45 to guard Haulover 14 to guard Barracks and 65 for Belize Town and other Pickets.”\footnote{Superintendent Barrow to Magistrates, October 12, 1797, CO 137/99, Archives Honduras, 1: 239.} The Irish Brigade was, in fact, short-lived. Due to the extremely high mortality rate amongst the officers and men, the Brigade was officially struck off the list of fighting formations of the British Army sometime in 1798.\footnote{Buckley, British Army in the West Indies, 108.} The \textit{London Gazette} indicates that William O’Meara was placed on half-pay when it was struck off. In 1801, he was transferred to the regular army’s 62nd Regiment of Foot, with the rank of captain.\footnote{‘War-Office, September 26, 1801,’ London Gazette, September 26, 1801.} Shortly afterwards, he returned to France to join his twin brother Daniel in Napoleon’s new Irish Legion.\footnote{O’Hart, Irish Pedigrees, 2: 650.}

Following his military life, Irish-born Daniel O’Meara lived in Thomas Street, Limerick, and had two sons and a daughter.\footnote{Sheehan, Nenagh and its Neighbourhood, 51-52.} His death was reported in the \textit{Limerick Chronicle} in August 1821, “after a tedious illness, regretted by all who
knew him.” 215 One of his sons (also called Daniel O’Meara) followed him into the WIR, although he was later transferred to a regular unit, also in the Caribbean. The Freeman’s Journal quoted an 1824 letter to “Mrs General O’Meara from her son, Lieutenant Daniel O’Meara,” which reported that his Regiment, the 93rd Highlanders, “were in excellent health at Barbados on the 2d of April, and only lost one private since arriving from Ireland.” 216

Conclusion

The final section of this chapter traces the spaces that Edward Despard, Marcus Rainsford and Daniel O’Meara moved through during their Caribbean years. By paying close attention to the spatial, we gain insights into the imperial world in which the men lived, and also their experience of that world. The men become more visible against a background—and that background is multi-faceted, comprising absolute, relative and relational spaces, to use David Harvey’s terminology. 217 The lack of personal papers for any of the soldiers in this chapter has made it virtually impossible to access their internal (‘relational’) spaces, and it is difficult too, to assess the networks (‘relative spaces’) within which they moved. For most of the men profiled in the remaining chapters of this thesis, it has been possible to locate sources which can illuminate the men’s relative and relational spaces. Rather than speculate as to these elements of Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara’s Caribbean lives, I

215 ‘Deaths,’ Limerick Chronicle, August 8, 1821. His death was also reported in The Morning Post, September 12, 1821. NB a family biographer nominated O’Meara’s year of death as 1824: O’Meara, O’Mearas of Lissinisky, 124.


217 David Harvey, Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 134-141.
will focus here on the ‘absolute’—encompassing the men’s physical environs, and the geopolitics at play in those spaces. What has emerged in the process of considering these spaces is the centrality of race in the soldier’s lives. All three worked closely with, recruited, and commanded enslaved (and free coloured) men—slavery was as much a part of the military experience in the British Caribbean as it was a part of other aspects of life, such as the sugar plantation. This aspect of the quotidian life of the British soldier is perhaps the most striking finding to emerge from this chapter.

Hostilities between European empires in the Caribbean, and the spectre of revolution loom large in the biographies of Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara. Despard had been in the Caribbean since the early 1770s, but Rainsford and O’Meara were shipped to the region with their regiments after war between France and Britain was declared in 1793. Despard’s role as a military engineer in Jamaica meant that he had spent years overseeing the construction of defensive works on the island in anticipation of foreign invasion. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as soldiers, all three men spent time on the front line (such as it was) in areas which were not firmly under British control—Rainsford was recruiting in St. Domingo, which was only partially held by Britain; O’Meara was largely at St. Lucia, an island Britain was attempting to wrest from French control; and Despard ventured south to fight the Spanish for control of parts of Central America. At all times during the men’s service in these places, the perception on the ground must surely have been of a sense of precarity. Britain did not have a strong hold on St. Domingo, Honduras or St. Lucia when the
men were there, and although Britain eventually retained Honduras and St. Lucia, during the revolutionary Era this was not necessarily assured.

Despard played a significant role in Britain challenging Spanish power in modern-day Central America. The latter part of his Caribbean career was spent on the ‘frontier’ as Britain attempted to push further into the Spanish Main. His military exploits there took in the San Juan River region between modern-day Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and the Black River and Bay regions on the Mosquito Shore of Honduras. Compared with Jamaica, where much of Despard’s military career was spent, these regions were contested, trans-imperial spaces, with territory constantly changing hands between imperial powers. The territories of Central America must also have seemed vast in comparison with Jamaica. In her history of Belize (which approximates to Honduras when Despard was superintendent there), Mavis Campbell describes its hazardous coastline with a series of cays, atolls and reefs enclosing its coastal waters, forming a barrier reef second only to that in Australia. The treacherous waters harboured “buccaneers of many nationalities from Europe,” but by the eighteenth century, the British came to dominate from St George’s Cay, an island with a wide harbour, an “agreeable and healthful” climate, and an abundance of valuable logwood. British domination was frequently challenged by Spain, however, with the most dramatic event being the Spanish destruction of St George’s Cay in 1779. By the time Despard was appointed superintendent of Honduras, the British Bay

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218 Campbell, ‘St George’s Cay,’ 171.
219 Campbell, ‘St George’s Cay,’ 175.
settlement was no longer based at St George’s Cay—it had moved to the mouth of the Belize River on the mainland, an area surrounded by dense tropical forest and mangrove swamps.\textsuperscript{220}

The geopolitics which engulfed Despard in Honduras were inter-imperial, but also local. As he informed the King in his \textit{1802} petition, Despard considered negotiations with Spain (and avoiding war) his primary responsibility, but he was also tasked with managing the integration of the \textit{émigrés} from the Mosquito Shore with the ‘Baymen,’ the pre-existing British Bay settlers.\textsuperscript{221} By means of his lottery system for land allocation, he also undertook to ensure that free coloured people (or at least men), and less wealthy white men were integrated as land-owners too. The story of Joshua Jones, a free coloured man who received land under Despard’s lottery, illustrates the racial tensions in Honduras. Jones drew town lot number 69, and, on Despard’s authority, proceeded to tear down the cookhouse of a wealthy settler which had been illegally built on the lot. Jones was promptly arrested by the Baymen’s magistrates and imprisoned. After “a few white people of the very lowest class, a number of Mustees, Mulattos, and Free negroes” took to the streets to protest, Despard intervened and freed Jones.\textsuperscript{222} The Baymen accused Despard of ignoring racial norms in the British West Indies, but Despard argued that there being no legislature in Honduras, “it must be governed by the law of England, which knows no such distinction [between white and coloured

\textsuperscript{220} Linebaugh and Rediker, \textit{Many-Headed Hydra}, 268.
\textsuperscript{221} ‘The Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King.’ Transcription in Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition.’
\textsuperscript{222} Despard to Sydney, August 24, 1787, CO 123/5, and Edward Marcus Despard, ‘A Narrative of the Publick Transactions in the Bay of Honduras from 1784 to 1790,’ March 8, 1791, CO 123/10, quoted in Linebaugh and Rediker, \textit{Many-Headed Hydra}, 270-271.
people]; and that these people of colour were as much entitled to places to live as the first Mahogany Cutters in the Country.”

The distance between Despard’s actions and the norms of the time with regard to relations between Europeans and coloured people give us an insight into Despard Caribbean experiences. His actions suggest that he sought to treat free coloured men equally with their white counterparts. This egalitarian approach was perhaps a result of his close interaction with enslaved and free coloured men and women in military, civil and domestic settings throughout his years in the Caribbean. As a military engineer in Jamaica, Despard’s work depended upon the labour of enslaved men. In the Black River expedition, he had commanded a troop which included eighty American Rangers (quite likely enslaved or free coloured men), other “free people of colour and negroes,” as well as some six hundred “Mosquito Indians.” We also know that by the time he was Superintendent in Honduras, he was living with a coloured woman. This in itself was not unusual, but the role Catherine played in supporting him through his imprisonment and trial in London reveals that she was an intelligent woman of great courage and tenacity. By acting on his egalitarian principles in Honduras, Despard demonstrated the high regard he had developed for his coloured counterparts over the course of decades of working alongside them in the Caribbean.

223 Despard to Sydney, August 24, 1787, CO 123/5, and Edward Marcus Despard, ‘A Narrative of the Publick Transactions in the Bay of Honduras from 1784 to 1790,’ March 8, 1791, CO 123/10, quoted in Linebaugh and Rediker, Many-Headed Hydra, 270-271.
224 ‘Jamaica, October 10, 1782,’ London Gazette, November 30, 1782.
225 Linebaugh and Rediker, Many-Headed Hydra, 281.
Daniel O’Meara also commanded enslaved and free coloured men, first in his own corps of Rangers, and then in the WIR. There are no sources to reveal to us O’Meara’s view of his troops, but the circumstances in which his corps of rangers was created illustrates the impact of war and revolution at ground level in the Caribbean. Through O’Meara’s service in St. Lucia, we can see the effect of the French Revolution playing out in both the French and British militaries; in response to the revolutionary French Army’s use of enslaved and creole men in their ranks, the British Army sought to formalise its use of enslaved and creole soldiers. When news of the French Revolution reached St. Lucia, a prosperous sugar island, the free inhabitants divided into royalist and ‘patriot’ factions, and the enslaved population began to contemplate revolt. In 1794, a British force took St. Lucia—or at least took control of the island’s main defensive post at Morne Fortuné, while French troops remained in control of many of the other batteries or fortified posts on the island. Royalist French planters were forced to leave the island, leaving their enslaved workers to melt into the hills to fight alongside the remaining French (republican) troops. In mid-1794, Lieutenant General Sir Charles Grey noted that “the Brigands being numerous in the Woods, must be rooted out,” which he proposed doing by raising corps of 250 men to be called “Island Rangers.” O’Meara’s Rangers was one of these corps. Sir John Vaughan, the British commander in chief of the British Army in the Windward and Leeward Islands also wrote to Dundas, noting the fundamental change wrought by revolutionary France’s use of black soldiers—he argued that Britain was no longer competing on “equal terms,”

227 Gaspar, ‘La Guerre des Bois,’ 104.
228 Grey to Dundas, April 29, 1794, no.21 (“secret”), CO 318/13, quoted in Gaspar, ‘La Guerre des Bois,’ 104.
since operations in places like St. Lucia now demanded a type of warfare which "our Troops are not formed to execute."229 Vaughan argued that the answer was "opposing Blacks to Blacks."230

When Vaughan finally got his way, Rainsford (among others) was appointed to recruit for the new WIR. We know little of his experiences in recruiting for the WIR, but Rainsford’s publications make clear that like Despard, he developed a measure of respect for his coloured counterparts, particularly for Toussaint L’ouverture. At the time of Rainsford’s visit to St. Domingo, the island was in a state of flux, which (at least on Rainsford’s account) permitted him a level of freedom to move about in the French controlled space—albeit posing as an American rather than as a British soldier. As already noted, he was struck by the apparent equality between Europeans and the formerly enslaved in Cape François, and by the discipline displayed by Toussaint’s military, at least initially. Jamaica, Britain’s main holding in the Caribbean is physically very close to St. Domingo, yet Rainsford’s rendering of his adventures evokes St. Domingo as a far-off, isolated place. He evoked the revolutionary distance between the two, rather than the physical distance. Unlike many contemporary observers, Rainsford did not conjure the possibility of revolutionary contagion. By rendering St. Domingo as a place apart, he seems to confirm that what occurred there was entirely ‘foreign’ to Britain and its colonies—a result of French mis-management which could be avoided in British colonies. Rainsford acknowledged that his assessment of the risk revolutionary St. Domingo posed

to Britain, and the high regard in which he held Toussaint, were “hostile to received opinions.”\textsuperscript{231} It is this tension between Rainsford’s view and that of his contemporaries which illuminates his experience of the Caribbean. Although he abhorred the destruction and violence that ensured in St. Domingo, he maintained that what he encountered was a society which posed no military threat to Britain, and which was embarking upon a new path towards equality. The question which remains is how he reconciled his respect for the new St. Domingo with his ongoing support (at that stage) for the slave trade and slavery.

The life stories of Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara illustrate the way that a military career enabled Irishmen to travel throughout the interdependent and interrelated European imperial outposts in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary era.\textsuperscript{232} For the three soldiers in this chapter, the military was at once the absolute space within which they lived, and the network at the core of their careers. In assessing the “diverse and mobile imperial career” of Scottish soldier and revolutionary Gregor MacGregor, Matthew Brown has shown that the armed forces could be more than the ‘military melting pot’ which many historians have evoked.\textsuperscript{233} In addition to being given space and time to coalesce in the melting pot, Brown argues that the identities of soldiers, sailors and officers were “formulated and reformulated as the armed services moved

\textsuperscript{231} Rainsford, \textit{Memoir}, 22.
\textsuperscript{233} Brown, ‘Gregor MacGregor,’ 56-57.
through and across imperial spaces.” This phenomenon marks the experiences of Despard and Rainsford (and perhaps O’Meara too); even though all three remained loyal to the British crown through their military careers, and did not switch allegiances as MacGregor did. Rainsford’s development from military recruiter to commentator on the new ‘Black Empire,’ and eventually to representative of the new nation of Haiti demonstrates a re-imagination of his role in society over time, influenced no doubt by his adventures in St. Domingo. (We must of course acknowledge an element of opportunism in Rainsford’s actions, as is the case for many of the men in this thesis.) Similarly, Despard’s trajectory from military engineer to egalitarian administrator must owe something to the different physical environments he circulated through, as well as the networks he developed in each new location.

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates the diversity of the Irish military experience of empire, as well as some commonalities. The most striking finding has been the centrality of race to the three soldiers’ experiences in the Caribbean. On one level, this is hardly surprising. However, it is not often reflected in the historiography of British military experience. The connections that the soldiers all made across colour lines, and the different systems of life to which they were exposed in the Caribbean, influenced the way they saw the world.

234 Brown, ‘Gregor MacGregor,’ 57.
The men’s experiences also emphasize that to be Irish, even Catholic, and loyal to the British crown were by no means in tension. Irish service in the British Army has often been presented as a paradox, but Catriona Kennedy has argued that there is no evidence for this—a finding which is also borne out in my study of Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara. It seems likely that Daniel O’Meara was Catholic (on the basis of his relatives’ flight to France), but he served in the British military until his retirement, and his son continued the military tradition by enlisting with the British Army too. We have no reflections in their own voices, but it is likely that the experience of combat and campaign encouraged the soldiers I have studied to identify deeply with the institutional reputation of the British Army. On Kennedy’s account, to be a British soldier did not preclude loyalty to Ireland too. O’Meara retired to Ireland, although it is entirely possible that Despard may have returned there too, if events had not overtaken him. The mobility the soldiers’ careers afforded them allowed them—particularly Despard and Rainsford—to explore their own identities and loyalties, but ultimately (to borrow Despard’s words) each served his “country faithfully, honourably, and usefully.”

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236 Angus, A Particular Account of the...unfortunate Colonel Despard.
In 1802, Captain Leeson Blackwood, an Irish officer in the 7th West India Regiment, set off from his Antiguan garrison for Trinidad, determined to leave his military life behind and “turn sugar planter.”¹ The 7th was one of the six West India Regiments which had been disbanded by the British government following the Treaty of Amiens.² Blackwood engaged in some unspecified “speculation” which netted a substantial profit of over £1,000. Together with funds from his wealthy brother back in Ireland, he purchased 600 acres of “excellent land in a sea side situation” in Trinidad, and “about a dozen slaves” who were immediately set to work clearing the land and preparing it for use as a plantation.³ While in Trinidad, the Irishman enjoyed the hospitality of one of the island’s premier sugar planters, John Black, originally from Belfast, who owned the Barataria plantation—it is from Black’s letters that we can glean these small insights into Blackwood’s Trinidadian venture. Black was only too pleased to open his home to Irish visitors; he wrote to his brother in Ireland of his pleasure at discussing “all our friends from the North,” and recounted that his guest had “made this house his home and dined with us at all times when tired of hard living with the military and wished to cool down en famille.”⁴ Black cautioned the young man against selling his British Army commission

¹ John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
² Roger Buckley, “The Early History of the West India Regiments 1795-1815” (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 1975), 209. Under the Treaty of Amiens, Britain agreed to return all its conquests in the Caribbean to their previous imperial powers, with the exception of Trinidad.
(to succeed as a planter required considerable funds, and Blackwood was largely dependent upon his brother); however, it seems that Blackwood persevered with his plan to turn planter.\textsuperscript{5} He remained in Trinidad, but died not long after.\textsuperscript{6}

Blackwood was just one of the many young Irishmen who passed through John Black’s home in Trinidad over the years. Black’s letters contain many such glimpses of life in the British Caribbean. The people and experiences he related in his letters illustrate the interactions between the different spaces in the Caribbean, as well as the importance of visitors from Ireland. Just as we saw in Chapter One, military life was not cordoned off from civilian life in the Caribbean. Military men (albeit largely the officer class) interacted with planters and merchants, sometimes engaging in their own business ventures, or as in Blackwood’s case, embarking upon plantation life. One such Irish officer, Captain James Graves, married Black’s eldest daughter Marguerite.\textsuperscript{7}

Visitors from ‘home’ kept connections between the Caribbean and Ireland alive. In the same letter to his brother which related Blackwood’s visit, Black

\begin{itemize}
\item[3] John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
\item[4] John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
\item[6] Blackwood’s older brother, James Stevenson Blackwood, is noted in the LBSO Database as owner of North (or New) Union estate in Trinidad, with 16 enslaved people in 1822. Perhaps this was the estate bought or founded by Leeson Blackwood and bequeathed to his brother James on his death.
\item[7] Graves was born in Ireland in 1775, the son of Thomas Graves, a clergyman in the Church of Ireland. Graves served with the 14\textsuperscript{th} (Bedfordshire) Regiment in Europe (including at Waterloo), before
pondered a return to Ireland. In the end he dismissed the possibility. After many years in the Caribbean he believed a man “can never brook living anywhere else.” Black had become accustomed to “good West India hospitality in which all formality and ceremony has been long abolished.”

This chapter will draw upon the Caribbean lives of John Black and Samuel Watt. The latter worked as a commission agent and merchant in Barbados and Jamaica. Both men wrote to family back in Ireland during their years in the Caribbean, primarily to their brothers. The letters, which touch upon personal, family, business and political matters, provide insights into the complex world they inhabited. The focus in this chapter on Watt and Black is not to suggest that the two men necessarily led similar lives. Rather, they illustrate diverse aspects of commercial life in the British Caribbean; Watt had no desire to take on the life of a planter, nor to involve himself in colonial administration. In contrast, Black progressed through a series of commercial ventures during his working life and played an active role in public life in Grenada and Trinidad. Their experiences in the Caribbean, which were inflected by their Irish identities and networks, enable an exploration of the relationship between their Irish identity and the social structures within which they fashioned their Caribbean lives. In order to achieve commercial success (or simply to remain afloat), and survive in an unfamiliar environment, Black and Watt built networks within the overlapping systems of life in the Caribbean—slavery, British imperial spaces, the mercantile community, and (particularly in the


8 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
case of John Black) with other imperial powers in the region. Both men manoeuvred within and outside these spaces with varying degrees of success.

John Black hailed from a prosperous Presbyterian merchant family based in Belfast but with branches around the Atlantic world, including Dublin, Bordeaux, Nova Scotia and Cadiz. Black’s grandfather and uncles had investigated the business opportunities available in Grenada after the Seven Years’ War, so it was to Grenada that the young man embarked in the early 1770s. After a few years in Grenada, he moved to Spanish Trinidad, where he took on the business of running a sugar plantation and involved himself in the administrative life of the colony under Spanish, and then British control. The primary source material on Black is enriched by the fact that the tumultuous early years of British rule in Trinidad were the subject of much commentary, particularly when the former Governor Picton was sensationaly tried in London for the torture of Louisa Calderon, a young woman in Trinidad. As an established member of Trinidad’s planter community, Black was closely involved in the administration of the island in the first years of the nineteenth century. He survived the political fallout of Picton’s tenure and remained on the island until his death in 1837.

Samuel Watt left his hometown of Ramelton in Donegal in 1800 as a young man, to embark upon a career as a commission agent in Barbados. His family

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9 John Fielding Black, ‘Annotated Index (1950) to the Black Family Papers, 1738-1837, MSS49125-49227,’ Huntington Library. J.F. Black’s annotation regarding a letter dated December 21, 1764 “...he is interested in the sale of a plantation in Granada (sic), recently ceded to Great Britain by the “Peace” (English and French and Indian Wars). A Longuedoc gentleman, apparently is interesting John Black IV in Bordeaux to acquire the property. He talks of some sort of exchange of the Blamont house for the
was in the linen business, and his mother was from the wealthy Delap family.\textsuperscript{10} Watt initially went to Barbados with Alexander Hall, also from Ramelton, a well-established plantation owner and merchant. Much to his family’s horror, Watt accompanied Hall to Demerara soon after his arrival in the Caribbean, but he returned to the safer commercial waters of Barbados and settled into life in the counting house. In Barbados, and then Jamaica, Watt joined at least three partnerships, one of which almost resulted in his bankruptcy. He eventually returned to Donegal in the 1820s, perhaps reluctantly, and died not long after in 1826.

As Orla Power has observed, in tracing the paths taken by Irish people as they moved beyond Ireland, historians are often faced with the deep complexities inherent in the concept of ‘Irishness.’\textsuperscript{11} Power’s research on the Irish diaspora at the Caribbean island of St. Croix has revealed that the community was by no means a homogenous group—despite their many commonalities. The connections that existed between Irish migrants did not always represent “friendship, solidarity or belonging.”\textsuperscript{12} Barry Crosbie’s exploration of Irish men and women in India also confirms that the Irish were not a homogenous group. Nonetheless, he found that Irish men and women—who were divided by religious and political considerations at home in Ireland—were drawn together

\footnotesize{Granada plantation, but advised great care and caution.” See also letters from John Black, Belfast to Alexander and James Black, London between January 1, 1765 and August 2, 1766, PRONI D719/75-78. 
\textsuperscript{10} Watt’s mother was from a Donegal branch of the Delap family. The family had made money as wine merchants, used their wealth to acquire a large plantation in Antigua, and moved to London: Nini Rodgers, \textit{Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: 1612–1865} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 85.
\textsuperscript{12} Power, ‘Friend, Foe or Family?’ 30.}
in the colonial context by a “common imperial bond.”

Crosbie describes this as the “coexisting layers of identities” of Irish men and women during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This chapter employs the notion of ‘coexisting layers of identity,’ and also considers the way in which Irishmen navigated the perception that they and their compatriots were a homogenous group. As this chapter will demonstrate, Black (perhaps more so than Watt) took advantage of the complexity inherent in Irish identity, as he manoeuvred within and around imperial networks—displaying flexibility as to how he presented himself to those around him. The question underlying this chapter is, then, whether this flexibility was a marker of the Irish experience of empire?

**Mercantile and Plantation Life in the British Caribbean**

The backdrop to Samuel Watt and John Black’s Caribbean lives encompasses mercantile culture, patronage and networks, and plantation slavery. Each of these elements has a discrete historiography, but as Irish commercial connections with the Caribbean have been covered in the Introduction to this thesis, this review will focus on the operation of mercantile culture and networks in the lives of ‘men of business.’ Watt and Black’s connections with slavery will be covered over the course of the chapter.

The pioneering work of economic historians Pares, Dunn and Sheridan last century traced the way that successful merchants and planters operated their enterprises and transitioned from Caribbean-based operatives to absentee

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plantation owners based in England or Scotland. Scholars of eighteenth-century British Atlantic business culture continue to build upon the work of Pares et al., by scrutinising the business records of merchant houses in detail, with the resulting scholarship focusing on networks, patronage, and the availability of credit—all issues of great concern to men like Watt and Black.

In her 2012 monograph, Sheryllynne Haggerty examined business culture in the British Atlantic economy between 1750 and 1815, drawing upon case studies of Liverpool merchants. She argued that merchants in the British Atlantic world were by no means a homogenous group, but that their prospects for success were predicated upon their participation in a “relatively homogenous, commonly understood and conformed-to business culture.” That business culture incorporated a common understanding of concepts of risk, trust, and reputation, and the strength of commercial networks. A crucial factor in mercantile success was an understanding of the various types of risks all merchants faced, from natural disaster, to untrustworthy or incompetent

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17 Haggerty, *Merely for Money?*

partners, and geopolitical factors. Merchants could ameliorate the hazards of transatlantic commerce through knowledge, experience, and networks of personal connections. For example, entering into a partnership (as both Watt and Black did), reduced risk by providing access to finance, knowledge, expertise and skills.

Personal trust was paramount in the Atlantic world in which Watt and Black transacted business. Even when confidence was dented by wars and credit crises, and trust in institutions wavered, merchants around the Atlantic continued to do business. Personal trust was vital during times of crisis, such as the Revolutionary era. Reputation was intimately connected with trust; and merchants’ access to credit depended upon their reputation. To have a good reputation and to be ‘creditable,’ a businessman required excellent financial management, judgement and integrity. Watt and Black communicated frequently with their brothers in Ireland as a means of managing their reputation with their business counterparts there. At times during their careers, their reputations were called into question, requiring intensive rehabilitation efforts. In 1816, after the failure of his partnership with a Mr Cummings in Jamaica, Watt travelled to London to avert bankruptcy proceedings and to repair his personal relationships with correspondents and creditors. Black was involved in at least two court cases (detailed later in this

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20 Haggerty, ‘Merely for Money’? 45.
21 Haggerty, ‘Merely for Money’? 96.
22 Zacek, review of ‘Merely for Money’?
chapter) which would have called into question his judgement and integrity, and he was also tainted by his association with Governor Picton, whose London court case was a very public affair. A sense of morality pervaded eighteenth-century business culture; merchants worked within a framework of what they considered to be correct conduct. As will be explored in this chapter, Black was involved in the slave trade in Grenada and Trinidad—but this in itself would not have raised moral concerns at that time. Rather, it was the way in which merchants like Black bought enslaved Africans from transatlantic ships for resale to other islands which was considered morally questionable. By engaging in resale, these merchants drove up prices and effectively undersold their Liverpool and Bristol counterparts.

Business and personal networks played a crucial role in ameliorating risk, building trust and managing reputation. As is evident in the letters of Watt and Black, these networks usually overlapped and intertwined. Albane Forestier’s study of the personal and business correspondence of John Pinney traces the way that he and his partner developed a successful Bristol/West Indian merchant house. Pinney expertly managed various co-existing networks of “friendships;” but the term “friend” could be applied to kin, companions and close relations, as well as a wide range of unrelated supporters, such as patrons, guardians and employers. Most attention in work on merchant networks in the past has been on the role of kinship, but Haggerty and Forrestier both noted the potential limitations of family networks (including

26 Haggerty, ‘Merely for Money’ 164.
simply missing out on other, non-family, opportunities), as well as the
dynamic nature of networks.\textsuperscript{28} Merchants frequently developed new networks,
and lost existing ties, thus demonstrating that networks change over time.\textsuperscript{29}
Forestier’s study revealed the continued importance of friendship and
community.\textsuperscript{30} In this she reinforced Douglas Hamilton’s work on networks
between Scotland and the West Indies. Hamilton found that geographical
factors, based on physical proximity, took precedence over direct blood ties,
and that Scottish migrants developed networks with individuals coming from
the same locality.\textsuperscript{31} Craig Bailey’s research on professional networks also
confirms the adherence to networks based on geographical location. He found
that ethnicity could be an effective means of counteracting the risks of
patronage in unfamiliar settings.\textsuperscript{32} All of these elements are evident in the
letters Watt and Black wrote—both placed great importance on their family
networks, and on connections with other men from the north of Ireland. But
both also gradually broadened their networks around the Atlantic world, and
in Black’s case, across imperial ‘borders.’

\textbf{Samuel Watt}

The collection of letters on which Samuel Watt’s biography is based spans 25
years. It begins with a letter Watt wrote to his brother from Liverpool on the
eve of his departure for Barbados, and ends with a series of letters from his
nephew and business partners in Jamaica as they concluded Watt’s affairs

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Forestier, ‘Risk, Kinship and Personal Relationships,’ 918.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Forestier, ‘Risk, Kinship and Personal Relationships,’ 927.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Haggerty, \textit{Merely for Money}?, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Forestier, ‘Risk, Kinship and Personal Relationships,’ 927.
\end{itemize}
after his death in 1826.\textsuperscript{33} Samuel was the second son of James Watt, a “substantial middle-man” in Ramelton, a port town on the shores of Lough Swilly in County Donegal.\textsuperscript{34} James Watt had real estate, agricultural and mercantile interests, which included linen production, the dominant industry in Ramelton.\textsuperscript{35} Watt’s mother was well-connected; he travelled to the Caribbean with an introduction to his uncle Robert Delap (the proprietor of a Jamaican sugar plantation), and he had also met with another Delap relative (also named Samuel) in Liverpool.\textsuperscript{36} Watt made it clear, however, that he was unlikely to take up the Delaps’ offers of patronage, as he “did not much like to embark” upon “the planter business.”\textsuperscript{37} He wrote to his brother James that “the bustle of a town and the regulations of a counting house please me better than the directions of the ‘cow skin’.”\textsuperscript{38} Rather than availing himself of his Delap connections in the plantation business, Watt suggested that the only favour he would ask of his relatives was that they “procure for me a few letters of some of the London or Liverpool merchants.”\textsuperscript{39} Watt was well aware of the need to broaden his commercial network if he was to succeed as a merchant—and in his trade (linen), London was key.\textsuperscript{40}

Nini Rodgers profiled Samuel Watt in her chapter on nineteenth-century “Sojourners, Slaves and Stipendiaries” in \textit{Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery},
but there is no further scholarship based on his correspondence.\textsuperscript{41} For Rodgers, Watt exemplified the sojourner, “the most consistent and pervasive Irish presence in the West Indies...a figure who ensured that Hibernian links were regularly renewed.”\textsuperscript{42} As she noted, sojourners were frequently succeeded by family members from the next generation as Caribbean contacts were “hotly pursued and fostered” from generation to generation.\textsuperscript{43} This was the case in Watt’s family, as a brother (David) and a nephew (James, also known as John) joined him in the Caribbean during his stay.\textsuperscript{44} Watt’s correspondence provides a glimpse into the world of a middling-successful Caribbean merchant. Although the correspondence is at times intermittent and is only one-way (only the letters sent to Ireland are extant), the letters justify further examination. They illuminate not only the quotidian aspects of the merchant’s life, but also the precariousness of business partnerships in the early decades of the nineteenth century; the role of Irish networks; and attitudes towards abolition.

Watt travelled from Ramelton to Barbados under the patronage of the Hall family. He was close to Alexander Hall, a merchant in Barbados, who owned estates there and in Demerara.\textsuperscript{45} Alexander’s brothers soon employed Watt as a clerk in their partnership in Bridgetown (known as ‘George and David Hall’).\textsuperscript{46} Watt’s early letters to his family suggest that in addition to his employment as a clerk, he was pursuing opportunities for himself as a

\textsuperscript{41} Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 82-94.  
\textsuperscript{42} Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 82.  
\textsuperscript{43} Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 82.  
\textsuperscript{44} Samuel Watt’s father, his eldest brother, and his nephew were all called James. This nephew was also known as John. I have tried throughout to make clear whether I am referring to Samuel’s father, brother or nephew. Most of Samuel’s letters were written to his brother James.  
merchant and commission agent. He traded on his own account, taking consignments of linen and provisions (including butter) from his family for sale in Barbados, and remitting produce (including rum, sugar and coffee) to them in Ireland.\textsuperscript{47} Trading on his own account, and as an agent for clients, would have involved Watt taking responsibility for receiving goods off ships, paying customs duties, warehousing and selling the goods consigned to his care. Watt was somewhat cautious; he reported to his father in 1803 that he had “as yet made nothing and, thank God I owe nothing,” but that his salary of £100 currency permitted him to put aside some savings.\textsuperscript{48} In the same letter he wrote (perhaps writing what his father wished to hear) that “although I am very anxious to get forward I considered it better to acquire the character of being steady and attentive” so that he “will always be able to get a place in any Counting House in this Island.”\textsuperscript{49} In 1806, the Hall brothers made Watt a partner in their business for a term of three years, perhaps in acknowledgement of the business he had been transacting whilst a clerk and his expanding mercantile network.\textsuperscript{50} 

During his time in partnership with the Halls, Watt travelled to London, at one point even considering remaining there and giving up his Caribbean career altogether.\textsuperscript{51} London had long played a central role in Ireland’s transatlantic

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\textsuperscript{46} Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 84.
\textsuperscript{47} For example, in a letter to his brother dated April 12, 1801, Watt referred to the fact that he was waiting on linens sent by his uncle; in a letter to his younger brother dated April 19, 1801, he instructed his brother how to make out the invoices which accompanied the Irish linen shipments and discussed sending rum to Ireland in return. In a letter to his brother James dated July 31, 1804 he discussed low-cost linens and butter. PRONI, MIC135/1.
\textsuperscript{48} Samuel Watt, Barbados to James Watt, Ramelton, March 9, 1803, PRONI MIC135/1.
\textsuperscript{49} Samuel Watt, Barbados to James Watt, Ramelton, March 9, 1803, PRONI MIC135/1.
\textsuperscript{50} Samuel Watt, Barbados to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, February 3, 1806, PRONI MIC135/1.
\textsuperscript{51} Samuel Watt, London to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, April 1, 1808, PRONI MIC135/1.
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There was a well-established community of resident merchants in London who represented the interests of linen and provisions producers and exporters in Ireland and expatriate Irish businessmen in Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas. Indeed, Watt drew upon London firms for some of the bills of exchange he sent to his family. According to Thomas Truxes’ research on London’s Irish merchant community in the mid-eighteenth century, most Irish merchants in London had some connection with linen, and the community was “strikingly” northern in character. Watt’s Donegal connections would have afforded him an entrée into this community.

Given that networks were inherently personal in nature and took time to develop by means of personal contacts, it is no surprise to find frequent requests for introductions in Watt’s letters. For example, in 1802 he asked his brother to mention him to his contacts at Stewart’s of Baltimore, as “I know a number of the Baltimore merchants transact business here.” Watt also returned time and again in his letters to contacts from Ireland, and even then, to regional northern Irish contacts. As already noted, he initially worked with the Hall brothers, from his hometown in Donegal. The two further partnerships Watt joined during his career were also with Irish partners. Watt’s letters to his family often mentioned the mutual acquaintances he encountered in Barbados and Jamaica—some more welcome than others. He complained in 1802 that “I have been tormented with a Ramelton man by the

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54 Truxes, ‘London’s Irish Merchant Community and North Atlantic Commerce,’ 279.
55 Samuel Watt, Barbados to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, March 19, 1802, PRONI MIC135/1.
name of ‘Sheales’.”  

In Jamaica, Watt encountered Delap cousins, and contacts from Derry and Donegal, including his wealthiest and most prestigious client, Hamilton Brown, from County Antrim. Watt’s network adapted over time, but retained a strong Irish hue—attributable partly to the fact that his business interests in the Caribbean were almost always focused on Ireland’s commerce with the Caribbean and North America.

During his Caribbean years, Watt’s family in Ireland urged him intermittently to change course from his mercantile career to become a planter. He discussed the possibility of moving to Jamaica for many years before doing so, but he was adamant that the move would not precipitate a career change. He wrote as early as 1802 that if he were to go to Jamaica, he would not go to his uncle’s “part of the country; Kingston would be the place for me.” In 1802, in response to a question from his brother about a mutual friend who worked on a plantation, Watt wrote that “as to his employment on Sunday it is the case with all people in his present situation over all the West Indies; the slaves themselves have every Sunday but the book keeper or more properly called the turnkey (for some of them never put pen to paper) is constantly confined, whilst everyone else is either praying or carousing.”

In 1808, Watt moved to Jamaica. He entered into partnership with a Mr Cummings, but the venture ended in financial disaster. Cummings invested heavily in sugar and coffee from Cuba at highly speculative prices—Watt

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56 Samuel Watt, Barbados, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, July 6, 1802, PRONI MIC135/1.
58 Samuel Watt, Barbados, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, November 30, 1802, PRONI MIC135/1.
estimated the loss to the partnership at “upwards of £50,000 and all this in the space of nine months.” He travelled to London and Ireland to negotiate settlements with his creditors; one of which (Barrow & Co.) had commenced legal proceedings against him. Watt reported to his brother that he feared he “must try and clear myself of them by recourse to the bankrupt law,” a development he found a most “distressing circumstance.” A circular letter printed by Watt in London in February 1816, however, indicates that he managed to negotiate a settlement, thus avoiding personal bankruptcy. The damage to his reputation was clear, however; in the circular he entreated his network to trust him to “bring the House again into that repute which it long held under my management, for integrity, punctuality and stability.” The fallout from the collapse of Watt’s partnership with Cummings reverberated for some time, in London, Jamaica and Ireland. In 1818, Watt thanked his brother “for the kind and good offices you have been doing me in Belfast... I am well aware that the friends of Cumming have been endeavouring to keep up his character at the expense of both mine and truth but time will tell and open the eyes of those who have been deceived.”

In the midst of this turbulent time, Watt was deeply saddened by the death of his younger brother David, who had joined him in Jamaica. On Watt’s account, David died “after scarcely three days illness...although everything was done that could be thought of to preserve his valuable life, his sickness was brought

59 Samuel Watt, Barbados, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, December 27, 1802, PRONI MIC135/1.  
60 Samuel Watt, Barbados, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, May 21, 1816, PRONI MIC135/1.  
on by his prescribing for himself; even I did not know it until too late.” 65 Watt’s correspondence for his final decade in Jamaica was sparse—whether this was because he wrote less, or the letters have been lost is unknown. Later correspondence and archival research confirms that during that decade Watt was joined in Kingston by his nephew James (also known as John) Watt; and that he joined a partnership with two Belfast men, McDowell and Cramsie. 66 Watt learned of his father’s death in late 1824, and within six months he left Jamaica for Ireland, equipped with introductions to visit merchants in Philadelphia, New York, New Brunswick, Quebec and Norfolk en route. Watt eventually returned to Ireland but died not long after in 1826. His business partners in Jamaica wrote to Watt’s elder brother James in Ramelton “with painful feelings and deep regret” over his death. Watt died in Ireland, which, as his partners noted “is seldom the case of any of those which reside a few years in these colonies.” 67

The overarching milieu of Caribbean society was plantation slavery. 68 Although Watt’s career as a merchant may have given the appearance of some distance from the quotidian reality of plantation slavery, he was in fact a slave-owner, and his mercantile career was an essential element in the maintenance of the apparatus of plantation slavery. Watt never mentioned the fact that he owned enslaved Africans in any of his surviving letters, but the 1820 ‘Return of Slaves in Jamaica’ indicates that he owned three young boys and three adults

64 Samuel Watt, Kingston, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, December 26, 1816, PRONI MIC135/1.
65 Samuel Watt, Kingston, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, August 17, 1816, PRONI MIC135/1.
67 Samuel Watt, Barbados, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, May 8, 1826, PRONI MIC135/1.
as “owner,” four adults as attorney for an absentee slave-holder, and one adult as “committee for James McFall, a lunatic.”

When he left Jamaica in 1825, his slaveholding amounted to at least seven adults and three children. His nephew John was charged with “the sale of the negroes” after Watt’s departure; the process was protracted, and John wrote to his uncle on more than one occasion of his difficulty in selling them “as the prices you put on them are considered too much,” and that “it is rather difficult to sell negroes now.” Ultimately, John suggested that the unsold slaves be transferred to his ownership, which his father (Watt’s brother) agreed to. In the records of the British Commissioners of Slave Compensation, John Watt received over £100 compensation for nine enslaved people—which quite likely included some of those people originally owned by his uncle Samuel. The firm of Cramsie, McDowell and Watt claimed compensation for a further 46 slaves (37 were associated with the Ellerslie Estate owned by the firm)—they received compensation of almost £1,000.

As already noted, the enslaved people in Watt’s life were absent from his letters, but an exchange between Watt’s nephew John and his brother James in a letter after Watt’s death, tells the story of one of these slaves—a man named

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70 John Watt to, Kingston to Samuel Watt, August 6, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.
71 John Watt to, Kingston to Samuel Watt, September 14, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.
72 John Watt, Kingston to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, December 3, 1827, PRONI MIC135/1.
James. Watt’s brother in Ireland inquired after James, evidently having met him when he accompanied Watt at some point on a trip to Ireland. Watt’s nephew John confirmed that James had since died “from a rapid decline brought on from excessive drinking.” Very little research has been done on Africans in eighteenth-century Ireland, but a preliminary survey published by W.A. Hart in 2002 concluded that Africans were not an altogether unusual sight in eighteenth-century Ireland. Hart noted that travelling in the company of a slave perhaps imbued the West Indian traveller with a “certain social cachet,” but that it was not necessarily unusual.

Abolition and the anti-slavery movement loom large in Watt’s letters, particularly around 1807. His commentary on the subject hints at an ongoing debate on the issue with his brother in Ireland. In 1804, Watt argued that although when “our forefathers” established the trade, it was “certainly then an improper one but now for the sake of humanity alone we ought to continue it.” In his view, European slave-traders had saved the lives of “many of these wretched creatures,” who would otherwise have been slaves, or prisoners, or put to death “in their country wars.” By 1807, however, he had conceded that “total abolition...I will grant is a humane good law.” He noted the planters

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75 John Watt, Kingston to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, January 5, 1829, PRONI MIC135/1.
76 Mark Doyle recently confirmed that Hart’s work is still the only systematic study of non-Europeans in eighteenth-century Ireland: Mark Doyle, ‘Those the Empire Washed Ashore: Uncovering Ireland’s Multiracial Past,’ in Ireland in an Imperial World: Citizenship, Opportunism, and Subversion, ed. Timothy G. McMahon, Michael de Nie, Paul Townend (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 51. In the chapter, Doyle made some suggestions as to how historians might build upon Hart’s work, taking cues from historians who have in recent years researched African and Asian communities in Britain.
78 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, September 20, 1804, PRONI MIC135/1.
79 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, September 20, 1804, PRONI MIC135/1.
nonetheless maintained the view that it was “a damned impolitic one.” He also scorned the hypocrisy of the slaveholders among the political class in Whitehall, “I should like to know how often they have been bought and sold by Mr. Pitt and his successors.” As we know from Nini Rodgers’ work, anti-slavery was never a large-scale movement in Ireland, but it had, at times, enthusiastic and influential supporters. It is imprudent to guess at James Watt’s view, but Watt’s letters do suggest that there was some back and forth between the brothers on the question.

On the final reckoning of Watt’s Caribbean life, one of his business partners wrote to Watt’s bereaved brother James in Ireland that “as it has turned out, it is unfortunate that your brother was not more communicative respecting his private affairs than he was” as it had placed his nephew John “in an awkward situation.” In addition to working with his uncle’s executor to resolve his uncle’s debts, and sell his assets (including a horse, his run-down Kingston townhouse, and his slaves), John was confronted by his uncle’s personal life. Watt never married, but he had a relationship with a woman named Palmyra in Kingston, presumably an African or creole woman. The scarce references to her in the correspondence give no hint as to whether she was enslaved or free. In response to an enquiry from Watt after he left Jamaica, John wrote that soon after Samuel had left, “Mr. Cramsie got into her good graces and they have been man and wife nearly these four months and live apparently happy

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80 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, June 20, 1807, PRONI MIC135/1.
81 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, June 20, 1807, PRONI MIC135/1.
82 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 2.
83 McDonald, Watt & Ramsay, Kingston to James Watt, Ramelton, May 8, 1826, PRONI MIC135/1.
84 John Watt, Kingston, to Samuel Watt, November 28, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.
enough but she continues delicate and not likely to fulfil the proverb ‘increase and multiply’.”

This is somewhat cryptic. Was she an enslaved woman, which meant that any children she might bear would be of monetary value to her owner? The relationship itself was not unusual, despite the fact that Watt kept it from his family in Ireland. Daniel Livesay has argued that for most of the eighteenth century, interracial relationships were normative unions in Jamaica. Nini Rodgers postulated that Watt and Palmyra perhaps had a son together, as Watt’s nephew referred to a free coloured man in town, also by the name of John Watt.

Watt had returned to Ireland virtually empty-handed, and left debts in his wake in the Caribbean; but as Rodgers argues, there is no reason to suppose that he was any more inept than the average white sojourner. He had kept the West Indian end of his family’s business afloat for a quarter of a century, and had secured a Caribbean career for his nephew John—thus continuing the family enterprise. The final letter in the Watt collection at PRONI is from Watt’s nephew John to his father James in 1839—his Jamaican sojourn was at least as long as that of his uncle.

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85 John Watt, Kingston, to Samuel Watt, November 28, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.
86 No-one by the name of Palmyra is listed on the Slave Registers under Watt’s name.
88 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 91.
89 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 91.
John Black

The Black family was a prosperous merchant family of Aberdeen origin, which had entered trade as part of the emerging merchant community in late seventeenth-century Belfast.°° The family was integrated into the elite of Belfast in the eighteenth century through connections of marriage and apprenticeship and played a role in public administration.°°° They also had branches around the Atlantic world: in Dublin, Bordeaux, Cadiz, the Isle of Man, London and the West Indies. John Black constituted the West Indian branch; he was born in Belfast in 1753 and died in Trinidad in 1837.°°°° The family had developed a strong epistolary culture over many generations, which John Black continued after he left Ireland.°°°°° Nicholas Canny’s recent observations on the letter-writing style of John Black’s grandfather (also called John Black) provide some context for (Caribbean) John Black’s epistolary persona. A number of letters written by Black’s grandfather to family in Ireland were amongst the 125 letters which were being conveyed from Bordeaux to Dublin on board the Two Sisters when she was seized by a privateer in 1757. The letters were never delivered and languished in the prize court papers in London until they were opened in 2011. Canny rated John Black senior as one of the most opinionated of the Bordeaux correspondents, particularly in his

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°°° Livesey, Civil Society and Empire, 130.
°°°° Hereinafter referred to as “John Black.” In some literature, he is referred to as “John Black V” as the first-born son in each generation was named John.
°°°°° There are two collections of family letters in public institutions. PRONI holds letters spanning 1673 to 1868 (PRONI D719, D4457, D1401) and the Huntington Library has a smaller collection spanning 1738 to 1832 (MSS49125-49227). Some correspondence within the family network has been published in The Bordeaux-Dublin Letters, 1757: Correspondence of an Irish Community Abroad, ed. Louis Cullen, John Shovlin, and Thomas Truxes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). PRONI holds twenty letters written between 1797 and 1810 from John Black in Trinidad to his brother George in Belfast, and a further two letters he wrote in 1837, the year both men died. (PRONI D1950/37 & 38).
strident anti-Catholic views. Perhaps more interestingly for present purposes, Canny noted that Black was exceptional in expressing an interest in place.\textsuperscript{94} Caribbean John Black also penned vibrant letters which convey a strong sense of his Caribbean experience. It seems that he absorbed the epistolary tradition evident in his grandfather’s correspondence—hardly surprising in a family with members spread around the Atlantic world. The fact that many of the family’s letters survive is also testament to the value the family placed upon them.

Black embarked for the Caribbean as a young man in the mid-1770s.\textsuperscript{95} Sugar exports from Grenada had trebled during the first decade of British rule after the Treaty of Paris in 1763;\textsuperscript{96} and letters between Black’s grandfather and uncles indicate that the family was investigating the purchase of a plantation there shortly after the island was ceded to Britain.\textsuperscript{97} Whilst I have not found evidence of the purchase of a plantation by the family, it is clear that John Black lived in Grenada for some time, before moving to Trinidad in 1783, where he remained for the rest of his life.


\textsuperscript{95} It is uncertain exactly when he left Ireland, but clues from his later letters, and the correspondence between his grandfather and uncles places his departure around 1774. According to Michael Pocock, Black settled in Grenada in 1771, although his book cites no source for this: Michael R. Pocock, Out of the Shadows of the Past: The Story of the “Great House” of Champs Elysées, Maraval, and Account of the Lives and Times of the Families who lived in it 1780—1932 (1993).


\textsuperscript{97} Black, ‘Annotated Index (1950) to the Black Family Papers.’ J.F. Black’s annotation regarding a letter dated 21, Dec. 1764: “…he is interested in the sale of a plantation in Granada (sic), recently ceded to Great Britain by the “Peace” (English and French and Indian Wars). A Longuedoc gentleman, apparently is interesting John Black IV in Bordeaux to acquire the property. He talks of some sort of exchange of the Blamont house for the Granada plantation, but advised great care and caution.” See also: John Black, Belfast to Alexander Black, London, January 1, 1765, PRONI D719/75. John Black,
There is limited secondary scholarship on the Black family. Most recently, James Livesey devoted a chapter of *Civil Society and Empire* to the family, although he focused on earlier generations in Ireland and France, and made only passing reference to John Black in the Caribbean.\(^98\) The editors of *The Bordeaux-Dublin Letters* briefly discussed John Black’s grandfather, and as already noted, Nicholas Canny has provided some thoughtful insights into his letters.\(^99\) The only other scholarship on the family is a 1902 genealogical account published in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, and a history written by a descendant of the family in Trinidad.\(^100\) The primary source material on John Black is enriched by the fact that the tumultuous early years of British rule in Trinidad were the subject of much commentary, especially regarding Governor Picton’s time in office. By the time the British seized Trinidad in 1797, Black had established himself as a prominent member of Trinidadian society; as a result, he featured in contemporary accounts and early histories of British rule in Trinidad, as well as in more recent histories of the region.\(^101\)

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\(^98\) Livesey, *Civil Society and Empire*, 128-153.


Grenada

There are no letters written by John Black from Grenada amongst the surviving family correspondence, but traces of Black’s time there appear in the correspondence of Lord Macartney (Governor of Grenada 1776-1779), Black’s uncle Joseph, and in Black’s own letters later in life. Writing to his brother from Trinidad in 1799, Black recalled that in November 1776 he had “lost all my personal papers and books in the fire at Grenada,” and that three years later he had “lost all [his] linen and clothing by the plunder of the French soldiery,” presumably during the French capture of the island from Britain in 1779. On Macartney’s recommendation, Black was appointed to the Grenada Council in 1777; and he played a prominent role in the island’s militia, distinguishing himself in the attempted defence of Grenada in 1779.

Macartney was also from Ulster, and it is clear from Black’s letters (and those of his uncle Joseph) that the Black family was well-acquainted with him. Black’s uncle Joseph wrote in 1779 that John “I am told is in a very high way at Granada (sic) he is the Governour’s intimate Friend & companion and very much with him.” Back in Belfast, Black’s brother George acted as agent for

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102 John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, March 1, 1799, PRONI D1401/9.

Black referred to this appointment in a later letter to his brother: John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292. Note that Black later informed his brother that he was re-appointed to the Council after the colony was restored from French occupation to the British in 1783, although he left Grenada soon after the French interregnum ended.


Lord Macartney for a time. In an 1802 letter, Black wrote that he had served Macartney’s interests in his “younger days,” but that Macartney had not been able to recompense him due to the “premature capture of Grenada.” His calls on Macartney for favours were to become a regular feature of his correspondence with his brother George.

Whilst living in Grenada, John Black married a French creole woman, a widow by the name of Bonne Clotilde Fournillier, and they went on to have five daughters. Although it is uncertain where Black and Fournillier were married, a family by the name of Fournillier owned the sizeable Bacolet plantation in Grenada—which also had connections with the Black family. Grenadian plantation society during this period was firmly divided between British and French elements; and religion was a central element in the divide. The Black family were Ulster Presbyterians, but (as will become clear from a study of his letters), John Black’s religious practice was ambivalent; it is possible that his new wife’s was too. Mrs Black was a practicing Catholic in Trinidad, but research on the Fournilliers of Bacolet suggests that the family may have been of French Huguenot—thus Protestant—extraction.

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107 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
108 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
109 The plantation was examined in some detail by Seymour and Haggerty, due to the plantation’s financial connections with (and ultimately transfer of ownership to) Peter Thellusson, a wealthy financier: Seymour and Haggerty, ‘Slavery Connections of Brodsworth Hall.’ John Black’s uncle Joseph corresponded for many years with Alexander James Alexander of Bacolet in Grenada. Joseph provided John Black with a letter of introduction to Alexander in 1774: A. J. Alexander, Bacolet, Grenada to Joseph Black, latter half of 1774, in Correspondence, 1: 296.
111 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288. Seymour and Haggerty, ‘Slavery Connections of Brodsworth Hall,’ 42.
It is possible that Black and Fournillier married as Protestants in Grenada, but they went on to align themselves with the French planters there, many of whom also moved to Trinidad. Despite Black’s marriage to a woman who was possibly a member of the French creole elite of Grenada (and possibly Catholic), Black continued to benefit from Governor Macartney’s patronage. Indeed, in a letter written from Trinidad a few years after Macartney’s return to Ireland, Black asked his brother to pass on his respects to Lord and Lady Macartney, noting that Mrs Black was “well known to her Ladyship.”

The most striking documentary evidence related to Black’s decade in Grenada is a deposition he signed in 1777, in which he swore that a sloop he co-owned had sailed from Grenada to Trinidad “with 50 new Negroes for Tobago,” but that it had been captured three days into the journey. The deposition outlines the steps Black had taken to recover the vessel, including procuring French papers for the vessel—“a precaution which tho’ illegal this deponent thought very excusable at that time when so little fair play was going forward.” The story of the lost vessel and its cargo of enslaved Africans indicates that soon after his arrival in the Caribbean, Black was engaged in the flourishing intercolonial slave trade. After Britain took control of the ‘Ceded Islands’ (Grenada, Dominica, Saint Vincent and Tobago) after the Seven Years’ War, intercolonial slave traders arranged numerous shipments from the older colonies, especially Barbados, carrying several thousand slaves. These deliveries were primarily destined for Saint Vincent and Tobago, the last

112 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
113 ‘Deposition of John Black part owner of the sloop Swallow, captured by the Speaker and taken to Martinique,’ April 25, 1777, TNA SP78/303/31.
islands to be targeted by transatlantic traders directly from Africa. Eventually transatlantic deliveries to the Ceded Islands accelerated, and the intercolonial trade declined—encouraging John Black to pursue new opportunities. He decided upon Trinidad, an island on the “edges of the British Atlantic world.”

Trinidad

Black moved to Trinidad in 1783 with his wife and possibly infant daughter Marguerite, at around the same time that Grenada was returned to British control under the Treaty of Paris. In that year the Spanish government published the *Cedula de Poblacion*, which was aimed at attracting new immigrants to Trinidad. Central to the *Cedula* was the requirement that new arrivals “sufficiently prove...that they are of the Roman Catholic persuasion, without which they shall not be allowed on any account to settle.” On taking an “oath of fealty and submission,” white immigrants were to be granted “four fanegas and two-sevenths,” plus half again of that quantity of land “for each negro or coloured slave” he or she brought to Trinidad. The *Cedula* mandated that the land grants must be entered in a “Book of Registry (the Libro Becerro).” According to a local historian of Trinidad, the first

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114 ‘Deposition of John Black.’
117 France controlled Grenada between 1779 and 1783.
119 A fanega was an old Spanish unit of measurement equivalent to 30 acres: Brereton, *Modern Trinidad*, 13.
immigrant entered in this Book of Registry was John Black, in 1784.\textsuperscript{121} Unfortunately the \textit{Libro Becerro} is not extant, so it is not possible to identify which parcel/s of land were granted to John Black, or who he brought with him. It must be assumed however, that he took an “oath of fealty and submission,” and that he satisfied Governor Chacón that he was Roman Catholic.\textsuperscript{122}

The immigration pursuant to the \textit{Cedula} transformed the size and composition of Trinidad’s population.\textsuperscript{123} Although some Irish and English Catholics arrived during 1783 and 1784, the new immigrants were overwhelmingly French. Trinidad was a trans-imperial space: although still a Spanish colony, it was overwhelmed by this new French population. Free coloured people were welcomed, although they received half the amount of land granted to their European counterparts pursuant to the terms of the \textit{Cedula}.\textsuperscript{124} According to Linda Newson, the influx of immigrants created flexibility in the island’s social structure—the old social order based on race and claims to nobility were undermined by a new one based on the economic position of the individual.\textsuperscript{125}

By the 1790s Trinidad was an “international, frontier colony, full of foreigners preying on the island’s new prosperity, anxious to make quick fortunes.”\textsuperscript{126} The Spanish government had offered all new settlers a ten-year exemption from major taxes, which included the duties previously payable on the slave trade; 

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{121} Besson, ‘Tidbits.’
\bibitem{122} Gerry Besson has informed me that Black was buried in Trinidad’s Catholic cemetery.
\bibitem{123} Brereton, \textit{Modern Trinidad}, 15.
\end{thebibliography}
and in 1786 a decree extended this in perpetuity. The French settlers tended to
focus on agriculture, while the British established a stronghold on the island’s
trade.\textsuperscript{127} John Black, together with a number of other Irishmen, was in the
midst of this flurry of activity. He soon established himself as a “merchant and
planter” in partnership with Edward Barry; together they acquired
“considerable property” in Trinidad, consisting of “plantations and other
lands.”\textsuperscript{128} They produced rum, ran cattle, and traded in slaves.

Barry and Black acted as the Trinidad agents of a Liverpool shipbuilding and
slave trading firm, Baker and Dawson.\textsuperscript{129} In a 1798 legal deposition, they
explained that Baker and Dawson “sent out divers slaves consigned to [Barry
and Black] for the purpose of supplying the Spanish government,” in return for
which Barry and Black received a commission “for the sale of such slaves.”\textsuperscript{130}
One of the contracts Black and Barry worked on was an exclusive contract (an
asiento) to aid the Spanish government in rapidly increasing slave numbers in
Trinidad and Caracas, as the islands transitioned to a plantation economy.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{125} Newson, ‘Foreign Immigrants,’ 144.
\textsuperscript{126} Brereton, \textit{Modern Trinidad}, 19.
\textsuperscript{127} Brereton, \textit{Modern Trinidad}, 14-18.
\textsuperscript{128} ‘Barry v Dawson; Bill only; Plaintiffs Edward Barry and another. Defendants John Dawson and Philip Langton,’ 1798, TNA C13/477/76. Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 98. I have not been able to establish exactly when Black acquired \textit{Barataria}. The first sugar plantation in Trinidad was established in 1787, previously the main crop had been cacao. During the 1780s most land grants were in areas which included Santa Cruz: Newson, ‘Foreign Immigrants in Spanish America,’ 146-148. Mallet’s survey of Trinidad in 1799 showed that Black owned land at Santa Cruz: F. Mallet, \textit{Descriptive Account of the Island of Trinidad: Made by Order of Sir Ralph Abercrombie} (London: W. Faden, 1802), 14.
\textsuperscript{130} ‘Barry v Dawson.’
The 1798 deposition is clear evidence that John Black and his partner were involved in slave-trading in Trinidad. It also demonstrates the difficulties of doing business in a trans-imperial space. Baker and Dawson and their attorney pursued legal action under British law (claiming Barry and Black owed them money) while Barry and Black (until 1798) contested the suit and claimed recompense under Spanish law. The two sides reached a stalemate until Britain took Trinidad from Spain in 1797. According to M’Callum, a Scottish writer (and fierce critic of John Black), the most valuable property which had been seized on behalf of Baker and Dawson comprised the Orange Grove estate and some buildings in Port of Spain. In 1798 John Dawson travelled to Trinidad in an attempt to settle the dispute. It seems that a “decree of his Majesty in Council” had been issued by Governor Picton in Trinidad, which ordered Dawson to accede to an earlier Spanish decree, and to surrender Orange Grove and the Port of Spain property to Edward Barry. Dawson’s appeal to Picton to reverse the decision failed, and it seems that the property was returned to Barry, and presumably also to Black. There is no further evidence of Black’s involvement in the slave trade after the Baker and Dawson dispute. Britain passed legislation between 1799 and 1806 which effectively curbed the importation of enslaved Africans to Trinidad.

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132 Baker and Dawson had appointed Philip Langton to act as attorney in Trinidad to recover a disputed debt from Barry and Black. Langton seized property and effects from Barry and Black and sold much of it in satisfaction of the supposed debt. Black and Barry were also “arrested and imprisoned for a considerable length of time.” In response, Barry and Black took legal action in 1792 at “a certain Court called the Royal audience of Carracas.” When Langton failed to comply with the orders of the Caracas court, Barry and Black appealed to the King of Spain (in 1796). Langton did not comply with the orders for restitution made by the King of Spain. After Britain took Trinidad from Spain in 1797, Barry and Black lodged the deposition (dated 11 January 1798) with Lord Loughborough, the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain: ‘Barry v Dawson.’


Black consolidated his position in Trinidad with his appointment as a member of the Port of Spain Cabildo.\footnote{The Port of Spain Cabildo is hereinafter referred to as “the Cabildo.” For consistency, the Spanish terms cabildo, regidor and alcalde will be used henceforward.} Each administrative area of the Spanish colony had a cabildo, which took charge of municipal matters. The members of the cabildo (called regidores) took turns acting as alcaldes (magistrates) to exercise the Cabildo’s criminal and civil jurisdiction.\footnote{Fraser, History of Trinidad, 1:4-5.} As Port of Spain was by far the largest settlement in Trinidad, the Port of Spain Cabildo became the most important authority in the colony after Governor Chacón.\footnote{Candlin, Last Caribbean Frontier, 79.} Within a few years of settling in Trinidad, Black thus became an established member of the island’s ruling elite. He enjoyed the comfortable life of the wealthy white planter, dividing his time between his country house on his sugar plantation Barataria and his townhouse in Port of Spain, one of the busiest cities in the Caribbean.\footnote{Candlin, Last Caribbean Frontier, 79. In a letter dated 1 August 1808 Black referred to his escape from “the Conflagration,” presumably the fire in Port of Spain on 24 March 1808 which destroyed much of the centre of Port of Spain. He referred to his neighbours’ properties, and how a printing office which “was consumed,” was “separated from my own by the street 32 feet wide.” John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, D4457/292.} The town boasted neatly painted wooden houses and regularly laid-out, wide limestone streets with drains running down their middle.\footnote{Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 98.} Culturally, Port of Spain was French; the most commonly spoken language was French, and French tastes prevailed.\footnote{Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 99.} Black’s letters suggest that he and his family were comfortable in this setting—some of his letters to family were written in French, and French phrases are scattered throughout Black’s letters.
Most of the letters written by John Black which survive in the family collection were written to his brother George, and the earliest surviving letter was written in March 1799.\textsuperscript{141} By this time, it seems that Black had displeased at least the senior members of his family in Ireland. His uncle Joseph was a celebrated chemist and physician, based in Edinburgh. In 1795, Joseph wrote to his brother (John Black’s father) in Belfast, to inform him that he had re-drafted his will to disinherit John, and counselled his brother to do the same. Joseph wrote that “the propriety of such a step by you is so obvious that you cannot fail to perceive it. NB. Keep secret & burn the above part of this letter.”\textsuperscript{142} Joseph never clarified in his letters the nature of John’s transgression. Perhaps it was his move to Trinidad and associated loyalty to the Catholic King of Spain. Or perhaps the public dispute with Baker and Dawson was an embarrassment, or the fact that it exposed the family’s connection with the slave trade. (Although there is nothing to indicate that involvement in slavery would provoke concern in the family.) In 1798, Joseph wrote again about his nephew John. He wrote that he had recently been provided with “full information” about John, from the latter’s father in Belfast. Joseph continued,

I knew nothing of him before but what appeared to me to be very bad and I was disposed to write him a letter of very severe reproof which I see now would be very improper. He certainly was guilty in his youth of many follys & neglect of his dutys but he is now labouring to make

\begin{footnotes}
\item[141] John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, March 1, 1799, PRONI D1401/9.
\item[142] Joseph Black, Edinburgh to George Black Snr, Belfast, July 28, 1795 in Correspondence, 2: 1266-1267.
\end{footnotes}
reparation and I have no doubt will do it, if his life be spared.\textsuperscript{143}

Joseph was a strict money-manager who dispensed loans and bequests to various members of the extended family—perhaps his nephew John’s failing amounted to ‘simply’ failing to make the most of the investment Joseph had made in the Caribbean venture.

Joseph Black was a source of patronage for most members of his immediate family. In 1799, John Black’s wife Bonne Clothilde wrote from Trinidad to Joseph in Edinburgh. She intended to travel to Europe the following summer with her five daughters, and asked Joseph whether he could “take them under [his] Protection.”\textsuperscript{144} Joseph wrote in reply to John Black, as his wife’s letter had been written in French, a language Joseph could not “easily & correctly” write in. He declined to provide patronage for the five young women, on the basis that he was too old and infirm, and that “I have abundance of nearer connections in Europe who need my assistance & are very deserving of it.” To add insult to the refusal, he wrote that John Black and his wife could surely find other places “far fitter for them” than Edinburgh, as they “surely do not propose to make them fine & fashionable Ladies any such design would be ridiculous for you.”\textsuperscript{145} Ultimately, only Black’s daughter Adele was educated in Europe (in Belfast).

\textsuperscript{143} Joseph Black, Edinburgh to George Black, Belfast, August 16, 1798 in \textit{Correspondence}, 2:1344.
\textsuperscript{144} Joseph Black, Edinburgh to John Black, Trinidad, November 9, 1799 in \textit{Correspondence}, 2:1380.
\textsuperscript{145} Joseph Black, Edinburgh to John Black, Trinidad, November 9, 1799 in \textit{Correspondence}, 2:1380.
In 1797 Spain surrendered Trinidad to Britain, and John Black and his cohort were well-placed to assist the fledgling British administration. The official capitulation document was accompanied by a British proclamation that the “administration of Civil and Criminal Justice and of the Police or Cabildo is to continue as heretofore under the Spanish Laws.” Trinidad was established as a Crown Colony, with no Assembly, and ruled by a British governor in the name of the Crown. The first British governor of Trinidad, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Picton, was accordingly tasked with administering a British colony pursuant to Spanish Laws. One of Picton’s first actions was to appoint Black, together with four other planters, to his Council of Advice. In a letter to London regarding the Council, Picton described Black as one of “the most respectable proprietors of the colony.” But Picton’s years as Governor were marked by repression and violent displays of power towards the enslaved and free coloured populations; and by deep divisions within the white community. Agitation by many British residents of Trinidad (referred to as “the English party”) for British law and constitutional rights fragmented the minority white population. Black was firmly aligned with Picton—for economic reasons. Spanish law essentially protected planters in cases of debt recovery. Trinidad’s rapid expansion since 1797 was “staked by British capital;” but by 1802 the price of sugar had collapsed and the island’s planters owed large sums to British merchant capitalists. Most of the British inhabitants in Trinidad were involved in commerce, and thus were unable to recover debts

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147 This Council was comprised of members of the Port of Spain Cabildo. For consistency, the Council will be referred to as the Cabildo hereinafter.
149 Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 110.
from the planters, who were protected by Spanish law: unless debts against an estate equalled two-thirds of its appraised value, creditors could not force the sale of an estate for repayment of a debt.\textsuperscript{152} The imposition of British law would enable swifter debt recovery. Aside from the ongoing dispute with Baker and Dawson, there is no suggestion in Black’s correspondence that he was deeply in debt by this stage, but the conflict between British and Spanish legal regimes illustrate the deep divisions in the colony, and the disdain with which the merchants of Port of Spain held their planter counterparties.

By 1802, the disquiet in Trinidad had reached London.\textsuperscript{153} The British government informed Picton that Trinidad was to be ruled by a Commission, with Colonel William Fullarton appointed as First commissioner, Picton Second and Commodore Samuel Hood Third.\textsuperscript{154} Fullarton arrived in Trinidad in January 1803, and Hood followed a month later. Black recounted to his brother that as “Senior Member of Council,” it fell to him to board the \textit{Ulysses} “long before she Anchored, to be the mouthpiece of General Picton” in welcoming the First Commissioner to Trinidad.\textsuperscript{155} He described “the most perfect harmony” that subsisted between Picton and Fullarton during the official ceremonies the following day—although Black intimated that this

\textsuperscript{150} Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 127.
\textsuperscript{151} Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 126.
\textsuperscript{152} Sanderson, \textit{A Political Account of the Island of Trinidad from its Conquest by Sir Ralph Abercrombie in the Year 1797, to the Present Time in a Letter to his Grace the Duke of Portland} (London: Cadell and Davies, 1807), 114-115.
\textsuperscript{153} A loyal address signed by 108 “freeholders, merchants and other British inhabitants” of Trinidad was sent to London, requesting that “the privileges and protection of the British constitution” be extended to them (the address is printed in full in Sanderson, \textit{Political Account}, 81-85). A counter-address signed by 71 British residents of Trinidad (including John Black) were sent to London: Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}.
\textsuperscript{155} John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, January 19, 1803, PRONI D4457/291.
would come as a “great disappointment” to many in the colony.\textsuperscript{156} The harmony was short-lived, however, and the Commission lasted less than six months. Picton returned to Britain in mid-June 1803, and Fullarton sailed on 20 July, to be replaced by the newly-appointed lieutenant-governor Thomas Hislop. Hood made only a fleeting appearance in Trinidad.\textsuperscript{157}

As a member of the \textit{Cabildo}, Black was inevitably drawn into the political manoeuvrings between Fullarton and Picton (he was also \textit{alcalde} during Fullarton’s tenure, the magistrate responsible for civil and criminal cases). Although he had procured an early recommendation to Fullarton from Lord Macartney, Black’s opinion of Fullarton soon soured. Within two months of Fullarton’s arrival, Black was informing his brother that “we are all at loggerheads,” and that the government “could not possibly have chosen a man more unfit for the purposes than Fullarton...a low, intriguing, insidious \textit{Commis de Bureau}.”\textsuperscript{158} The feeling was mutual; Fullarton later wrote that despite his close friendship with Black’s uncle Joseph, and Macartney’s recommendation, he came to believe that Black was “one of the chief instruments of injustice, terror, and oppression” in the colony.\textsuperscript{159}

Indicative of the men’s relationship was a dramatic altercation which took place in the evening of 28 March 1803 at Black’s Port of Spain home. The altercation revolved around the question of access to colonial archives—access

\textsuperscript{156} John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, January 19, 1803, PRONI D4457/291. 
\textsuperscript{157} Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 130-131.
\textsuperscript{158} John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288. 
\textsuperscript{159} Colonel William Fullarton, \textit{A Statement, Letters, and Documents, Respecting the Affairs of Trinidad} (London: B. McMillan, 1804), 28.
which was to prove crucial to legal actions, and to “narratives of colonial misrule and intrigue.” In the course of Fullarton’s investigation into misrule in Trinidad, he had requested Francisco de Castro, the keeper of the archives for the colony, to furnish him with copies of the full criminal records for Trinidad since 1797. When Picton and Hood discovered this, they convened a special session of the Commission (without notifying Fullarton) and de Castro was charged with taking illegal possession of a public archive of the colony. As the current alcalde, Black had jurisdiction to arrest de Castro, which he did on 28 March. The ensuing altercation between Fullarton and Black was recounted in publications separately by Picton, Fullarton and Trinidad’s Attorney-General, Archibald Gloster; the latter included a letter written by Black to Commissioners Picton and Hood, the morning after the altercation.

On Black’s account, he had arrested de Castro and taken him to his home in Port of Spain, rather than to the “common gaol.” During the evening, with de Castro still at his house, Black “heard the noise of a carriage at my gate, and immediately after appeared, coming up the staircase with seeming impetuosity, Colonel Fullarton, having in one hand his sword, and in the other a sort of supple-jack.” A heated argument ensued, with Fullarton demanding de Castro’s release, and Black refusing. During the course of the argument,

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160 Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 132.
161 Gloster, Respecting Affairs in Trinidad, 16.
162 John Black, Port d’Espagne, Trinidad, to Brigadier-General Picton and Commodore Hood, March 28, 1803, quoted in Gloster, Respecting Affairs in Trinidad, 103.
164 John Black, Port d’Espagne, Trinidad, to Brigadier-General Picton and Commodore Hood, March 28, 1803, quoted in Gloster, Respecting Affairs in Trinidad, 103.
165 John Black, Port d’Espagne, Trinidad, to Brigadier-General Picton and Commodore Hood, March 28, 1803, quoted in Gloster, Respecting Affairs in Trinidad, 104.
Black reported that Fullarton had threatened him, saying, “with increased violence, ‘You shall be hanged for acting in this manner’.”\textsuperscript{166} For his part, Fullarton wrote that he learnt of de Castro’s arrest “while sitting at table, in my own house, with a large company. I went immediately to Mr. Black’s, and happening to be in full uniform, of course I had on my sword, and had a stick in my hand, which I have used for many years.”\textsuperscript{167} He denied that he had “threatened the Judge with the gallows,” and labelled Black’s claims “one of the most unqualified fallacies that has ever disgraced the Minutes of any Council.”\textsuperscript{168}

The conflict between Black and Fullarton is just one example of the divisive factional rivalries in Trinidad during the Commission’s tenure. As James Epstein has noted, it is difficult to move beyond the rival factions’ narratives in understanding the conflict between the commissioners in Trinidad.\textsuperscript{169} The culmination of the conflict, of course, was the sensational case at King’s Bench in 1806, in which Picton was tried for the unlawful torture of Luisa Calderon in Trinidad five years earlier in 1801.\textsuperscript{170} The Calderon case was tried publicly and garnered wide press coverage, particularly with the appearance of the star witness, Luisa Calderon. Picton was found guilty, although he was never sentenced.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{166} John Black, Port d’Espagne, Trinidad, to Brigadier-General Picton and Commodore Hood, March 28, 1803, quoted in Gloster, \textit{Respecting Affairs in Trinidad}, 105.
\textsuperscript{167} Fullarton, \textit{Statement, Letters, and Documents}, 16.
\textsuperscript{168} Fullarton, \textit{Statement, Letters, and Documents}, 16.
\textsuperscript{169} Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 131.
\textsuperscript{170} This trial emanated from a wider case Fullarton had brought on his return to London, which alleged that Picton had overseen twenty-nine counts of death unlawfully-inflicted in Trinidad. The case dragged on for four years, although it was never publicly tried, and Picton was eventually absolved of all charges: Epstein, \textit{Scandal of Colonial Rule}, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{171} Picton’s counsel moved for a new trial, and this was held in 1808. The “special verdict” found that torture was legal in Trinidad in 1801 and that Picton was not influenced by malice towards Calderon,
John Black was not involved in the Calderon case—he was not *alcalde* at the relevant time in 1801. However, his detractors claimed that his activities were no different from those of St. Hilaire Begorrat, the *alcalde* during Calderon’s arrest and torture. In an anonymous book published in London in 1807, the author opined that “the shameful example [of Calderon’s torture] has been followed by Mr Begorrat’s friend and successor in office, and imitator in cruelty, Mr Black, in the case of Modeste.” Pierre M’Callum repeated this claim around the same time in his popular book, *Travels in Trinidad*, and added that Black had “absconded to America.” Black was acutely aware that his name was publicly connected with the Picton case. As there is a gap of four years between letters for this period, Black’s whereabouts remain a mystery; and it is indeed possible that he spent time in America or Nova Scotia, where he had previously owned property, and had business contacts.

In 1807 the Privy Council ruled that the evidence did not support bringing Picton to trial on any of the charges against him; and in May that year Lord Castlereagh (secretary for war and the colonies) presented Picton to the king at court—thus signalling his rehabilitation. In March 1807, 130 “friends of Colonel Picton dined together” in Trinidad to celebrate “the triumph of virtue

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“independent of the illegality of the act” in British law. Legal argument on this special verdict continued for a further two years. Finally, in 1812, the court ordered Picton’s “recognizances respited until further ordered,” that is, the case was left unresolved. See Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 26. Sanderson, *Political Account*, 48. This book has since been attributed to the radical English lawyer, John Sanderson, who lived in Trinidad in the early 1800s, and who was instrumental in advocating for the imposition of British law. M’Callum, *Travels in Trinidad*, 272. M’Callum was variously described as a scandalmonger, journalist, spy and writer: Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 10. John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292. For example, in a letter dated May 25, 1809 John Black referred to a contact having “lived with us in America;” and in a letter dated August 1, 1802, “I renounced my former plan of passing some years in Nova Scotia and in Consequence I immediately gave orders for the disposal of my property there.” Respectively: PRONI D4457/298 and D1401/11.
and honour over vice and immorality.”¹⁷⁷ There is no evidence that Black attended the dinner, but he was clearly emboldened by Castlereagh’s support for Picton. He wrote to his brother, asking that their cousin (Frank Turnley), who had worked with Castlereagh, intercede on Black’s behalf.¹⁷⁸ Black’s object was the lucrative position of Collector of the Port, worth £5,000 (local currency) per annum. Black’s requests became increasingly urgent in tone: he was troubled by the “depressed state of the sugar market,” the rising cost of sugar production, and his inability “to replace the mortality which is inevitable” within his slave population, due to the abolition of the slave trade.¹⁷⁹ Black even suggested to his brother that as it would be impertinent to request such a lucrative position for himself, “it might suit Lord Castlereagh to confer the appointment on some of his noble relatives who might condescend to give me the deputation...and allowing him a half of the allowances.”¹⁸⁰ Black pressed the issue with his brother in increasingly frequent letters.

Finally, in January 1809, Black’s brother George confirmed that their efforts to secure the position had failed; Black responded that “what cannot be cured must be endured, if the Turnleys can’t save me, I must be content to struggle thro as well as I can.”¹⁸¹ Black continued in public roles in Trinidad—he was even the Council’s ‘Chinese Agent’ when Trinidad sponsored a Chinese emigration scheme in response to labour shortages precipitated by abolition.¹⁸² But an 1814 letter from Black’s daughter Adele to her uncle in Belfast indicates

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¹⁷⁶ Epstein, Scandal of Colonial Rule, 266.
¹⁷⁸ John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292.
¹⁷⁹ John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, October 5, 1808, PRONI D4457/294.
¹⁸⁰ John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292.
¹⁸¹ John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292.
her father’s growing dissatisfaction with life in Trinidad. She wrote that the governor was “no friend” of her father’s, and that in an attempt to lift his spirits, “we have done all in our power to get my father to go and pay you a visit, but all to no effect.” Whether Black visited Ireland is unknown, and the remainder of his years in Trinidad are largely undocumented. It seems Black ultimately embraced his creole identity after so long in the Caribbean. With most of his extended family around him, he remained in Trinidad until his death there in 1836.

**Conclusion**

The Caribbean lives of John Black and Samuel Watt reveal the diversity of the Irish mercantile experience of empire in the region. Watt and Black were both from relatively prosperous backgrounds and travelled to the Caribbean as part of their family business enterprises. As their biographies demonstrate, however, their careers were played out against vastly different geographic and political spaces within the Caribbean. Within those spaces, both relied upon networks which stretched back to Ireland. By examining the geopolitical spaces the men occupied, and the intimate and cultural spaces they created, it is possible to draw conclusions about the Irish merchant and planter experience of empire in the British Caribbean during the Revolutionary era. The men’s letters enable insights into their ‘internal spaces’ too—albeit tempered by the conventions of letter-writing—in a way which has not been possible for all of the Irishmen profiled in this thesis. This personal element of their imperial

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181 John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, April 26, 1809, PRONI D4457/297.
183 Adele Shine to Mr Black, Belfast, September 8, 1814, PRONI D4457/304.
experience combines with the analysis of their absolute and relative spaces to reveal the variety of social, cultural, and political spaces that comprised the world of the Irish merchant and planter in the British imperial world.

The specificity of place played a role in the different ways that Samuel Watt and John Black’s Caribbean lives unfolded. By 1800, when Watt arrived in the Caribbean, Barbados and Jamaica had been British possessions since the mid-seventeenth century. Barbados had never been invaded by another European power; and despite intermittent threats of invasion, Jamaica had been under English (and then British) control since 1670. Barbados was Britain’s eastern-most possession in the region; both it and Jamaica had long been established as sugar-producing islands, and as a result, slavery was deeply embedded within the social fabric of the islands. Both Barbados and Jamaica were extremely profitable islands, but at the time Samuel Watt ventured to the Caribbean, Jamaica was the greatest generator of wealth for Britain. John Black described it, perhaps with envy, as “the metropolis of the West Indies.”

By the 1780s, Jamaica had perfected what Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus call “the plantation machine”—a quintessentially colonial system which barely used local resources while depending heavily upon goods from elsewhere, that is, capital from Europe and labour from Africa. Planters’ (and by extension, white society’s) focus on wealth meant that material success became as important as traditional class divisions in determining social status in

185 John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, May 25, 1809, PRONI D4457/298.
Jamaican society. Whiteness was the other crucial determinant of social standing. An integral element of the material success of the plantation machine was the brutality with which enslaved Africans were controlled and punished. Samuel Watt lived in the midst of this society for a quarter of a century, yet slavery is almost entirely absent from his letters; we cannot know whether this is because he became inured to the everyday brutality of the system, or because he was uncomfortable sharing the details with his family in Ireland. Or perhaps a combination of the two. In any case, we know that he was deeply embedded in Jamaica’s plantation machine. Despite his ambivalent comments as abolition approached, he was a slave-owning merchant who traded with and extended credit to planters and enjoyed their hospitality—he was complicit in the system. To participate in the wealth generated by the British spaces of Barbados and Jamaica, Watt had to settle into the plantation machine that dominated those islands.

In contrast, John Black arrived in Grenada within just a decade of the island being ceded to Britain—but it was by no means a secure British space. Black lived in Grenada when the French re-took the island by force in 1779 but left around the time that it was restored to Britain in 1783. As we know, Trinidad was a Spanish colony when he and his family settled there, but Spain then surrendered the island to Britain 1797. Geographically, Trinidad was close to the South American mainland, which influenced the mercantile activities undertaken on the island. When the British took over Trinidad, the island’s plantation economy was divided between coffee, cotton, cocoa and sugar.

plantations. Despite the efforts of Trinidad’s planters, the island’s slave population never reached the levels required to cultivate the island (and particularly its sugar plantations) to its full agricultural potential.\textsuperscript{189}

Administratively, Jamaica and Barbados were governed by Assemblies, in conjunction with a succession of British governors. Grenada also adopted this model, but Trinidad was different. The first few years of British rule under Picton were essentially military, followed by the dysfunctional three-man Commission, and then a series of governors. There were no British Assemblies in Trinidad; and it was not until 1838 that Spanish law was definitively abolished.\textsuperscript{190} The social order during Black’s time in Trinidad was flexible. The old social order based on race and claims to nobility was undermined by the influx of new immigrants following the \textit{Cedula}, and a new order based on individual economic power began to emerge.\textsuperscript{191} Barbados and Jamaica, as long-established sites of the British world, had a less flexible social order. Watt’s life in Jamaica and Barbados proceeded according to a more established social pattern, with a deeply embedded system of slavery, and a settled public administrative order. In contrast with Black, who became involved in the administrative order in Trinidad, Watt played no role in public administration in either Barbados or Jamaica. His letters suggest that the extent of his civic involvement was his reluctant participation in Barbados’ compulsory militia.\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{188} John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, May 25, 1809, PRONI D4457/298.
\textsuperscript{189} Matthews, ‘Trinidad: A Model Colony,’ 93.
\textsuperscript{190} Böttcher, ‘Neptune’s Trident,’ 157.
\textsuperscript{191} Newson, ‘Foreign Immigrants in Spanish America,’ 144.
An important difference between Watt’s experience of the Caribbean, and Black’s, is that Black operated within a trans-imperial space. As already noted, Grenada was subject to wrangling between Britain and France, and post-\textit{Cedula} Trinidad was a French social and cultural space, within a Spanish colonial framework. This changed only gradually after 1797. The trans-imperial nature of Trinidad—together with its physical location so close to the South American mainland—facilitated mercantile links with Spanish America, as well as other islands in the region such as \textit{Curaçao}, which John Black took advantage of.\textsuperscript{193} Black’s daughter Marguerite lived in Curacao in 1808 when her husband commanded the British garrison there—it was another essentially Spanish space, but one which the British military controlled.\textsuperscript{194} We have seen too, that during the early years of British rule, Black benefited from Spanish law, and was drawn into the conflict between the plantocracy (of which he was a part), and the more recent British mercantile settlers, sometimes referred to as the ‘English party.’ Perhaps it was this contested space which drove Black during those years to draw more deeply on his Irish heritage, as it was during this period that his letters (at least those that remain) most frequently mentioned his Irish home.

Barbados and Jamaica, where Watt lived, were staunchly British imperial spaces.\textsuperscript{195} Jamaica was subject to numerous threats of invasion during times of war, but it remained British throughout Watt’s stay, and thereafter. His letters

\textsuperscript{192} Samuel Watt, Barbados to James Watt, Ramelton, 12 April 1801, PRONI MIC135/1. Watt described his distaste for turning out for service “under a scorching sun.”

\textsuperscript{193} John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, November 13, 1808, PRONI D4457/295.

\textsuperscript{194} John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1808, PRONI D4457/292.
suggest that his mercantile contacts existed entirely within the confines of the British Atlantic world—in Jamaica, Barbados, London, Ireland, Nova Scotia, and the north-east of the United States. There is nothing in Watt’s letters to suggest a segregation between Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh inhabitants of Jamaica or Barbados, but as Nini Rodgers noted, the names of the majority of his Jamaican intimates are either Ulster Presbyterians or Donegal men. It is clear that his role in the Caribbean was primarily to facilitate trade with his family and regional contacts in Ireland, and his Irish contacts in London. In this regard, Samuel Watt followed a well-trodden path, of young Irishmen travelling to the Caribbean as agents or merchants representing their family businesses. This business model, which existed across the British mercantile community in the Caribbean, was taken up in the eighteenth century by Irish families, including Presbyterian families from the Ulster linen industry.

When he arrived in Barbados, and then Jamaica, his Irish network was already largely in place, and his role was to tap this network to facilitate the trade in linen and provisions from his home region in Ireland. Having traced the progress of his Caribbean career, it is notable that Watt seemed only ever to join in partnership with other Irishmen. As a result, his business opportunities never extended beyond the boundaries of his Irish (perhaps even northern Irish) connections.

The domestic spaces occupied by Watt and Black differed, as befits merchant versus planter, but they shared important markers of the creole life. The

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196 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 88.
intimate spaces of their lives were shared with enslaved Africans, encompassing the domestic spaces of their homes, and the counting house and plantation in which (Black’s) enslaved men, women and children were put to work. Creolisation was a process of transformation wrought by the coming together of Africans and Europeans characterised by violence, inequality and intimacy.\textsuperscript{198} In his study of the letters of the English/Jamaican planter Simon Taylor, Christer Petley examined the ways in which West Indian planters (to which merchants may be added) sought to reconcile the distinctively local, or creole, aspects of their lives in the Caribbean with their identities as loyal transplanted British subjects.\textsuperscript{199} He concluded that arguments over slavery were central to this balancing act. Simon Taylor was a distinctive character, but many of Petley’s observations ring true for both Watt and Black, shedding light on the intimate spaces of their lives, and the way in which they conceptualised and recounted this space in their letters to their brothers in Ireland.

John Black had a home on Barataria, and a Port of Spain townhouse. The description of the typical Trinidadian plantation house provided by Mrs Carmichael, a Scottish woman who lived with her husband on the Laurel Hill estate in Trinidad in the early nineteenth century suggests that it may not have been an altogether luxurious existence. According to Carmichael, plantation houses were typically wooden houses, which “to the European...seem at first

\textsuperscript{197} Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 82.
uncouth abodes.” The typical house had open galleries to aid the circulation of breezes, but usually without ceilings or glass in the windows, such that the interior resembled (in Carmichael’s words) an English barn. The windows had only wooden shutters propped open at the bottom to keep out the frequent torrential rain. Nonetheless, it is clear that Black and his family participated in the culture of white sociability, just as Watt did in Jamaica. Hospitality and sociability played a crucial role in binding the white minority together; in Trevor Burnard’s words, “white unity was fostered by an all-embracing cult of hospitality.” Black wrote often of the guests he hosted, sometimes for extended periods (including Leeson Blackwood, with whom this chapter opened). In his travels to visit clients and counterparties in rural Jamaica, Watt could expect to receive food, drink, and a bed for the night in the houses of other white colonists.

Watt enjoyed working in the counting house, and we know from his nephew’s letters that he owned a house in Hannah’s Town in Kingston, not far from the port. He preferred urban life but enjoyed the opportunity to travel into Jamaica’s interior to stay with hospitable planters. He owned a number of enslaved Africans, some were possibly domestic workers, others he may have hired out to supplement his mercantile income. Jamaica provided Watt with


Carmichael, Domestic Manners, 112-113.


Letter John Watt, Kingston, to Samuel Watt, November 28, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.

Letter John Watt, Kingston, to James Watt, December 31, 1822, PRONI MIC135/1.
liberties which were not available to his brother James in Donegal. For the quarter century that he lived in the Caribbean, Watt lived the life of the bachelor, but maintained at least one acknowledged sexual relationship. As Petley has noted, elite slaveholders exercised degrees of discretion regarding their relations with women of colour.\textsuperscript{207} In Watt’s case, his relationship with Palmyra was clearly acknowledged in Jamaica, but was never even alluded to in his letters to family—it is only from his nephew’s letters that we learn of her existence.

Black, on the other hand, had married a creole (i.e. Caribbean-born) woman, and they had five daughters; and his correspondence with his brother frequently turned to the lives and activities of his family.\textsuperscript{208} The letters he penned as the time approached to send his daughters Marguerite and Adele to Ireland strike a genuinely tender note—at odds with the harshness with which he referred to the enslaved Africans who shared the family’s intimate space.\textsuperscript{209} The \textit{1813 Return of Slaves for Trinidad} attributed three “personal” (household) slaves to Black, sixteen to his wife, and four to their youngest daughter Esther.\textsuperscript{210} The \textit{Barataria} plantation was home to a total of ninety-seven “plantation slaves.”\textsuperscript{211}

\textsuperscript{207} Petley, “Home’ and ‘this Country’,” 50.
\textsuperscript{208} Black referred to his wife as a “creole:” John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
\textsuperscript{209} On his daughters leaving: John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288.
\textsuperscript{210} ‘The Return of Bona Clotilda Black of the Town of Port of Spain of Personal Slaves, 1813,’ TNA T71/503, folio 108. ‘The Return of John Black of the Town of Port of Spain of Personal Slaves, 1813,’ TNA T71/503, folio 241. ‘The Return of Esther Black of the Town of Port of Spain of Personal Slaves, 1813,’ TNA T71/503, folio 118.
\textsuperscript{211} ‘The Return of the Hon John Black, Bona Clotilda his wife for the Plantation entitled Barataria in the Quarter Called...A Sugar Plantation, 1813,’ TNA T71/501, folios 191-194.
Black made only one mention of the family’s personal slaves—when he discussed Marguerite taking Fanny, a “negress...who has been many years her servant” with her to Ireland when she travelled here with her new husband in 1803. Black’s (and indeed, Watt’s) reticence to mention their daily interaction with enslaved people accords with Petley’s findings in relation to Taylor’s papers. Black wrote about enslaved people solely as a resource: as a plantation input, to be bought, worked and kept alive, and then to be replaced after they died. Petley noted that Taylor most commonly referred to enslaved people as “negroes,” not as “slaves;” and argued that this reluctance to refer to enslaved people as such was symptomatic of colonists’ unease about slaveholding, which was a uniquely colonial practice and relatively unknown in Britain. The letters of John Black, and Samuel Watt and his nephew John all use the terms “negro” and “slave” interchangeably, suggesting, on Petley’s analysis, that they were less concerned with the nuances of British and Irish society as compared with their creole lives. Perhaps also, this suggests that Black’s lengthy stay in the Caribbean, and his background as a slave trader, had inured him to this difference.

Black’s letters also contain some commentary on the question of abolition. In 1808, he blamed “the ridiculous philanthropy of Mr. Wilberforce” for his inability to replace slaves who had died, and the fact that property-owners were being forced to sell up to settle debts. His most strident word on the subject was that abolition would “terminate by Consigning thousands of whites

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212 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 3, 1803, PRONI D4457/290.
213 Petley, “Home’ and ‘this Country’,’ 51.
214 Petley, “Home’ and ‘this Country’,’ 51.
to beggary, for the Sake of a Country of Savages who are 10 thousand times happier with us as Slaves, than at home free.”216 This clearly contrasts with the position Watt had reached. As already noted, he conceded to his brother that abolition was “a humane good law.”217 Black’s commentary mirrors that of Simon Taylor of Jamaica. A frequent theme of Black’s letters was his industriousness in his plantation work, as well as in his administrative roles in Trinidad—for which he claimed to be inadequately remunerated. Like Taylor, Black emphasised the importance of slavery to the national (British) economic interest. The proslavery arguments Black advanced, then, drew upon the cultural worldview of the plantocracy, the members of which saw themselves as industrious Britons—and desired others to perceive them in the same way.218

Ireland as a relative, or cultural, space played an important role in the lives of both Watt and Black; both men invested considerable effort in maintaining their Irish contacts, within the Caribbean and back in Ireland. As already noted, Watt arrived in the Caribbean with a ready-made network of contacts from his home region in Ireland. There is evidence that John Black engaged in business with other Irishmen in Grenada and Trinidad, but it appears that his Irish network was harder won than Watt’s. Maintenance of traditions from Ireland was important; Both Black and his daughter Adele recounted St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in their Trinidadian home. In 1800 Black wrote that he had returned from Nova Scotia on St Patrick’s Day to find “many friends

215 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, October 5, 1808, PRONI D4457/294.
216 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, October 5, 1808, PRONI D4457/294.
217 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, June 20, 1807, PRONI MIC135/1.
inebriated in celebration of the Irish patrons festival.”  

Fourteen years later, Adele wrote to her grandparents in Belfast from Port of Spain that “yesterday was St Patrick’s Day and all the Irishmen gave...dinners and as they generally have many toasts to drink their heads pay for it the next day, as for my Father he began this day by taking a large dose of Magnesium to clear his head.”

The notion of returning to Ireland was a constant feature of Black’s letters to his brother. In one of his earliest surviving letters, he expressed his “ambition...to revisit my native soil,” and then three years later, he wrote again “of ending my days where I so happily began them.” It is possible that these fond reminiscences involved an element of performance; he had left Ireland as a very young man, and by the time he wrote these lines he had lived as long in the Caribbean as he ever had in Ireland. It is possible too, that like other members of his family based elsewhere in the Atlantic, he never really expected to return to Ireland. In writing about the expatriate Irish community in Bordeaux in the 1750s (of which Black’s grandfather was a member), Nicholas Canny observed that very few of the expatriates seemed to expect that they would ever return to live in Ireland. Notwithstanding their attachment to Irish cultural habits and the English language, Canny concluded that the expatriates seemed settled and reasonably integrated in the city of Bordeaux and its hinterland. They maintained business and familial contact with Ireland, frequently expressed a desire to meet in person with their correspondents, and

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218 Petley, ‘Home’ and ‘this Country’, 55.
219 John Black, Trinidad to “brothers and sisters,” Belfast, April 19, 1800, PRONI D4457/271
220 Adele Shine, Port of Spain to Mr and Mrs Black, Belfast, March 18, 1814, PRONI D4457/302.
221 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 1, 1799, PRONI D1401/9, and August 1, 1802, PRONI D1401/11.
often sought “a little news from home;” but many of them remained in France.Whilst Black himself never returned to Ireland (at least to live, it is unclear whether he visited), he did send one of his daughters (Adele) to Belfast for her education, and his eldest daughter (Marguerite) moved there for a time after marrying James Graves, a British Army officer from Belfast.

It is evident from the absolute and relative spaces that Watt and Black occupied and created, that the ‘British Caribbean’ encompassed a diversity of spaces. The absolute spaces identified in this chapter span the ‘older’ British islands of Jamaica and Barbados, with their entrenched systems of slavery and relatively settled geopolitics, and Britain’s ‘newer’ islands, which were essentially trans-imperial in their makeup. The absolute spaces Watt and Black occupied differed, too, in their domestic make-up. Considering the men’s domestic arrangements highlights the differences between urban and rural life, and the extent to which enslaved people were likely to have participated in the men’s private spaces. The relative spaces created and occupied by the men include the degree to which they participated in the culture of white sociability, public administration, and mercantile networks on their islands and further afield.

Watt and Black’s inner (relational) spaces are less accessible, but the body of correspondence as a whole for each man allow an overview of their states of mind. Emotional responses such as longing for home, anxiety about the future,

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222 Canny, ‘The Irish colony in Bordeaux,’ 36.
223 Canny, ‘The Irish colony in Bordeaux,’ 36.
224 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288.
and anger over lost opportunities fashioned personal spaces intersected with and acted upon the circulating material world in which the men moved.\textsuperscript{225} Black’s letters convey an ongoing sense of frustration with the difficulty of turning a profit from his sugar plantation, and lack of funds to travel or to send his daughters to Europe. His letters contain constant requests for recommendations from his brother (who himself often struggled to find employment in Belfast), and his frustration at the vagaries of patronage. In 1803 he wrote that “Fullarton has had the whole of Renfrew and Caithness well recommended to him and we old standers will all be kicked out to make way for them. They are all ready to devour us. I never saw such a set of wolves.”\textsuperscript{226} Black’s frustration bears out Craig Bailey’s conclusion that ethnicity could be an effective means of counteracting the risks of patronage in unfamiliar settings—Black’s problem was that Irish connections were at times hard to come by.\textsuperscript{227} Watt also prevaricated about his return to Ireland and seemed reluctant to return.\textsuperscript{228} His return trip involved a long detour via the United States and Canada. As Nini Rodgers observed, his return was tinged with disappointment as he brought little home with him other than a contact list and a number of debts.

An important element of the men’s inner spaces was their sense of identity. The fact that both Watt and Black retained such strong links with their Irish networks, yet experienced such different lives in the Caribbean is testament not only to the diversity within the British Caribbean, but also to the diversity

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\item \textsuperscript{225} Tamson Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ \textit{Journal of British Studies} 52 (2013): 449.
\item \textsuperscript{226} John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast March 3, 1803, PRONI D4457/290.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Bailey, ‘Metropole and Colony: Irish Networks and Patronage,’ 177.
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which existed within the community of Irish merchants and planters. This diversity militates against the notion of a singular Irish identity, or sense of Irishness, and contributed to the fact that Irishmen perhaps defied easy categorisation. As we have seen, Watt lived in established British imperial spaces, and slid into pre-existing networks of Irish merchants and planters. There would have been little doubt as to his ‘place’ in creole society. But John Black was not so easily categorised. In the trans-imperial spaces of Grenada and Trinidad, he took advantage of the multifaceted (even ambiguous) nature of Irish identity to manoeuvre between the different networks and spaces in the Caribbean. There are numerous examples from Black’s life which demonstrate his ability to manipulate and defy the expectations of those around him.

In his 1777 Grenada deposition, Black aligned himself with the “English” interest, thereby positioning himself against French and Spanish interests.229 Yet he was married to a French creole woman, wrote and presumably conversed in French, and identified with the French interest in Grenada. Despite this, he and his wife fostered apparently close ties with Macartney when he was governor, and afterwards. Perhaps Macartney was being diplomatic, or perhaps he was accustomed to ambiguity. In emigrating to Trinidad, Black swore an oath that he was Catholic (although perhaps the Spanish turned a blind eye as he was a slave trader, and could bring wealth and slaves to Trinidad), and his wife and children went to Catholic mass. He did too, on occasion.230 Further, there was confusion amongst others in Trinidad.

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228 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 90.
229 ‘Deposition of John Black.’
230 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288.
as to his religion—during the altercation with Commissioner Fullarton at his Port of Spain home, Fullarton’s clerk insisted that Black was Catholic, but he proclaimed that he was Protestant. Perhaps the best illustration of Black’s ambivalence towards religious denomination is summed up by the following. When writing to his brother about his daughter Adele’s imminent move to Belfast, Black wrote “as to her religion, provided she has one well instilled I am almost indifferent whether it be protestant or Romish...Adele will now go with you to your own mode of worship.”

Black’s biography offers a window into the complex world of Trinidad, a liminal space which existed at the very edge of the British empire in the Caribbean. Here, Black could push the boundaries of the British empire, in a way that an Englishman, or Scotsman most likely could not. The fact that Irishmen were accustomed to negotiating across different religious, regional and imperial networks made them particularly well-suited to the shifting allegiances within the Caribbean. Black’s family background equipped him with the language and cultural skills to reach across the imperial ‘border’ between Britain and France. The experiences he accumulated and connections he fostered then enabled him to participate in the Spanish Atlantic world too. It must be acknowledged, however, that Black’s shifting identity was not always an advantage. He was a polarising figure; his relationship with Fullarton is a good example, and the Scottish writer M’Callum was vociferous in his opposition towards Black. At times the ambiguity in Black’s identity (or the fact that he took advantage of different elements of his identity as the

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231 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288.
occasion suited) meant that he was short on trustworthiness—that essential
element of Atlantic business culture.

Watt and Black’s experiences, inflected by their Irish identities and networks,
demonstrate the diversity within of experiences of empire. The fact that there
was no single, Irish identity enabled these very different men to follow
different paths, and take advantage of the commercial opportunities in the
British Caribbean. Watt’s career demonstrates that by the beginning of the
nineteenth century, there was a well-trodden path for Irish merchants in the
more established British spaces in the Caribbean. Black’s career, similar to
those of Edward Despard and Marcus Rainsford, remind us that the
geopolitical landscape in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary era was far
from settled. Like his military compatriots, Black lived a trans-imperial life,
enacting a certain flexibility of identity and shifting across and around imperial
borders, both physically and metaphorically.
Chapter Three

Administering the Empire: Irish Participation in Imperial Governance

In July 1779, John Black, the planter we encountered in the last chapter, penned a letter from Grenada to a relative in Bordeaux.¹ The letter was drawn up to recommend George Staunton, the recently-appointed Attorney-General of Grenada, and confidant of the island’s Governor, Lord George Macartney. Black recounted that since the 4th of July, Grenada had “been under the dominion” of France, the latest British island to change hands as the year-old war between Britain and France was played out in the Caribbean. According to Black, the French had confiscated “a very great part of the property of the English subjects... and all those who have no property will be expelled,” and had ordered “home to France eight of the principal inhabitants, as hostages, for I know not what.”² The hostages included Governor Macartney and Attorney-General Staunton and his wife. Black recommended the Stauntons to his relative, noting that “during the five years we have spent together, we have been intimately connected, and...I rejoice at the opportunity of procuring him a bon accueil, however unfortunate the circumstances, to return him in some measure the many acts of friendship I have received at his hands.”³ John Black remained at

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Grenada, charged with overseeing Staunton’s “effects,” which were “very considerable, in slaves, lands, contracts.”

Black’s letter, while possibly a genuine act of friendship, accords with the norms of eighteenth-century patronage. He alluded to the “many acts of friendship” he had received from Staunton, and offered his personal recommendation as to Staunton’s character, as well as extending him financial credit, via his relative in Bordeaux. Black also knew that a favour to Staunton was a favour to Governor George Macartney. As we have already seen, Black frequently called upon Macartney in the years following their time together in Grenada, particularly regarding the former’s attempts to secure salaried administrative positions in Trinidad. Patronage was at the heart of eighteenth-century imperial appointments—whether that patronage emanated from ministers in London directing who the King should appoint as governors around the Empire, or from governors themselves, recommending appointments within their colonial jurisdictions.

Historian Christopher Bayly observed that most administrative appointments during the imperial meridian remained in the hands of the gentry. This certainly appears to have been the case for senior roles appointed from London (such as governor), and these ranks included members of the lesser gentry from the Scottish Borders and Ireland. But numerous examples in this thesis

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7 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, 135.
demonstrate that military men, lawyers and plantation proprietors in the British Caribbean (most of whom would not have been considered gentry) also managed to obtain lucrative imperial appointments by utilising patronage networks, and by demonstrating merit and connections on the ground in the Caribbean. Irishmen such as George Staunton, John Black, Edward Despard, and Michael Keane were appointed to the ranks of imperial administrators out in the Empire, well away from London.

This chapter will examine the Caribbean careers of three Irishmen from different strata of colonial administration: Governor Lord George Macartney; Richard Burke, a Collector of Customs; and stipendiary magistrate Richard Madden. Macartney was appointed in 1775 to the governorship of Grenada and its dependencies, Tobago and the Grenadines. He benefited from the patronage of Lords Bute and Holland in London in securing this appointment. Macartney’s Caribbean sojourn ended in spectacular fashion, when he was taken back to France as a ‘hostage’ along with George Staunton. Some official records remain in relation to Macartney’s time in Grenada, but of most interest here are the series of letters he wrote to a friend in Britain, Lady Ossory, which detail his travels in the region, and contain observations on quotidian life in Grenada, and on Grenadian society.

8 E.M. Johnston, ‘Grenada, 1775-79,’ in Macartney of Lisanoure 1737—1806: Essays in Biography, ed. Peter Roebuck (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1983), 90. Shortly after this appointment he was elevated to the Irish peerage as Baron Macartney of Lisanoure in the County of Antrim.

9 The four surviving letters were written by Lord Macartney to Lady Ossory between 1776 and 1780: PRONI T2480/2-5.
The second life-story in this chapter details the earliest sojourn in this thesis as a whole. Richard Burke, the younger brother of Edmund Burke, was appointed as Collector of Customs for Grenada in 1763. Similar to Macartney, Burke was educated in Ireland and moved to London in the 1750s. In fact, Macartney and the Burkes were well-acquainted. In a letter written in 1780, Edmund Burke wrote of Macartney: "He is one of the oldest acquaintance, out of my own family, that I have in the world; & I have always entertaind (sic) a warm & sincere friendship for him."\textsuperscript{10} It is unclear how Richard Burke obtained his appointment, but on the basis of William Ashworth’s assessment of customs appointments (which were particularly susceptible to patronage), it is safe to assume that his connection with Edmund assisted in his appointment.\textsuperscript{11} Richard had two separate, but brief, sojourns in the Caribbean in his role as Collector—but the controversy sparked by his activities in Grenada and St. Vincent lasted well into the 1780s. Ashworth provides a comprehensive analysis of eighteenth-century customs and excise operations. He quotes one outspoken contemporary critic deriding the appointment of

Country Fox-hunters, Bankrupt Merchants, & Officers of the Army & Navy—without the least previous knowledge of the Business of the Revenue and too late in Life to acquire it—so that they are totally unfit to keep good order in the port or to the representatives of the Board which they are required to be.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{12} Ashworth, \textit{Customs and Excise}, 142.
The final subject of this chapter is Richard Madden, a Catholic medical doctor originally from Dublin who commenced his imperial career as a stipendiary magistrate appointed to oversee the transition from slavery to apprenticeship in Jamaica. Madden is indicative of the gradual integration of the Irish professional middle class into imperial administration in the early years of the nineteenth century, a development which gathered pace in the wake of Catholic ‘emancipation’ in the 1830s. He was among the first Irish Catholics to be appointed to a role in the British civil service. Madden’s sojourn in Jamaica was short; but it was by no means the end of his imperial career. He resigned after only a year as he “found the protection of the negro incompatible with my own.” After a period of time in London, he was appointed as Britain’s Judge Arbitrator and first Superintendent of Liberated Africans in Havana (Cuba). He later lead a Commission in the Gambia investigating the operation of slave settlements on the west coast of Africa, and his final posting was as Colonial Secretary in Western Australia in the late 1840s.

Biographies of key colonial and military figures were a mainstay of British imperial history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—two such biographies of this genre were published for Macartney. It is clear that these works should be approached with scepticism—they were generally celebratory,

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16 Burton, ‘Liberty’s Call,’ 201-204.
and as Catherine Hall has argued, they focused invariably upon the imperial centre.\textsuperscript{18} The genre of history to which they belong was founded upon an “implicit spatial dualism of the metropole or centre (Britain) versus the periphery or margin (the empire).”\textsuperscript{19} New imperial historians, including Hall, have increasingly emphasised the more extensive connections between multiple metropolitan, imperial and extra-imperial sites.\textsuperscript{20}

Reflecting upon the concept of imperial biographies in a British context, David Lambert has noted that far from being a simple narrative of an individual’s experiences, imperial biographies can serve as a “lens into a wider imperial formation, including structures of governance and rule, geopolitical concerns and strategies, racial ideologies and all manner of colonial projects.”\textsuperscript{21} As the first two chapters of this thesis have already demonstrated, biographies can provide insights into individual and community behaviours, including domestic arrangements, family relations, and the operation of commercial and patronage networks; as well as broader structural and geopolitical matters such as the integration of slavery within the British military, and the trans-imperial nature of life in some British Caribbean islands. One of the key recent developments in the field of imperial biographies has been the effort to expand the range of imperial subjects considered. By applying the notion of imperial biographies to career-types beyond elite colonial governors, and to a wider range of social

\textsuperscript{20} Lambert, ‘Reflections,’ 29.
\textsuperscript{21} Lambert, ‘Reflections,’ 26.
identities in terms of gender, age and status, scholars have begun to explore a wider range of projects, ideologies and discourses.\textsuperscript{22} As we will see, Macartney, Burke and Madden all had connections with London, but that is not the case for most of the Irishmen in this thesis. Scrutinising the experiences of Irishmen in the Empire reveals the broader web of connections that existed around the Empire, often entirely outside the metropole and peripheries nexus. Even though the administrators in this chapter owed much to their London connections, they brought the breadth of their experiences and connections with Ireland to their imperial sojourns too. Jonathan Wright recently noted that relatively little is known about the careers and experiences of Irishmen involved in the government and administration of the Empire.\textsuperscript{23} Macartney is one of the “more obvious examples” according to Wright, but as I will explain below, his time in Grenada has been the subject of very little scrutiny, despite the fact that he was a well-known Irish imperial administrator.\textsuperscript{24}

Unlike Macartney, neither Burke nor Madden have been the subject of traditional imperial biographies. By examining their careers alongside Macartney’s, this chapter expands the field of study of imperial administrators beyond elite colonial governors. In examining the colonial careers of Macartney, Burke and Madden, this chapter addresses two principal questions. To what extent did the men’s Irish connections and backgrounds influence their imperial careers in the Caribbean? And to what extent did these men, with their Irish

\textsuperscript{22} Lambert, ‘Reflections,’ 33-35.
\textsuperscript{24} Wright, ‘The Belfast Chameleon,’ 194.
connections, manage to disrupt the traditional dualism of metropole and periphery?

**Administering the British Empire in the Caribbean**

Britain’s relationship with its colonial dependencies changed markedly over the period covered by this chapter. Prior to the Seven Years War, Britain’s relationship with its territories out in the Empire was essentially “mediated through groups of complaisant mercantile elites and creoles.”

When Richard Burke travelled to Grenada in 1764, Britain was in the process of consolidating its hold over territories recently ceded by France. As Britain attempted to centralise colonial power, commercial and landed interests in the Caribbean asserted a degree of independence in return—but never quite followed their counterparts in the American colonies to rebellion. Macartney’s arrival in Grenada a decade later coincided with the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, but by then restless planters had acquiesced to the imperial centre in the face of their fear of the French, and of slave revolt.

At the other end of Bayly’s imperial meridian, Madden’s stint in Jamaica during 1833-4 was characterised by many of the same underlying tensions within the colony that Burke and Macartney had encountered during their sojourns in the Ceded Islands—but imminent emancipation heightened the tension even further.

In most parts of the Empire the power of the colonial executive steadily grew over the course of the eighteenth century; for example, Caribbean governors

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were fortified with joint military and civil command, which gave them precedence over local councils and assemblies.\textsuperscript{27} Macartney’s tenure in Grenada is illustrative of this development. One of his first actions as Governor of Grenada was to dismiss the existing council and recommend appointments to suit his needs. One appointee was John Black.\textsuperscript{28} On Bayly’s account, the imperial state began seriously to discipline and control marginal groups, and to create wider spheres for the exercise of state power.\textsuperscript{29} As we saw from Edward Despard’s experiences in British Honduras, however, the nature and scope of colonial administrators’ power was by no means always clear on the ground. Burke, Macartney and Madden’s experiences highlight the often uncomfortable relationship which resulted from the contestation over administrative power between elites on the islands and the administrators dispatched from London. The interests of the social and political orders which had emerged in the British Caribbean were often at odds with the designs of the developing imperial administration.\textsuperscript{30}

What were colonial administrators doing in the Caribbean? Although regimes differed somewhat from island to island, the regimes established in the ‘older’ British islands generally served as a model for the ‘newer’ territories. The legislatures of British Caribbean islands generally comprised a governor, a council and an assembly; legislation originated in the assembly, then went to the

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\item[27] Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian}, 5-6.
\item[29] Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian}, 6.
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council for review. Bills passed by both houses were sent to the Governor for his
approval and assent—if a bill contravened his original instructions from the
Crown, it was his responsibility to withhold his assent.31 Day to day
administration in Jamaica was carried out by a number of Boards (for example,
the Committee of Correspondence, the Commission of Public Accounts, the
Board of Works), all of which were composed of representatives of all three
branches of the legislature.32 The execution of legislative decisions and of
British government policy was in the hands of officials appointed by the
Governor, British government departments or patent office-holders in Britain
holding their grant directly from the king.33 On paper at least, all of these officers
were subject to the authority of the Governor while in the island.

There were three categories of public offices in Jamaica. Some of the oldest and
most lucrative posts were those held under patent, but the roles were actually
performed by deputies, while the patent-holder remained in Britain and shared
the profits with the deputy. Some of these patent-holders held the same office in
several islands.34 These offices included Island Secretary, Clerk of the Supreme
Court, Surveyor-General and Attorney-General.35 The second category of public
offices were those appointed from and financed by British government
departments, such as the Comptroller of Customs, the Collector of Customs and
officials of the Court of Vice-Admiralty.36 The third category of offices were those

31 Edward Kamau Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770—1820 (Oxford:
32 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 10.
33 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 12-13.
34 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 13.
35 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 14.
36 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 10.
directly under the Governor’s appointment and control, which included Chief Magistrates of the various parishes, justices of the peace, and the Island Engineer. In effect, it seems that some of the patent-held offices were appointed on the Governor’s recommendation—for example Macartney appointed George Staunton his Attorney-General in Grenada, and another resident Irishman (Michael Keane) was appointed Attorney-General of St. Vincent.

The British Empire’s expansion in the Caribbean after the Seven Years War, with its associated administrative burden, presented opportunities for individuals. Ireland was an important source of administrative manpower for the British Empire—both in terms of appointees to senior roles from London, as well as appointments made out in the Empire for local administrative roles. The growing commercial middle class contributed some senior military men and state servants, but the more substantial gentry, especially from outlying regions of Britain (Scotland and Ireland) were the most forward in filling the many new positions in state and colonial service. For many Irish and Scottish men, the expanding empire constituted a career opportunity, a path to levels of professional and economic attainment that were blocked by economic realities and social barriers at home.

37 Brathwaite, Development of Creole Society, 14-15.
39 Bayly, Imperial Meridian, 134.
George Macartney

George Macartney’s imperial career spanned the Russian court, Ireland, Grenada, Madras, China, Verona (where he waited on the pretender to the French throne), and finally the Cape of Good Hope. Historians have focused on discrete sections of Macartney’s career, most notably his time as British ambassador to the Court of Ch’ien-lung, Emperor of China (1792-4) and India, where he was Governor of Madras (1780-1786). Peter Roebuck’s biography—an edited collection of essays on his various postings—is the most wide-ranging academic work on Macartney’s life and career.\(^41\) The first biography of Macartney was published the year following his death by John Barrow, and a second was published by a descendant, Mrs Helen Robbins, in 1908.\(^42\) These publications contain useful source material, but neither is scholarly; nor are they disinterested accounts, given the authors’ relationships with Macartney. In relation to Macartney’s tenure in Grenada, the only in-depth study is Edith Johnston’s chapter in Roebuck’s book.\(^43\)

Macartney was born on his grandfather’s estate in North Antrim on 3 May 1737. His family was of Scottish origin, his great-grandfather had left Auchinleck in Scotland in 1649 and settled in Ulster.\(^44\) Black George (as he came to be known),


\(^{42}\) Robbins, Our First Ambassador to China. Barrow, Some Account. Barrow was the comptroller of Macartney’s household in China, and his private secretary at the Cape (1796–98). Volume 2 of Barrow’s work contains some of Macartney’s writings about Russia, political history of Ireland, and China.


\(^{44}\) Peter Roebuck, ‘Early Years 1737–64,’ in Roebuck, Macartney of Lisanoure, 3.
established himself as a successful merchant, ship-owner and landlord, and served as sovereign (mayor) of Belfast a number of times.\textsuperscript{45} His son (also George—Macartney’s grandfather) was educated at Oxford and the London Bar, before embarking upon a long parliamentary career in the Irish parliament.\textsuperscript{46} Macartney ultimately inherited the bulk of his grandfather George Macartney MP’s estate.\textsuperscript{47} His new-found wealth increased the opportunities available to him, but it was too modest to free him completely. As Peter Roebuck noted, whilst his wealth afforded him considerable financial independence, it was “prospective rather than immediate.”\textsuperscript{48} Macartney was required to sell assets to pay small legacies and debts on his Grandfather’s estate, and to finalise bequests to his sisters. He inherited a house in Henry Street, Dublin, but many of the rural properties he inherited were subject to intermediate interests; that is, the properties were vested in trustees who were obliged to pay life annuities to female relatives, before passing to Macartney’s father for life, and only thereafter to Macartney himself.\textsuperscript{49} Macartney’s inheritance made the pursuit of salaried office both feasible and necessary.\textsuperscript{50}

After graduating from Trinity College Dublin, Macartney took the well-worn path to the London Inns of Court, where he commenced studies at Middle

\textsuperscript{45} He was known as Black George because of his swarthy appearance and to distinguish him from another, related immigrant of the same name: Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 3.

\textsuperscript{46} He was the member for Limavady, Donegal, and finally Belfast, which he represented from 1715 until his death in 1757: Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 4-5.

\textsuperscript{47} The estate was devised to George Macartney MP’s eldest son, Charles (Macartney’s uncle), but as Charles had no heir, Macartney inherited the greater part of the family’s wealth when his uncle died in 1759. The estate included small allowances for Macartney’s two sisters - his older sister Letitia and younger sister Elizabeth - and his father: Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 1-12.

\textsuperscript{48} Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 14.

\textsuperscript{49} Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 12-14.

\textsuperscript{50} Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 15.
Temple. Admission to the London Bar was a prerequisite to practicing law at the Irish Bar. Macartney was one of the estimated 150 Irish students sitting terms at one of the Inns of Court in London every year. In London, Macartney met Edmund Burke; the latter had studied at Middle Temple a few years before Macartney, and the two had mutual friends from Dublin.

Macartney and Burke, despite the former’s eventual rise to gentry status, were what Craig Bailey classifies as middle class migrants. They belonged to families that had moderate to substantial incomes and considerable status in their local communities, and they had enjoyed the benefit of a relatively high standard of living in Ireland, including access to education and perhaps professional training. The London which attracted Macartney and Burke was a dynamic, cosmopolitan centre, which doubled in size over the course of the eighteenth century, from 500,000 to one million residents. Bailey’s research indicates that the Irish middle class population in London was small—and that it was small relative to the city’s entire Irish population. He estimates a total of between 250 and 300 such individuals lived in London (with their families); of that number there were about fifty Irish barristers, attorneys, solicitors, special pleaders and conveyancers in business in London at any one time during the century. Bailey’s overall analysis suggests that the entire middle-class population of

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51 Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 11.
53 Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 10. Roebuck surmises that the two were introduced by the Rev. William Dennis, a mutual friend from Dublin. Barrow’s biography of Macartney contains letter written from Russia from Macartney to William Burke in 1767, in which he notes he was “much mortified at missing Ned’s letter” (Barrow, *Some Account*, 416).
London, made up of both permanent and temporary residents, included some 1000 individuals at the end of the eighteenth century. The Irish friends and connections Macartney fostered in London remained a constant throughout his imperial career.

Macartney settled his uncle’s estate in 1760, then promptly discontinued his legal studies and embarked instead upon a Continental Tour. The friends and connections he made during this time were to propel him beyond the Irish circles that had sustained him thus far. In Geneva he met Stephen Fox, the eldest son of Henry Fox (soon to become 1st Lord Holland). While his friendship with Stephen Fox deepened, Macartney seized the opportunity to consolidate his connection with his friend’s family. Henry Fox (by 1762, Lord Holland) was a Whig politician, and was allied with the Earl of Bute, who served as prime minister from May 1762 to April 1763. Bute was deeply unpopular within his own party due to his reputation as the King’s favourite, and this extended also to Holland. Despite this, Holland proved to be a powerful and supportive patron for Macartney. Correspondence between Macartney and Holland suggests that in addition to actively promoting Macartney’s career, Holland furnished him with some financial assistance at this time. Macartney’s participation in the Hollands’ social circle was expensive, as Holland realised—he counselled the young man to balance his budget. In Roebuck’s words, “the success of Macartney’s relations with the Hollands derived from the ease with which he had adopted the carefree manner of living which they had encouraged.

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58 Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 15-16.
him to share.” Holland was aware (as perhaps the young Macartney was not) that the salaries attached to the public positions available to Macartney would not compensate for the expenditure to which they gave rise, let alone enable him to discharge his financial duty to his tenants and relatives in Ireland. These concerns seem to have been assuaged by late 1763, however, when Macartney wrote to Holland, somewhat cryptically,

> You have given me that Ease of Mind, which I had been for some time a Stranger to, and made me perfectly happy. Since my Coming over, I have reason to prize the Obligation still more, as I fear I could not have brought my own scheme to bear without the Greatest Difficulty of Disadvantage.

Macartney’s ambition at that time was to secure a seat in Parliament. Holland’s attempts to assist with this ambition failed, but he was able to offer Macartney the post of Envoy-Extraordinary to the Court of St. Petersburg in May 1764. On 19 October Macartney was knighted, and in December he set off for Russia, where he remained for three years.

Following his posting in Russia, Macartney married Lady Jane Stuart, Bute’s youngest daughter. Bute had recently retired from parliamentary politics, but remained deeply unpopular in political circles—his opponents continued what John Brewer has described as an “extraordinary, and very largely unjustified,
obsession” with Bute and his political influence. Nonetheless, Bute used his influence to obtain for his new son-in-law a prestigious position as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, with his close friend, Charles Townshend.

During Townshend and Macartney’s tenure, the office of the Lord Lieutenant changed from a largely administrative to a deeply political role; increasingly the Chief Secretary was called upon to play a ‘ministerial’ role in Irish politics. As Macartney described it, “the management of the house of Commons, and the conduct of business there, has fallen entirely to the care of the chief secretary.” He had few fond memories of his time in the role, writing to a friend in 1773 that

My ministerial career in this country is, thank God, now at an end and... I have no ambition to run it over again. I entered upon it with every honest and patriotic intention which a man bound to Ireland by birth, affection and interest could possibly entertain [!] but I was unfortunate, the times and circumstances were unfavourable; I found myself obliged to do many things I did not like and to leave others undone which I wished to accomplish.

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66 Thomas Bartlett, ‘Ireland 1769-72,’ in Macartney of Lisanoure, 66. Macartney was not keen to take up the role in Ireland, He had purchased a house in Charles Street, off Berkeley Square in London, and he delayed his departure for Ireland, partly waiting on Cabinet approval of Townshend’s policies, but also to lobby for a more lucrative and prestigious post of Ambassador to Spain. When these efforts failed, Macartney and his wife set off for Ireland. See Peter Roebuck, ‘Middle Years 1764-80,’ in Roebuck, Macartney of Lisanoure, 137; and Bartlett, ‘Ireland,’ 70-71.
68 George Macartney, Account of Ireland in 1773 (London: 1773), 70-71.
69 George Macartney to Sir A. Acheson, July 23, 1773, PRONI D1606/1/77.
Macartney had little time for the political disputes and power struggles he witnessed in the Irish Commons. He maintained that Ireland would be better served by an acceptance of constitutional subordination to England and greater attention to the Irish economy and the management of Irish revenue. At the end of his time in Dublin, Macartney compiled *An Account of Ireland in 1773*, which he printed privately. In the pages of his *Account*, Macartney revealed himself as an imperialist; he wrote that Ireland “under whatever predicament it may be considered, is, and ought to be, subordinate to and dependant upon Great Britain.” He continued,

> In this vast empire, on which the sun never sets, and whose bounds nature has not yet ascertained, one great superintending and controuling (sic) dominion must exist somewhere; and where can that dominion reside with so much dignity, propriety, and safety, as in the British legislature?

Macartney was, from an early period, a firm advocate of legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland. In 1779, at the behest of Lord North, he visited Ireland to explore the possibilities of a union. His response to North was that “the idea of an (sic) union at present would excite a rebellion...and yet, without an (sic) union how vague and close is the connexion of Ireland with England.”

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70 Bartlett, ‘Ireland,’ 85.
71 Macartney characterised Ireland as one of the “inferior branches of this great body:” Macartney, *Account of Ireland*, 55.
72 Macartney, *Account of Ireland*, 55.
73 Bartlett, ‘Ireland,’ 87.
While posted in Dublin, Macartney took his first real interest in the Irish estate he had inherited nine years previously. Despite the fact that the estate was dispersed between five different locations, and much of it was undrained bog, and mountain, he embarked upon a programme of estate expansion, and began an ambitious scheme for improvement of the house at Lisanoure.74 According to Peter Roebuck, an early artist’s impression of the house reveals that Lisanoure was substantially Georgian Gothic in design, and was similar to the contemporary edifice at Strawberry Hill, the home of Macartney’s friend Horace Walpole.75 The general impression of Lisanoure House at the time was that it suffered from cold and damp, but the Macartneys lived out their later years at the house, apparently in comfort.

Grenada
At the end of his Dublin posting, Macartney was once again faced with the dilemma which had plagued him throughout his career. Despite the substantial loans from Holland, he was embarrassed by the dichotomy between his public position and his private lack of substance.76 Marriage to Lady Jane had not been financially rewarding—she was the youngest of Bute’s many daughters, and as middling Irish gentry he had not been in a position to bargain for funds or assets with his prospective father-in-law before the marriage.77 His Russian and Irish appointments had been expensive to sustain, as were the ongoing works on his Antrim estate. Macartney was in receipt of a royal pension, but that precluded

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74 Bartlett, ‘Ireland,’ 87.
75 Bartlett, ‘Ireland,’ 140.
76 Roebuck, ‘Early Years,’ 2.
77 Peter Roebuck, ‘Middle Years 1764-80,’ in Roebuck, Macartney of Lisanoure, 131.
him from holding a seat in the Westminster Parliament—a seat which was essential to his advancement in public office.\textsuperscript{78} Macartney’s trajectory illustrates the centrality of membership of parliament to the advancement and establishment of a public career in the eighteenth-century Empire.\textsuperscript{79} He eventually solved the problem by exchanging his pension for an equivalent sinecure as Constable for Toome Castle in County Londonderry; and with his father-in-law’s assistance, he was then returned as the member for Ayr Burghs in the 1774 general election.\textsuperscript{80} Within a year he was appointed as Governor of Grenada and promptly resigned from his parliamentary seat.\textsuperscript{81}

The Macartneys arrived in Grenada in May 1776. Most of their private and official papers were lost during their flight from the island three years later, but a series of personal letters Macartney wrote to Lady Ossory survive, and these provide an insight into the couple’s experiences in the Caribbean and their impressions of the region and its inhabitants. Lady Ossory and her husband, the Earl of Upper Ossory, were close friends of Macartney, part of a circle of friends which included Horace Walpole, Joshua Reynolds, and Stephen and Charles James Fox. In his first letter to Lady Ossory from Grenada in September 1776, Macartney reported that “As yet we are very popular, but all new Governors are so for a time & then they are numbered with their predecessors.”\textsuperscript{82} Macartney’s letters give the impression of a man who very

\textsuperscript{78} Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 89.

\textsuperscript{79} Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 90.

\textsuperscript{80} Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 89-90.

\textsuperscript{81} Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 90. In July, Macartney was elevated to the Irish peerage as Baron Macartney of Lisanoure: ‘St. James’s, July 2,’ London Gazette, June 29, 1776.

\textsuperscript{82} George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.
much enjoyed his Caribbean posting, at least initially. He relished the climate and enjoyed exploring the natural environment, assuring his friend that “all the unfavourable accounts” of the West Indies were “without foundation,” and that Grenada itself was “impossible for the most lively imagination to figure anything so beautiful.”\footnote{George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.}

Grenada was ceded to Britain in 1763 after the Seven Years War, but the society Macartney encountered remained firmly divided between British and French elements; and religion was a central element in the divide. The French who remained after 1763—known as Britain’s ‘new subjects’—were involved in

\begin{figure}[h]
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{George Macartney, 1\textsuperscript{st} Earl Macartney; Sir George Leonard Staunton, 1\textsuperscript{st} Bt by Lemuel Francis Abbott, c.1795. © National Portrait Gallery, London.}
\end{center}
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“rancorous struggles” over their rights throughout the 1760s and 1770s, which threatened the island’s fragile political and economic stability. In 1768, the Privy Council had ruled that French Catholics in Grenada could vote for assembly members, and that two of their number could take a seat in the assembly and council, without having sworn the oath against transubstantiation. Many British Protestants in Grenada railed against the ruling; numerous petitions and vitriolic pamphlets were published throughout the 1760s and 1770s. The exemption remained, however, and was a foundational paragraph in instructions issued to governors of Grenada well into the 1790s.

The letters Macartney wrote to Lady Ossory gave little indication of these difficulties, although he frequently described the extraordinary “mixture of people” he and his wife encountered during their sojourn,

> It is singular, what a number of strange people are brought together in this part of the world, who one would imagine were never intended to see each others faces anywhere else...there is indeed such extraordinary associations, such a concourse of jarring atoms, as it would seem, scarcely any political chemistry could amalgamate together. Yet, necessity...and common interest make them agree tolerably well...

Macartney was dismissive of the French inhabitants in his first letter, noting that a considerable number of them remained in Grenada, “but our countrymen are

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85 Muller, ‘Bonds of Belonging,’ 40–41
86 George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, June 15, 1777, PRONI T2480/3.
infinitely superior to them in wealth, ability & importance,” and proceeded to describe the French as “dissipated and extravagant beyond belief.”\textsuperscript{87} He was intrigued by the life stories he encountered, and in particular those of men who had changed their station in life. He wrote of a “gentleman of a landed estate in Norfolk” who preferred to remain in Tobago, rather than manage his property as an absentee; a carpenter who had risen to become a member of the island’s Assembly; “negro drivers” who had become “men of consequence;” and London shopkeepers and ship’s captains who had purchased estates.\textsuperscript{88} Macartney’s interest in such changes in fortunes perhaps reflected his attitude towards his own career, which was marked by his fear that his hard-won reputation would be undermined by the discovery of his modest background and means.\textsuperscript{89}

As to the day-to-day life of a governor, Macartney reported that he and Lady Macartney’s days were spent together riding, dining and reading, except when he was required to attend the Courts, Council or his Secretary’s Office.\textsuperscript{90} His governorship incorporated Tobago and an archipelago of twenty-four small islands known as the Grenadines, and Lady Macartney accompanied him on some of his travels around the islands. Their social life in St. George’s included frequent balls—Macartney reported to Lady Ossory that “notwithstanding the supposed heat of the climate people dance here all night long with as much spirit & activity as at Almacks or Cornely’s”—and the couple were “most hospitably &

\textsuperscript{87} George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.
\textsuperscript{88} George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, June 15, 1777, PRONI T2480/3.
\textsuperscript{89} Peter Roebuck, ‘Conclusion,’ in Roebuck, \textit{Macartney of Lisaneure}, 314.
\textsuperscript{90} George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.
often elegantly entertained” at any number of gentlemen’s estates.\footnote{George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2. Almacks and Cornleys were clubs in Mayfair, London.} During a seven-week sojourn at Tobago in late 1776, they “passed [their] time in a continual round of jollity, feasting all day & dancing all night at the different houses where we visited. Such is the style of West India living.”\footnote{George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, December 2, 1777, PRONI T2480/4.} 

Although Macartney confided to Lady Ossory that the “mixture of people” in Grenada “affords a good deal of entertainment to us,” he did have cause to complain to his overseer in London.\footnote{George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, June 15, 1777, PRONI T2480/3.} In a letter to Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the American Colonies, Macartney reported that the French whites embraced the toleration allowed and the benefits accorded to them, yet “French of every denomination and colour are totally disaffected...and incapable of any sincere attachment to us.”\footnote{George Macartney to Lord Germain, January 10, 1778, British Library, MS Liverpool Papers, ADD MS38718, quoted in Donald Polson, ‘The Tolerated, the Indulged and the Contented: Ethnic Alliances and Rivalries in Grenadian Plantation Society 1763-1800,’ (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2011), 124.} Macartney’s years in Dublin had provided him with experience in mediating between different interests, which included religious divisions. His \textit{Account of Ireland in 1773} revealed that he was by no means anti-Catholic; he had argued there that “the dangers of popery” had been removed (in Ireland at least) and “the first great principle of government ought to be to make every subject of the state as useful as possible.”\footnote{Macartney, \textit{Account of Ireland}, 23.} 

Although there is no such commentary from Macartney on Grenada, it is reasonable to assume that in his dealings with the Assembly and Council there, he would have...
attempted to incorporate Britain’s ‘new subjects’ for the betterment of the British imperial project.

The struggles between the British and French interests in Grenada were not the only challenges Macartney faced as Governor. The islands under his purview, located close to French Martinique and Spanish Trinidad, were inadequately defended. The neighbouring islands posed particular threats at a time of heightened hostility in the region. The Americans had established an unofficial naval base in Martinique, from which both American and French privateers preyed upon British shipping throughout the Eastern Caribbean. Macartney (as had his predecessors) repeatedly appealed to the Secretary of State in London for further troops to be stationed in Grenada and its dependencies, and for an increased naval presence to defend against foreign invasion and privateers, as well as to prevent internal strife from the slave and maroon populations. With no naval support or troops arriving from Britain, Macartney was increasingly called upon to protect British merchant ships (carrying Grenadian crops, supplies and enslaved Africans) from hostile fleets and privateers, and to negotiate with the French governor of Martinique to retrieve British ships captured by French and American privateers. He was also busy overseeing the improvement of the island’s defences and developing the militia, in the face of constant rumours of French invasion.

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96 Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 117.
In June 1779, Macartney received intelligence that a French fleet had taken St. Vincent, and that an assault on Grenada was imminent. He dispatched “several expresses” to inform the British Naval command in the region of this news, called up the island’s militia, and procured the Assembly’s financial support to supply the militia. Lady Macartney departed Grenada, taking with her duplicates of Macartney’s official and personal papers. Unfortunately, while the vessel she was on was docked in St. Kitts en route to England, a fire broke out and the papers were destroyed. The originals were destroyed or taken by the French at the capture of Grenada.

When thirty-seven sailing ships appeared on the horizon early on the second of July, Macartney wrote that “we flattered ourselves that it was a British fleet,” but it soon became apparent that the fleet was French. The defensive force at Macartney’s disposal comprised 101 rank and file of the 48th Regiment, 24 recruits of the royal artillery, a few sailors from vessels in the port and between three and four hundred militia. In contrast, the French landed at Grenada with some 6,500 men, under the command of Count d’Estaing. When the French fleet anchored in the early afternoon, the Grenadians were virtually defenceless; according to Macartney, “we had no coast batteries, nor indeed

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100 Lord Macartney, St. George’s Grenada, to Lord George Germain, July 5, 1779. Printed in Barrow, Some Account, 1: 428.
101 Johnston, ‘Grenada,’ 123.
could we afford to divide our strength.”

Within twenty-four hours, the French had over-run St. George and its meagre fortifications. Macartney attempted to negotiate a capitulation, but D’Estaing refused, leaving Macartney with no option but to yield the island. He procured an assurance from d’Estaing that the inhabitants left behind in Grenada would retain “quiet possession of their estates, and that during the present war they shall not be obliged to bear arms against his Majesty.”

D’Estaing insisted that the remains of the British 48th Regiment and the artillery recruits, together with Macartney and the officers were to embark for France. On Macartney’s account, D’Estaing’s conduct was entirely contrary to usual practice—he refused to consent to an exchange of his prisoners in the West Indies, or to them being paroled to a British or neutral island. As a result, Macartney was sent to France as a prisoner of war. Other hostages, including Attorney-General George Staunton and his wife, were sent to France separately, on board the Menagere. On Macartney’s departure, the remaining “principal inhabitants of St. George, Grenada” presented him with an address, expressing “that gratitude which we justly feel towards your excellency, to join our voices to the acknowledgement of the conquerors of this island, of the well-planned and spirited defence which you have made with such inferior force.”

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108 Extract from the journal of Mr Walker, a passenger on board the Menagere, on her passage from Grenada to France, in Staunton, Memoirs, 224. The Menagere left Grenada on 29 July, arriving in October.
The capture of Grenada was a newsworthy event in London, and the letters between Macartney’s friends indicate that they were keen for news, not least among them Lady Macartney. Horace Walpole reported to Lady Ossory in September that

I can learn no more of Lord Macartney, Madam, than your Ladyship sees in the papers, that he is near Rochelle. I have written to Madame du Defend to beg she will do him any service in her power, though he must have more powerful mediators; but sometimes by accident a straw may be more useful than a white wand.

In France, Macartney was imprisoned in Limoges, but, as he explained in a letter to Staunton, as he was “not a military man, my liberty or detention is a matter of mere indifference” to the French. Upmost in his mind was procuring for himself a prisoner of war exchange, rather than a parole, as the latter would prevent him from any consideration for British public office in future. In Paris, Macartney was introduced to a French man being held by the British as a prisoner of war (a Messieur de Verdiere), and the two men agreed to request a mutual exchange. Although the British government agreed without hesitation, it was only after Staunton’s intercession that the French government relinquished Macartney as their prisoner.

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110 Robbins extracted a number of entries from Lady Mary Coke’s diary regarding Lady Macartney’s anxious wait for word of her husband’s release. See Robbins, Our First Ambassador to China, 112-113.
112 Lord Macartney, Lisanoure to George Staunton, January 1, 1780, in Staunton, Memoir, 237.
113 Lord Macartney, Paris, to George Staunton, October 25, 1779, in Staunton, Memoir, 235-236.
114 Lord Macartney, Lisanoure to George Staunton, January 1, 1780, in Staunton, Memoir, 31, 237.
Macartney’s next imperial posting was as Governor of Madras in 1781. Lady Macartney opted to remain at home in England rather than travel to India, but George Staunton accompanied him. The two men also travelled together on Macartney’s following posting, to China. British political and family patronage had secured Macartney his appointment to Grenada, but once out in the Caribbean, and back in France, his closest ally was Staunton, a fellow-Irishman. These lingering links with Ireland demonstrate that London connections were only part of the experience of the Empire for men like Macartney.

**Richard Burke**

Here lies honest Richard, whose fate I must sigh at,

Alas, that such frolic should now be so quiet!

What spirits were his, what wit and what whim,

Now breaking a jest, and now breaking a limb;

Now wrangling and grumbling to keep up the ball,

Now teazing and vexing, yet laughing at all?

In short so provoking a Devil was Dick,

That we wish’d him full ten times a day at Old Nick.

But missing his mirth and agreeable vein,

As often we wish’d to have Dick back again.

(Excerpt from *Retaliation: A Poem* by Oliver Goldsmith)\(^{115}\)

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Oliver Goldsmith, an Irish-born poet and author, wrote *Retaliation* not long before he died in 1774. The poem contained mock epitaphs of his friends—including Edmund, Richard and William Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and David Garrick. Richard Burke appears charismatic, yet frustrating, in Goldsmith’s portrayal. The same characteristics emerge in the handful of Richard’s letters which survive, together with his brother Edmund’s commentary on Richard’s movements in his letters. Richard was a firmly entrenched member of Edmund’s household, as well as the group of friends that coalesced around Samuel Johnson, Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke in London. Famously, Edmund Burke, together with Goldsmith, Johnson, Reynolds and Dr Nugent (Edmund’s father-in-law), founded the ‘Literary Club’ to discuss moral and literary subjects. They met “at the Turk’s Head in Soho one evening in every week, at seven, and generally continued their conversation till a pretty late hour.” Whether Richard Burke was a formal member of the Club is uncertain, but his inclusion in *Retaliation* suggests that he had a place within the fraternity.


Burke’s life has attracted scant scholarly attention and is usually told as it relates to his older brother Edmund’s life. Indeed, the archival traces of his life survive largely due to his membership of Edmund’s household. Burke was an active member of the Irish expatriate community in London. As a young man, he ventured to the Caribbean as part of the Irish mercantile network. Once Edmund made inroads into politics, the opportunity for administrative roles emerged—but Richard Burke seems to have been suited to neither a mercantile nor an administrative career. In the context of this chapter, he is of interest because of the time he spent in Grenada and St. Vincent, and for what the record tells us about his activities during those appointments. Even though for much of the time that Burke occupied the post of Collector of Customs he was not physically located in the Caribbean, his official connection with the posting in Grenada was long-lasting and controversial.

Richard Burke was born in Dublin in 1733, the sixth of the eleven children of Richard and Mary (nee Nagle) Burke. Like his older brother Edmund, he was educated at Abraham Shackleton’s school at Ballitore. Little is known of his early years, but he first went to London in 1752, possibly with the intention of pursuing a commercial career. The Irish trading community in London had experienced a dramatic expansion in the 1730s and 1740s which reflected the surge in Irish exports fuelled by the expansive markets in Britain’s North

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American and Caribbean colonies. There is no record of Burke’s activities within this merchant community, other than that he travelled to Grenada in 1759. Edmund informed an uncle in Ireland at the time that “one of the first merchants here” had taken Richard “by the hand, and enabled him to go off with a very valuable cargo.” Edmund reported that Richard travelled with “one of our best friends here” who was going to take up “one of the first places in the island;” this was presumably William Burke, who took up the post of Secretary for Guadeloupe in 1759. William Burke was no relation of Edmund and Richard. He was the London-born son of John Bourke, a Dublin lawyer who had established a successful practice in London. William registered at Middle Temple in London around the same time as Edmund and he was a constant presence in Edmund’s household. It has been suggested that Edmund, William and Richard pooled finances from an early stage. Nothing more is known of Burke’s first journey to Grenada, and indeed there is no further trace of his mercantile career.

Richard Burke’s first political writing, a contribution to Remarks on the Letter to Two Great Men, was published in 1760. George McElroy’s research

120 Thomas M. Truxes, ‘London’s Irish Merchant Community and North Atlantic Commerce in the Mid-Eighteenth Century,’ in Irish and Scottish Mercantile Networks in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, ed. David Dickson, Jan Parmentier and Jane Ohlmeyer (Gent: Academia Press, 2007), 272. 121 Edmund Burke, London, to Patrick Nagle, October 11, 1759, in The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, ed. Thomas W. Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 1: 134-135. Nini Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: 1612—1865 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 182. 122 Craig Bailey, ‘Metropole and Colony: Irish Networks and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Empire,’ Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora 23 (2006): 166. 123 Dixon Wecter, Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen: A study of the statesman’s financial integrity and private relationships (Boulder: University of Colorado Studies, 1939), 30. 124 Remarks on the Letter to Two Great Men (London: R and J. Dodsley, 1760). This pamphlet is attributed to William Burke but was considered by earlier commentators to be the work of Charles Townshend. McElroy argues that the section of the pamphlet which gained the most attention (i.e. the section warning that colonies with no fear of the French were more likely seek independence) was written by Richard Burke: McElroy and Lambert, ‘Richard Burke.’
indicates that Burke developed a career as a political writer, although he always wrote anonymously or under a pseudonym, and mostly in collaboration with Edmund or William Burke. McElroy has also suggested that Richard was probably one of the many writers who contributed letters in support of the Rockingham administration in the press, behind various pseudonyms. In addition to writing, Burke’s career encompassed politics, law, and various administrative posts in London and the Caribbean. Burke’s connection with the British Caribbean was limited to the Ceded Islands. It is no coincidence that many of the Irish sojourners profiled in this thesis travelled to these islands—they were a prime location for late eighteenth-century sojourners. The more established British islands such as Barbados, Jamaica and Antigua were dominated by a well-established planter class, but the Ceded Islands represented a renewed opportunity to enter into the plantation economy.

Collector of Customs for Grenada

In 1763, Bute approved Burke’s first official appointment in the Caribbean, as Collector of Customs for Grenada. As Edmund reported to his friend Richard Shackleton, “My brother Dick has got a good place, that of Collector of Customs of the Grenadoes; an employment lucrative enough, though in a remote and an unhealthy Climate, this is some Drawback.” The appointment of Customs officials was based predominantly upon a system of patronage; indeed,

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125 McElroy and Lambert, ‘Richard Burke.’
126 McElroy and Lambert, ‘Richard Burke.’
127 At the close of the Seven Years War in 1763, France ceded Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent and Tobago to Britain.
128 Quintanilla, ‘From a Dear and Worthy Land,’ 68.
130 Edmund Burke, London to Richard Shackleton, Dublin, April 19, 1763, in Copeland, _Correspondence_ 1: 167.
according to William Ashworth “perhaps no other state department, with the exception of the Exchequer, was such a favourite for sinecure appointments by state benefactors and royal favourites.” Customs sinecures were attractive as they paid well and (apart from a minor reshuffling in the 1760s) had the security of tenure for life. Absenteeism amongst customs officers appears to have been the norm. In July 1763, however, owing to tensions regarding the customs and excise regime in the North American colonies, Treasury ordered absentee customs officers to report to their posts within a month, and proceeded to dismiss some officers for non-compliance. After Burke’s appointment in 1763, it took some time for the London bureaucracy to formalise the customs regime in Grenada. By letters patent in July 1764, Britain extended the customs regime already in place in Barbados and the Leeward islands to Grenada, such that Grenadians were required to pay the duty of 4.5% to the British, rather than to the French, as had been the case until 1764. Richard’s appointment was formally approved and he set off for Grenada in July 1764. The letters patent were registered and publicly announced in January 1765, and a custom-house was erected in Grenada, and officers appointed to collect the customs duties.

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131 Ashworth, Customs and Excise, 141.
132 Ashworth, Customs and Excise, 142.
135 Edmund Burke, London, to Richard Shackleton, July 17, 1764, in Copeland, Correspondence, 1: 176. Note that Richard Burke was in Grenada very early in the British takeover, as Governor Melvill did not arrive in Grenada until December 1764, and his first council did not sit until December 1765 (see Campbell v Hall, XX: 249 and 329.) Burke was also acting as Receiver-General under Governor Melvill (see Proclamation by Governor Melvill, published in Lloyd’s Evening Post, October 31, 1765, 1.)
136 Campbell v Hall, XX: 261.
The administration of the customs regime was a pressing concern for the first British Governor of the island, Richard Melvill. His dispatches (together with a high profile legal case brought by Scottish sugar planter Alexander Campbell) indicate issues with illicit trading and the collection of the British impost. In 1766, a report from Melvill was summarised by the Board of Trade as follows:

regrets the continuation of the illicit trade between the French and Dutch Islands...especially Dominica & St. Vincent, can suggest no expedient to restrain it, but more small cruizers & more land waiters with better encouragement & some alteration in the Act...Mr Burke, the Collector, now in England, can give particulars & useful informations.137

Melvill attributed the difficulty with the customs regime to lack of resources, staff (“more land waiters”), and his inability to police illicit trade. But there was also a great degree of confusion as to the legitimacy of Britain’s customs regime in Grenada, as illustrated by the high profile legal case of Campbell v Hall, also known as the “Case of the Island of Grenada.”138 The case was brought by a Grenadian planter, who had (in 1764) paid the British duty of 4.5% on his sugar export to William Hall, the customs officer in Grenada at the time.139 The case turned on whether the pre-existing French customs regime was superseded by the British regime. The case was heard before the King’s Bench in 1774, and Campbell won; the court ruled that the British customs regime did not come into

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137 ‘Entry Books of Letters, Instructions, Commissions, Warrants: Precis of correspondence with governors for 1766.’ TNA, CO 5/218. This is the precis of a letter from Melvill, Grenada 7 April 1766 (received 17 June 1766).

138 Campbell v Hall, XX: 240-354.

force until Governor Melvill’s first council was assembled in December 1765.  

During Burke’s first stint in Grenada, therefore, he was charged with enforcing a customs regime which was of questionable legitimacy. As indicated by Governor Melvill’s dispatch, Burke was in Grenada for only a year before he returned to London on a leave of absence.

Burke returned to Grenada in 1770; it seems he was given the choice of going to Grenada and retaining his position as Collector of Customs, or losing it altogether. Edmund’s correspondence implies that his brother had been accused of some wrongdoing during his first visit to Grenada in 1764-5, but nothing is known of the nature of the accusations. Burke’s second stint also resulted in accusations of wrongdoing. On the basis of his commission as Collector of Customs, Burke claimed the right to handle funds which normally passed through the hands of the Treasurer of Grenada and St. Vincent (Alexander Symson), effectively claiming that office for himself. Historian Dixon Wecter’s research suggests that the feud between Burke and Symson was personal. Indeed, Burke hinted that his accusers were “the most notorious Smugglers in the Island.” Edmund wrote to a friend that his brother went “into a bad climate, among worthless and disagreeable people; but I hope the goodness of Providence, in his favour, is not yet exhausted.”

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140 Campbell v Hall, XX: 329.
141 Letter Edmund Burke to Rockingham, quoted in Wecter, Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen, 56.
142 Wecter, Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen, 54.
143 Wecter, Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen, 60.
Soon after his arrival, Richard Burke wrote to his friend David Garrick, joking that he had been forcibly transported to the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{145} Garrick interceded on Burke’s behalf with Lord North, the British Prime Minister, eventually securing “permission to order a warrant for granting leave of absence to Mr Richard Burke for one year.”\textsuperscript{146} On receiving news of this second leave of absence, Burke wrote to Garrick, “ten thousand thanks, and then ten thousand more: never was any thing so opportune; I had almost worked myself up to the resolution of going without leave.”\textsuperscript{147} The feud that Burke had stoked continued to simmer, however, even after his return to England. In mid-1772 Governor Leybourne wrote to Westminster that “The perverse conduct of Mr. Burke’s friends” in the Assembly in Grenada had “created a Diversion and heat... that stop’d all publick Business for some time.” Though Burke’s friends in Grenada were few, Leybourne insisted that “they contrive to prevent a sufficient number of Members from making a House, by absenting themselves.”\textsuperscript{148} The dispute dragged on for a number of years and was finally settled in 1783.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{145} Richard Burke, Grenada to David Garrick, October 3, 1770, in \textit{Private Correspondence of David Garrick}, ed. Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley (London, 1831), 1: 401-402.

\textsuperscript{146} Sir Grey Cooper, Treasury Chambers to Mr. Garrick, March 18, 1771, in \textit{Correspondence of David Garrick}, 1: 418.

\textsuperscript{147} Richard Burke, Grenada, to Mr. Garrick, July 28, 1771, in \textit{Correspondence of David Garrick}, 1: 429.

\textsuperscript{148} Quoted in Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, 60-61.

\textsuperscript{149} Dixon Wecter’s research in in the Milton Manuscript collection indicates that in December 1776, the Inspector General of Barbados suspended Burke from his position as Collector of Customs, after having charged him with various counts of dishonesty in keeping his accounts. Burke appealed against his suspension claiming (inter alia) that although the suspension was based upon the state of Burke’s books and accounts in Grenada, he himself was not allowed access to them in order to defend himself. Further, Burke was accused of having appropriated nearly £2,200 for his own use. In July 1778, Burke was reinstated as Commissioner of Customs, but was at the same time directed to repay the balance of monies owing to the Crown. When he refused to pay, the Commissioners again suspended him, and obtained judgment against him for the outstanding sum. No action was taken on the judgement, and in 1783, Richard was informed that whilst he owed the sum adjudged, he would not be pursued for “surcharges.” This was the period during which Edmund was a member of the Coalition Ministry, and Richard was appointed a secretary in the Treasury Office—so the outstanding debt to the Crown was clearly not an obstacle to the appointment. After the Coalition government fell, Burke was again ordered to pay the debt to the crown, but it seems that he possibly never did so. See Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, 66-68.
On his return to London in late 1771, it emerged that in addition to the accusations of financial misconduct, Burke had also made a controversial land purchase in St. Vincent. According to Edmund, his brother had made a considerable purchase in the West Indies. Government disputes it with him for the present; but if he prevails, as I trust he will, his establishment will be considerable, and he will be under no necessity of making a long stay in that remote and disagreeable part of the world.150

Dixon Wecter, who undertook a study of Edmund Burke’s finances, argued that the St. Vincent’s purchase was part of a Burke family plan to offset the extensive losses they had suffered in 1769 when the value of East India Company shares crashed.151 Whilst this may overstate the level of planning involved, the tenacity with which the family pursued Burke’s claim to the St. Vincent property over the following five years demonstrates the value of the investment to the Burkes. More broadly, their battle over the St. Vincent land illustrates the connection between Irish people (albeit based in London) and the Caribbean.

The St. Vincent Land Purchase

St. Vincent, which lagged behind Grenada in terms of development, presented an opportunity for Irishmen willing to speculate or settle in a space relatively unoccupied by British people.152 After Britain took possession of the Ceded

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150 Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, September 10, 1771 in Correspondence, 1: 255-256.
151 Wecter, Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen, 56.
152 St. Vincent lagged Grenada for a combination of reasons. The French settlers in Grenada had been guaranteed continued possession of their property by the terms of their capitulation at the island’s capture by Britain in 1761, and by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. This ensured that the plantation economy was largely uninterrupted when the island was ceded to Britain. In contrast, the French settlers in Dominica and St. Vincent were accorded no such rights to their land, which became the property of the British crown. (See D. H. Murdoch, ‘Land Policy in the Eighteenth-Century British Empire: The Sale of
islands, the imperial government experimented with a new land grant regime in an effort to regularise policy across the Empire.\footnote{Murdoch, ‘The Sale of Crown Lands in the Ceded Islands,’ 553.} Rather than granting land \textit{gratis} upon petition (the existing practice in in American and Caribbean colonies), land was sold in the Ceded Islands at public auction at a minimum price per acre. After surveying St. Vincent, the new Land Commissioner recommended to Treasury that, since the indigenous Carib people were occupying the best land in the island, they ought to be removed to a reservation, their lands surveyed and compensation paid to them. Treasury agreed—with the proviso that no removal should take place until terms had been agreed with the Carib people.\footnote{Murdoch, ‘The Sale of Crown Lands in the Ceded Islands,’ 561.} When the Land Commission commenced the survey of the Carib lands in 1769, however, the Caribs met the commissioners with armed force. The situation remained unresolved until 1771, when the Commissioners held a conference with the Caribs—but the latter rejected all offers and declared themselves an independent people. In response, the British government ordered a military expedition a year later; an expedition sometimes referred to as the ‘Carib War.’ By February 1773 the Caribs had been forced to negotiate a treaty which confined them to a large reservation.

\footnote{Crown Lands in the Ceded Islands, 1763—1783,’ \textit{Historical Journal} 27 (1984): 552.) Much of the agricultural development on Dominica and St. Vincent abruptly ceased, as the French abandoned their properties when the islands were ceded to Britain or sold them to British speculators. Second, St. Vincent had a relatively large indigenous and maroon population. The indigenous inhabitants were known as the ‘Yellow’ (or sometimes ‘Red’) Caribs, and the maroons as ‘Black Caribs;’ the latter were descended from a group of shipwrecked enslaved Africans who had integrated with the indigenous population. The Carib populations occupied the most desirable land on St. Vincent, and it took some years before the British government eventually dispossessed them of this land, such that British development of the island could proceed. See also Quintanilla, ‘From a Dear and Worthy Land,’ 69.}
During this period of uncertainty over the status of the Caribs’ land, the Commission continued to process sales of the land.\textsuperscript{155} By 1773, 3,885 acres of Carib lands had been sold, which represented almost twenty per cent of land sales in St. Vincent.\textsuperscript{156} One of the purchasers was Richard Burke. In October and November 1770, he purchased a number of parcels of land on St. Vincent, as he described it, from “several Red Caribs aboriginal natives.”\textsuperscript{157} Despite reports by Governor Melvill that “Black Charraïbs had come & burnt down for a second time the Houses & other Works begun by Collector Burke,”\textsuperscript{158} Burke advised the Council of St. Vincent that he had taken possession of the land and had “ever since continued in the quiet & uninterrupted possession thereof.”\textsuperscript{159} He added that he had registered the deeds of conveyance in the Public Register of St. Vincent.\textsuperscript{160} Burke’s purchase may have been one among many, but it was nonetheless controversial in St. Vincent. Feelings ran so high on the island that in 1770, Governor Melvill vetoed as too harsh an act of the St. Vincent Assembly which proposed “Capital Punishment” as the penalty for such sales (it is unclear whether the vendor or purchaser was to be executed).\textsuperscript{161} Despite Burke’s plea that his title not be invalidated, the St. Vincent’s legislature passed a Bill invalidating all such purchases. Along with other purchasers, Burke petitioned

\begin{footnotes}
\item[157] ‘Richard Burke’s Petition to the Council of St. Vincent, July 2, 1771,’ quoted in Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, 58.
\item[158] Letter Governor Melvill, Grenada to Lord Hillsborough, London, December 16, 1770, quoted in Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, 57.
\item[159] Governor Melvill, Grenada to Lord Hillsborough, London, December 16, 1770, and ‘Richard Burke’s Petition to the Council of St. Vincent, July 2, 1771.’ Both documents quoted in Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, 58.
\item[160] Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, p.58.
\item[161] Wecter, \textit{Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen}, p.57.
\end{footnotes}
the Governor, “begging for veto, and deprecating the harshness of the
punishment to be meted out for this new invented crime.”

On his return to London, Burke continued his campaign for the repeal of the
July 1771 *St. Vincent Act*. Edmund wrote to a relative that his brother “had not
been negligent in the management of his contested purchase,” and that he had
had initial success with lobbying the Board of Trade, but that “as it is an affair
of magnitude, so will it be a work of time and patience.” When negotiations
stalled, the Burkes enlisted the assistance of their friend Charles James Fox;
rumours abounded that they had promised Fox a share of the profits on the land
sale. Fox lobbied Lord North on the Burkes’ behalf, and appeared close to
resolving the matter when it was discovered that the St. Vincent’s land was part
of a larger parcel of land which had been allocated to the ‘Black’ Caribs in the
treaty of peace at the end of the Carib War in February 1773. Fox and the
Burkes continued to campaign, but with no success. By 1779, St. Vincent was
recaptured by France and any possibility of Burke obtaining legal title to the land
evaporated.

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162 Wecter, *Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen*, 58.
164 A footnote from the editor of *The Last Journals of Horace Walpole* states, in relation to Walpole’s
comment that Burke “in pushing [Fox] on asking for an enormous grant in St. Vincent’s,” that “To secure
it by his interest, the Burkes admitted Charles Fox to a share; and yet he could not persuade Lord North
to favour his bargain.” See *Last Journals of Horace Walpole*, ed. A. Francis Steuart (London: John Lane
Co, 1910), 1: 305, n1. Note that the available sources do not confirm any pecuniary interests by Fox in
the St. Vincent’s land.
165 In a letter to Rockingham in August 1773, Edmund Burke reported that Fox had “pressed the St.
166 St. Vincent was later returned to Britain in 1783. The primary sources do not indicate what became
of Burke’s St. Vincent land after 1783, although Murdoch concludes that after St. Vincent was ceded to
Britain, the land sales policy “lay in ruins.” Murdoch, ‘The Sale of Crown Lands in the Ceded Islands,’
573.
After his sporadic career in the Caribbean, Burke remained in London practicing law, and assisting Edmund with his political career. Edmund was bereft when Richard died in 1794, within months of Edmund’s son, also called Richard. A friend wrote that Edmund “Burke has had a great loss lately—his only brother, with whom he had lived in the greatest harmony from his youth...He is very much affected...He talked of retiring from all public business, and leaving over the trial of Hastings to the care of others.”\textsuperscript{167}

There are many gaps in our knowledge of Richard Burke’s life, and his Caribbean sojourns. But piecing together the available information has revealed little-known aspects of Britain’s early years in the Ceded Islands. What we can gather about Burke’s tenure as a customs official in Grenada emphasises the difficulties the imperial state encountered in incorporating newly-acquired Caribbean territories within its regulatory purview. Burke’s attempts to enrich himself by laying claim to land in St. Vincent has exposed a little of the story of contact between imperial agents and indigenous people in the Caribbean—a matter on which all other men in this thesis are silent.

**Richard Madden**

Richard Madden was an entirely different character from George Macartney and Richard Burke. A generation after these men, he was Catholic, and a staunch abolitionist. As a Catholic, Madden was only able to avail himself fully of the

\textsuperscript{167} Malone to Lord Charlemont, February 20, 1794, quoted in Wecter, *Edmund Burke and his Kinsmen*, 75.
opportunities of the Empire in the 1830s on account of the 1829 Catholic Relief Act—a hindrance which Macartney and Burke had not faced. Indeed, Madden was one of the first Irish Catholics appointed to the British civil service. What the three men had in common, however, was their Irish background, their move to London, and their work within the project of empire.

Madden was born in Dublin amidst the 1798 Rebellion. In his Memoirs, he ascribed his “ruling passion” for 1798 to the circumstances of his birth—his father’s house was apparently “ransacked” in a search for arms as his mother laboured with him in an upstairs bedroom. He is best known as an influential historian who shaped the Irish popular consciousness with his multi-volume United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times, but in recent years Madden himself—by virtue of the career he pursued alongside his writing—has become the historical subject. His early adulthood was spent practicing medicine in France and London, writing for newspapers and undertaking extensive travels abroad. In 1828 he married an English woman, Harriet Elmslie. She was the

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168 Burton, ‘Liberty’s Call,’ 199.

169 The Society of United Irishmen, established in Belfast in 1791 was inspired by the ideals of the French and American Revolutions. The aim of the Society’s founders was to secure reform of the Irish parliament. The British government was deeply suspicious of the Society, particularly after the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793. In June 1798 the Society, by then driven underground, orchestrated a Rebellion. Dublin failed to join the Rebellion, so it was limited to counties surrounding Dublin—the government quelled most outbreaks of violence, but County Wexford was the site of a major rebel success. The Rebellion spread to the North of Ireland, and with the assistance of a French force of some 1,100 men, the rebels held out until August. The estimates of between 10,000 and 25,000 killed, include a high proportion of non-combatants.


youngest of a large family, and her late father owned a number of estates in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{172} Whilst pursuing his medical career in London, Madden became an increasingly active member of the Anti-Slavery Society.\textsuperscript{173} After the passing of the \textit{Slavery Abolition Act 1833}, he gave up his medical practice, determined to personally assist in the process of emancipation.\textsuperscript{174} With the patronage of Thomas Buxton MP, an associate of Madden’s in the Anti-Slavery Society, he was appointed a Stipendiary Magistrate in Jamaica.

In October 1833, Madden and his wife waved goodbye to their young son William, and boarded the \textit{Eclipse} at Falmouth, bound for Jamaica.\textsuperscript{175} Despite the brevity of their sojourn there (Madden resigned in November 1834), he had a lasting impact on the apprenticeship system and the anti-slavery cause more broadly. On his return to London he wrote to the Colonial Office, denouncing apprenticeship as unjust and unworkable.\textsuperscript{176} Buxton moved for a committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the apprenticeship system, and Madden appeared as a witness at the ensuing inquiry.\textsuperscript{177} Although the Committee largely found in favour of the proprietors and planters, Westminster did pass a bill which removed Jamaican workhouses from local control. In retaliation, the Jamaican Assembly passed a motion abolishing apprenticeship altogether.

\textsuperscript{172} Madden, \textit{Memoirs}, 60. Per the Appendix, John Elmslie was “of Serge Island Estate, Jamaica and London.”
\textsuperscript{173} Madden, \textit{Memoirs}, 62.
\textsuperscript{174} Madden, \textit{Memoirs}, 62.
\textsuperscript{175} Richard Robert Madden, \textit{A Twelvemonth’s Residence in the West Indies, During the Transition from Slavery to Apprenticeship}, Vol. I (London: James Cochrane & Co., 1835), vi, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{176} Rodgers, ‘An Irish anti-slavery activist in the Americas,’ 124.
\textsuperscript{177} ‘Report from Select Committees appointed to inquire into the makings of the Apprenticeship System in the Colonies with minutes and evidence,’ in British Parliamentary Papers (Shannon, 1968), cited in Rodgers, ‘An Irish anti-slavery activist in the Americas,’ 122.
Madden and his associates in the radical wing of the anti-slavery cause thus triumphed, and apprenticeship ended two years early in 1838.  

The main source of information on Madden’s tenure in Jamaica is his two-volume work, *A Twelvemonth’s Residence in the West Indies*.  

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179 Richard Robert Madden, *A Twelvemonth’s Residence in the West Indies, During the Transition from Slavery to Apprenticeship*, Vol.I (London: James Cochrane & Co, 1835); and Richard Robert Madden,
followed the form of his previous publication (*Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*) but it was no mere travelogue.\(^{180}\) His observations on Jamaica, its history and its inhabitants is overlaid with antislavery advocacy, and recommendations for social and political reform. As Fionnghuala Sweeney has observed, Madden’s self-presentation in *Residence* distinguishes the work from much other travel writing of the period.\(^{181}\) He had travelled to Jamaica to play a role in the end of slavery and saw himself as part of the reforming mission of a new colonial administration.

Madden acknowledged at the outset that his work in Jamaica was unlikely to “please any political party,” or indeed to serve his own interests; his aim was to “serve the interests of that great question which is now solving in the West Indies... the first and most ardent of my wishes.”\(^{182}\) Madden and his wife arrived in Jamaica with five other magistrates. As anticipated, their arrival in Kingston did not go unnoticed by what Madden termed “the playful press of Jamaica,” which “lost no time in squibbing us on our arrival.”\(^{183}\) He quoted one newspaper as describing them as

a set of sleek, smooth-featured, stalworth, (sic) Irish parish-priest-faced fellows, tolerably well-fed looking whiglings (he must surely have viewed me through a magnifying lens of considerable power), sent out expressly to live on the fat of the land, and to feed and fatten at the expense of the

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\(^{181}\) Sweeney, ‘To Redeem Our Colonial Character,’ 182.

\(^{182}\) Madden, *Residence*, 1: vi.

\(^{183}\) Madden, *Residence*, 1: 80.
poor colonists. He was sure we would take the observation in perfect
good-humour; but lest it should ruffle us in the smallest degree, he quoted
a good many passages from the Scriptures to show the identity of whigling
functionaries with spoilers, strangers, plunderers, and various other
kinds of political locusts scattered over the islands.\textsuperscript{184}

The magistrates’ initial months in Jamaica were spent observing “the state of
the country” and gaining experience as general magistrates in preparation for
their duties from the first of August—the day that apprenticeship would replace
slavery.\textsuperscript{185} Madden was appointed to St. Andrews parish as a general magistrate,
but judging by \textit{Residence}, he had ample time to indulge his curiosity regarding
Jamaica’s natural environment, its inhabitants, and their lifestyle and cultural
habits. The Maddens enjoyed planter hospitality, and he took numerous trips to
places of interest, and a number of plantations.\textsuperscript{186} Harriet Madden’s journal
reveals the hectic pace of Jamaican social life. Within their first week in the
island, the Maddens attended two balls (one hosted by Governor Mulgrave, the
other by a Colonel Smelt), went to the races twice, and visited and stayed over
after evening meals with a number of new and old acquaintances. Of the first
ball they attended, Mrs Madden wrote that “there was a far better display of
ladies and dresses than I had expected...it was, in fact, a very pleasant party.”\textsuperscript{187}

After the social whirl of early November, she travelled to the south-east of the
island, to stay with her brother Henry at Serge Island, one of the sugar

\textsuperscript{184} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 80-81.
\textsuperscript{185} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: vi.
\textsuperscript{186} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 198-210.
\textsuperscript{187} ‘No. XXII. Mrs Madden’s Journal of their first visit to the West Indies.’ RIA MS24 O14, folios 155-159.
plantations which remained in her family. From there, she also visited Island Head, a nearby coffee plantation also owned by her family. Mrs Madden was occupied writing letters for her brother and assisting in putting his papers in order. After a few weeks though, she confessed in her journal that she was “almost tired of this tedious, quiet life.”188

Meanwhile, Richard Madden investigated the social and cultural lives of the island’s enslaved and free black inhabitants, as well as the island’s British heritage, no doubt with his forthcoming book in mind. Residence contains a number of life stories and vignettes, an aspect of Madden’s writing which has been overlooked. The stories embedded within his narrative constitute some of the few recorded instances of African Islamic slave autobiography from the period.189 Perhaps the most striking is that of an enslaved man called Abon Becr Sadika.190 Madden first encountered Sadika when the latter appeared before him to be sworn in as a constable on his master’s property, and Madden noticed that Sadika signed his name in Arabic. He took an interest in the man’s history, and discovered that prior to being sold into slavery thirty years earlier, Sadika had been an Arabic scholar.191 Madden decided to take up a public subscription to pay for Sadika’s release from apprenticeship, but on informing Sadika’s master of this plan, the master decided to grant the release gratis.192 On the day appointed for Sadika’s manumission, Madden’s office was “crowded at an early hour with persons of all complexions,” as onlookers and supporters came to

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188 ‘Mrs Madden’s Journal,’ folio 169.
190 The name assigned to him as a slave was ‘Edward Donlan.’
191 Madden, Residence, 2: 108.
192 Madden, Residence, 2: 121-123.
witness the event.\textsuperscript{193} \textit{Residence} contains Madden’s transcription of a letter written by Sadika, outlining his personal history.\textsuperscript{194}

Madden also took time to visit Marley, a plantation which had once belonged to his (maternal) late great-uncle, Dr Lyons. Both Madden and his wife were from slave-holding families. Marley had passed through two generations to Madden’s cousin, and in 1834 its ownership was in dispute in the Court of Chancery in London—Madden was one of those with a claim to what he believed could be “a considerable amount.”\textsuperscript{195} According to Madden, he had two motives for visiting the estate: to ascertain if it was worth the risk of an appeal to the Chancellor for his claim, and out of “a feeling of personal interest” in the condition of the estate which had been in his family for decades.\textsuperscript{196} Before proceeding to Marley, Madden visited a small plantation where he believed “some of the negroes of my uncle” were then living. He “prepared himself for a very sentimental scene” with an old African man who had been Lyons’ “favourite waiting-boy” some forty years previously; but instead, the encounter was “cruelly” disappointing.\textsuperscript{197} The old man indeed recalled Lyons, who had “brought him out of a Guinea Ship when a piccanini boy,” but declared himself not at all sorry to hear of the doctor’s death—“massa hab plenty of people in England to be sorry for him; him no want poor nigger to be sorry for him.”\textsuperscript{198} And when Madden revealed his relationship to Lyons (believing this would soften the old man’s countenance) the old man

\textsuperscript{193} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 2: 123.
\textsuperscript{194} Madden, \textit{Residence Indies}, 2: 125-130.
\textsuperscript{195} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 220-221.
\textsuperscript{196} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 230-231.
\textsuperscript{197} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 221.
\textsuperscript{198} Madden, \textit{Residence}, 1: 222.
gave him “a look which I would not willingly meet at the day of judgment” and said,

For true! You belong old massa: well, what you want here? You come to carry away old stones from Marley—plenty of old stones on grounds at Marley—you come carry away more old massa’s money—whara you find it?—no more poor niggers to sell at Marley.199

At Marley, Madden surveyed the “desolate aspect” of the ruins of the estate that had “recently passed from cultivation into the solitude of nature.”200 To his surprise, on entering the tumbledown estate house, he met “two women as white as any inhabitants of southern climates…and a very old Mulatto woman, of bright complexion.” He learnt that the younger women were the daughters of his uncle (who had inherited the property from Dr Lyons), and the older woman was their mother; the resemblance of one of the younger women to some members of Madden’s family was so striking, that he “had no difficulty recognising her origin.”201 The women were, he said, “delighted to see a person who called himself a relation of their father,” but they were suspicious of his motives, and apprehensive that he intended to take possession of the property. He gave the women at Marley “a small present,” and left.202 On the pages of his book, Madden railed against the injustice of the treatment of these enslaved Africans, who had been sold as part of the Chancery suit, but remained on the

199 Madden, Residence, 1: 222-223.
200 Madden, Residence, 1: 231.
201 Madden, Residence, 1: 232-233.
202 Madden, Residence, 1: 233, 236.
estate eking out an existence; but he made no further reference to his relatives in his books.

Madden’s discoveries at the two plantations highlight the complexities inherent in his position: he seemed aware of the contradictions and did not attempt to hide his own family’s involvement in slavery, but he still struggled to rationalise the experience. The staunch abolitionist misjudged the reception he would receive from his great-uncle's favourite—but rather than attribute the hostile reception he received to the institution of slavery itself, Madden rationalised the old man’s response as the result of “great neglect, and many hardships, and...cruelty,” which turned “the milk of kindly feelings towards his master or his family to gall and bitterness.”203 At Marley, he acknowledged the women’s suspicion—but attributed it to the fact that “they had received nothing but bad treatment from those who ought to have been kind to them...for nearly forty years since the death of their natural protector, who, dying suddenly, left them utterly unprovided for.”204 In his reactions to these encounters, Madden’s abolitionist tendencies were paternalistic.

A further level of contradiction in Madden’s experience of the Caribbean as an Irishman is exposed by his explanation of the Chancery suit over Marley’s ownership. A source of Madden’s indignation at the history of Marley is also revealed in his description of the Chancery suit; it seems that his cousin was a minor—and a Catholic—when he inherited the estate. The court was asked to

203 Madden, Residence, 1: 223.
204 Madden, Residence, 1: 233-234.
rule on whether a Catholic uncle or a Protestant uncle had precedence to act as the boy’s guardian. On the basis of the penal laws, the Protestant uncle’s right was affirmed, which clearly rankled Madden. Added to the contradictions in evidence at Marley then, was Madden’s sense of the injustice that “a few flippant words from an Irish Chancellor settled the matter” of his cousin’s religion and his inheritance.205

As the first of August 1834 approached, Madden observed “no adequate preparations” for apprenticeship, and he anticipated that the transition would be a difficult one. The success of apprenticeship depended, in Madden’s view, “on the temper of the colonists, and the co-operation of the colonial legislature.”206 Madden appreciated that his appointment was an insult to the incumbent magistrates in Jamaica—from 1 August, judicial authority over the apprenticed population was transferred from local to stipendiary magistrates. He and his cohort were “strangers in the land...appointed by an obnoxious government.”207 In preparation for emancipation, Madden was transferred from the rural St. Andrews parish to Kingston, which meant that he dealt with people who had been urban slaves, working as household servants, artisans, dockers and sailors. His duties as magistrate included adjudicating cases, usually brought either by masters against absconding apprentices, or by apprentices seeking manumission.208 He was also involved in training and swearing in apprentices to act as constables on plantations, and in setting the price of

205 Madden, Residence, 1: 225-226.
206 Madden, Residence, 1: 192.
207 Madden, Residence, 1: 192.
manumission on a case-by-case basis. In his evidence to the Parliamentary Committee in 1836, Madden disclosed that during his magistracy he had received some three hundred applications for manumission, of which eighty were successfully carried. As Nini Rodgers noted, this success rate proved to be dangerously high.  

Madden’s frustration with the operation of apprenticeship was soon evident. In two letters written in November 1834 and printed in *Residence*, he outlined the political and practical obstacles apprenticeship faced, from the point of view of masters, overseers, book-keepers and the apprentices themselves. In his day-to-day work, Madden faced increasing threats and hostility from local magistrates and the Kingston council. On one occasion, a Kingston merchant, who had previously “menaced” Madden “with tarring and feathering,” insisted on joining him at his courtroom bench, disrupting proceedings. Ten days later, the same man assaulted Madden in the street. Madden responded on the pages of his book that the burden of upholding apprenticeship was too much for his level of administration: “It is through the sides of the special magistracy the Abolition measure is to be stabbed.” Just days after the assault, Madden resigned his office in Jamaica. He wrote that he “found the protection of the negro incompatible with my own.” On departing Jamaica, he was pleased to receive testimonials from the Governor, the Chief Justice and the Attorney-General, all of whom Madden counted as supporters—but in his view their

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209 Rodgers, ‘An Irish anti-slavery activist in the Americas,’ 123.
211 Madden, *Residence*, 2: 211.
powers were subordinate to the Council, which “in the imbecility of its arrogance, it dreams that its privileges were tantamount to those of the British parliament.”

**Conclusion**

The turbulence of the Revolutionary Era looms large in the biographies of Macartney, Burke and Madden. The changes to the Customs regime during Burke’s tenure were designed to bring the North American colonies into line as the threat of rebellion there increased. When Macartney arrived in Grenada, the American Revolutionary War was underway, and mid-way through his tenure France entered the war, with dramatic consequences for Macartney himself. Madden’s experiences in Jamaica illustrate the heightened tensions there on the eve of emancipation, a matter which will be taken up again in the next chapter of this thesis, through a study of Hope Waddell’s Jamaican sojourn.

Before considering the geopolitical factors at play in the islands Macartney, Burke and Madden visited, it is important to acknowledge a factor that the three men had in common—their emigration from Ireland to London. As we have seen in the first two chapters of this thesis, Irishmen located in the Caribbean had access to administrative positions, generally via patronage from men like Macartney. But to secure the more valuable appointments such as Governor, customs sinecures and even a stipendiary magistracy, London contacts were essential. As Macartney, Burke and Madden’s biographies demonstrate, the men

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relied upon contacts and patronage from within government in order to obtain their positions. Craig Bailey’s analysis of middle-class Irish emigrants in London in the eighteenth century confirms that there was an Irish ‘space’ in London, and a network for those with a legal background from which to launch their careers.\(^{215}\) As is evident in the careers of Macartney and Edmund Burke, entering a London Inn of Court was often simply a way of entering the Irish space in London—neither finished their legal studies, but both utilised the networks that emanated from the Inns of Court to extend the networks of patrons they could call upon. The first ‘absolute space’ the three men shared, then, was London.

Macartney and Burke spent their Caribbean sojourns in the trans-imperial spaces of the Ceded Islands, during a time of intense hostility between Britain and France—Burke in the immediate post-Seven Years War period, and Macartney during the American Revolutionary War. Geographically, the Ceded Islands were (aside from Barbados) Britain’s easternmost Caribbean islands and were thus exposed to the risk of foreign invasion. Until Britain took Trinidad from Spain in 1797, Grenada was the closest British island to the Spanish Main. During Burke’s tenure as Collector of Customs, concerns about illicit trading with the nearby French and Dutch islands were ever-present, and Macartney’s time there was increasingly occupied with shoring up the islands’ defences and appealing to London for military protection. In terms of the prevailing political atmosphere—the society Macartney encountered in Grenada remained firmly

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divided between British and French elements. This internal division threatened the island’s fragile political and economic stability.216 But it seems that Macartney’s diplomatic experience in Russia, and his years at Dublin Castle where he mediated political disputes and power struggles, prepared him for the squabbles of Grenada. In fact, he wrote to Lord Germain soon after his arrival in June 1776 that “I have the satisfaction to find them [the people] more reasonable in their sentiments and more respectful in their language than they were formerly supposed to be.”217

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the Ceded Islands enabled a relatively flexible social order. Macartney remarked more than once upon the mixture of people in his personal correspondence and marvelled at the achievements of men from all walks of life who had taken advantage of opportunities for advancement that (in his view) abounded in the Caribbean. Indeed, Richard Burke had sought to do just that during his tenure. With his “considerable purchase” of land in St. Vincent, it seems he hoped to propel himself into the ranks of the wealthy absentee proprietors of St. Vincent.218 The study of Burke’s attempt to acquire land whilst stationed in the Caribbean illuminates the geopolitical elements at play in St. Vincent, which differed from those in Grenada. The contrasting treatment of French proprietors between the two islands; the presence of indigenous people in St Vincent; and the operation of the fledgling British land distribution regime, all serve to emphasise the diversity which existed even

216 Muller, ‘Bonds of Belonging,’ 29.
217 Macartney to Germain, June 30, 1776, CO101/20, f.28, quoted in O’Shaughnessy, An Empire Divided, 151.
218 Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, September 10, 1771 in Fitzwilliam, Correspondence, 1: 255-256.
within the Ceded Islands. Burke situated himself within this complex geopolitical space in an attempt to capitalise upon the opportunities. As we have seen, his protracted efforts to secure title to the St. Vincent’s land ultimately failed, when the island was re-taken by France in 1779.

Half a century later, Madden sojourned in the established British space of Jamaica. The island had been under English (and then British) control since 1670 and was the wealthiest and most productive island in the British Caribbean. As we saw in Chapter Two, material success was an important marker of civility in Jamaica; indeed, Harriet Madden remarked that “the vanity and extravagance of people in general here often surprises me.” Madden’s sojourn in Jamaica, which began in a social whirl as described by his wife, was soon marked by hostility and contestation as the island’s deeply embedded system of slavery was transitioned to apprenticeship. As a representative of the Empire, Madden stepped into the contested space between the interests of planters and slaveholders and those of the imperial state. In an echo of Macartney’s resilience in the face of factional differences in Grenada, however, Madden initially seemed prepared for (and indeed comfortable with) a degree of animosity—until he was physically assaulted. Madden was tenacious in the face of opposition. In the context of his subsequent posting in Cuba, he was described as “uniquely qualified to withstand the pressure exerted by colonial administrators and slave traders.” In fulfilling his duties there as Judge Arbitrator on the International Court for the suppression of the Slave Trade,

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219 ‘Mrs Madden’s Journal,’ folio 161.
220 Burton, Ambivalence and the Postcolonial Subject, p.73.
Madden refused to rubber-stamp activities that he believed were outside the law; and a fellow judge on the Court wrote that “he wouldn’t agree with an angel from heaven.”

Moving from the wider geopolitical spaces the men occupied to their day-to-day domestic spaces, it is notable that two of the administrators in this chapter—Macartney and Madden—were accompanied on their sojourns by their wives. Macartney described the “excellent house” he and Lady Macartney occupied, “on the summit of a hill overlooking the harbour, commanding a fine view of the capital, the shipping and the port,” and as we have seen, he described their daily routine. Despite reporting to Lady Ossory on the domestic arrangements of a number of people he encountered (including the presence of enslaved Africans in their lives), Macartney made no reference to the enslaved people who shared his own domestic space. Madden was also silent on the presence of enslaved (and then emancipated) people in his home. His wife commented, somewhat disparagingly, on the enslaved people on her brother’s plantation, but her journal does not reveal whether she and her husband were waited upon by enslaved people during their sojourn.

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221 Burton, Ambivalence and the Postcolonial Subject, p.31.
222 George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.
223 ‘Mrs Madden’s Journal,’ folio 163. In a journal entry for 22 November 1833, Mrs Madden recorded that “a great part of the negroes [at Serge Island Estate] came to welcome me, most of them being well clothed.” The following day, “the remainder of the negroes came up to see me; they are indeed a strange race of beings, very cunning and little to be trusted, indolent and dirty if not looked after, but sometimes they attach themselves to their masters. They keep their children so dirty that it is impossible to take hold of them, so they are absolutely unpleasant to anyone whose olfactory nerves are peculiarly sensitive.”
The relative spaces occupied by Macartney, Burke and Madden include the administrative realm, and their Irish networks, populated by Irish acquaintances in the Caribbean. Of the three, Madden most clearly evoked his Irish background during his sojourn, but this is perhaps more noticeable simply because he published his lengthy reflections on his experiences in Jamaica. Mrs Madden’s journal reveals the presence of Irish contacts in their life from early in their sojourn. One of the first people to visit the Maddens after their arrival was Mr Geoghegan, an Irishman who had lived in Jamaica for about twenty years, with his “native” wife. Mrs Madden found them both “very agreeable.”

When Madden resigned from his position in 1834, he counted among his supporters two Irish-born men: the Governor, Howe Peter Browne, second Marquess Sligo and the Attorney-General Dowell O’Reilly.

Macartney made no explicit mention of his connection with Ireland during his Grenadian sojourn, but it was during this time that he acquired a lifelong friend and colleague in fellow-Irishman George Staunton. Born in County Galway, and educated in France, Staunton was a Catholic man who had originally travelled to the French Caribbean to practice medicine. He had lived in Guadeloupe and Dominica, before settling in Grenada in 1770 where he had purchased an estate and adopted the legal profession. As we have seen, Macartney appointed Staunton to the imperial administration in Grenada shortly before the French invasion. Macartney was also involved in a patronage network which stretched

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224 ‘Mrs. Madden’s Journal,’ folio 159. See also Karst de Jong, ‘The Irish in Jamaica During the Long Eighteenth Century (1698-1836) (PhD Thesis, Queen’s University Belfast, 2017), 197-198.
225 Madden, Residence, 1: 216.
back to Belfast. We know from the Black family correspondence that John in the Caribbean, and his brother George in Belfast both benefited from Macartney’s patronage on an ongoing basis. Just as Macartney sought the patronage of others within the imperial system, he too acted as patron for those in less elevated positions, particularly within the Irish community.

A relative space on which most of the men in this thesis were silent was their religious community. John Black, Hope Waddell (in the following chapter), and Mrs Madden were the only sojourners in this thesis who provided any hint as to their religious communities. In Jamaica, Mrs Madden described attending an Anglican Sunday service, where she met Bishop Lipscomb and his wife, within days of arriving in the island.227 This was despite the fact that she had probably already converted to Catholicism on her marriage to Richard Madden, and there were two Catholic chapels in Kingston which she could have attended.228 Later in life, the Catholic community became very important to Richard Madden and his wife. During his last imperial posting in Western Australia, Madden forged close connections with the Catholic clergy, as did Mrs Madden.229

The administrative realm was central to the relative spaces occupied by Macartney, Burke and Madden. Each man was involved in the imperial bureaucracy and would have been conscious of his connection with the imperial

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227 ‘Mrs. Madden’s Journal,’ folio 157. There is no suggestion in Mrs Madden’s journal that her husband attended the Anglican service.
228 Madden, Residence, 1:99.
metropole in London—from which their appointments had emanated. But implicit in the administrative realm during all of their sojourns was the contested nature of power in the British Caribbean. Each man occupied, at various times, the uncomfortable contested spaces between vested interests (for example, the ‘old’ Protestant subjects in Grenada, or Jamaican planters) and the imperial state, of which he was the representative. For each of the men, this space had different tensions. Macartney may have been accustomed to the world of the imperial administrator, but he had a tenuous hold on his place in that world, due to his lack of financial means. The precarity of his position was amplified by the dramatic end to his Caribbean sojourn. As we have seen, Richard Burke’s tenure coincided with attempts to reform Britain’s customs regime in response to challenges from the North American colonies—which increased the degree of difficulty in performing his duties out in the Empire. Once in the Caribbean, Burke took advantage of the uncertainty surrounding the emerging legal order in the region, particularly in relation to land grants.

Owing to his arrival not long before emancipation in Jamaica, Richard Madden was quickly immersed in the “politics of slavery.” As an anti-slavery advocate, and representative of the imperial state’s efforts to end slavery, he was a target for the vitriol and violence which marked the transition to apprenticeship in Jamaica. His position in the administrative realm was also somewhat ambiguous—he occupied a space within imperial administration, but as a Catholic man, he had only recently been granted the right to hold that position.

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And for all his anti-slavery advocacy, in the eyes of the enslaved Africans connected with his own family, he was a slave-owner, and he was part of the apparatus of the Empire.

Of the three men, Madden is the only one for whom we can gain some clear insight into his inner, or relational space. Madden wrote _Residence_ with both polemical and commercial intent, but the two-volume work does not hide the contradictions inherent in his role in Jamaica. He occupied a position in the culture of the British elite but was not accepted as an equal in that culture; he built a career based on advancing British interests, but he had only recently been accepted into that culture as an Irish Catholic. Madden also demonstrates other ambiguities in his account; for example, the experience he related of meeting his great-uncle’s sexual partner and daughters. The fact that Madden incorporated this story into his book served to illustrate that even the well-intentioned (such as himself) were tainted by slavery and bore responsibility for its ills. Madden was prepared to expose his own connections with slavery in the interest of demonstrating the pervasive hold slavery had on British—and Irish—society.

For Macartney and Burke, their letters, although tempered by the conventions of the form, hint at their emotional responses to Grenada. Macartney’s early letters to Lady Ossory suggest that the climate suited both him and his wife, and that he relished the opportunity to explore Grenada and its associated islands. He ventured into the interior of the island and was profuse in his praise of the
island’s natural beauty.” Mrs Madden, too, praised Grenada. She wrote that the “scenery is really beautiful, and one might fancy it a little paradise.” Burke’s letters to David Garrick from the island suggest that he was far less content there than Macartney was a decade later. Burke likened his trip to enforced transportation, and it is clear that he was desperate to return to the comforts and familiarity of London almost as soon as he stepped ashore in the Caribbean.

London played a significant role in the careers of Macartney, Madden and Burke. But it is notable that once out in the Caribbean, both Macartney and Madden drew upon their Irish backgrounds in their approach to their work, and in the friendships and alliances they fostered on the ground. Both men gained support from Irish colleagues and brought to their jobs an ability to withstand a high level of conflict, echoing the experiences of Edward Despard and John Black in their administrative roles. To this extent, it is clear that the men’s Irish backgrounds influenced their imperial careers, in terms of the background and skills they brought to the role, and the way that they dispensed patronage. In so doing, they managed to disrupt the exclusive call of London on activities out in the British Caribbean.

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231 George Macartney, St. George’s, Grenada to Lady Ossory, September 25, 1776, PRONI T2480/2.  
232 ‘Mrs. Madden’s Journal,’ folio 155.  
233 Richard Burke, Grenada to David Garrick, October 3, 1770, in Correspondence of David Garrick, 1: 401-402. Richard Burke, Grenada to David Garrick, July 28, 1771, in Correspondence of David Garrick, 1: 429.
Chapter Four

Irish Humanitarians: Medical and Missionary Engagement in the British Caribbean

In 1802, John Crawford wrote from his new home in Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont in Demerara, eager for news from the Caribbean in the wake of the revolution in St. Domingo.

The times in your part of the world are so critical...We are in truth on the brink of the same precipice and every thing clearly evinces that our precipitation must be near at hand... the whole power of France would not reduce St. Domingo. It will never be reduced. The cultivators of the soil will be the Lords of it, not only there but in every spot on the Globe. It has been always so, and it must always be so.¹

Crawford’s letter betrays the palpable fear felt by many Europeans and Americans that slave rebellion might spread from St. Domingo to other slave societies. Crawford urged his friend to prepare for the end of white control, which he believed “must be drawing fast to a period.”² He also wrote to Thomas Jefferson, imploring him to put an end to slavery, lest the United States too, might succumb to slave rebellion. Crawford’s support for emancipation, however, was not derived solely from the desire to promote human welfare.³

¹ John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerary, April 21, 1802, MHS MS1246.
² John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerary, February 18, 1802, MHS MS1246.
Perhaps understandably, his emancipationist tendencies reflected his desire to avoid the “evil day” of slave rebellion first-hand, as well as to share with enslaved people the “liberties” that the people of the new United States had fought for so “gloriously.” Crawford’s mixed motivations are illustrative of nineteenth-century humanitarianism, in which self-interest almost always played a part. Taking a cue from scholarship on the interconnected histories of humanitarianism and empire, I will examine Crawford’s Caribbean sojourn—together with that of missionary Hope Waddell—within the context of humanitarianism.

Despite being at least a generation apart, Crawford and Waddell’s backgrounds were similar. Both hailed from counties within the province of Ulster. Crawford was born in 1746 in County Antrim; Waddell was born in 1804 in County Monaghan. Both men’s family trees were heavily populated with Presbyterian ministers—the Crawfords were aligned with the General Synod of Ulster, the Waddells were Secessionists. Crawford’s father Thomas was the minister at Crumlin for almost six decades; his paternal grandfather and great-grandfather had been ministers, as had a maternal uncle. Crawford’s eldest brother, William, also entered the ministry. After completing undergraduate studies, both

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5 Laidlaw, ‘Investigating Empire,’ 750.
8 Gordon, ‘Crawford, William.’
Crawford and Waddell took up posts in the Empire. Crawford was employed as a ship’s surgeon’s mate with the East India Company in the mid-1760s. Half a century later, Waddell travelled to Jamaica as a foreign missionary with the Scottish Missionary Society.

John Crawford spent almost two decades in the Caribbean. Between 1778 and 1789 he was the surgeon in charge of the Barbados Naval Hospital; and in 1789 he moved to the Dutch colony of Demerara, where he was appointed Chief Surgeon to the colony. Throughout his years in the Caribbean, Crawford was an enthusiastic member of the ‘Republic of Medicine,’ corresponding with medical contacts around the Atlantic world, and gathering ideas about unfamiliar medical and medicinal practices as he moved around the British world. He was instrumental in establishing two (short-lived) medical charities in Barbados, the General Dispensary and the Humane Society, and had plans to establish a Physic Garden in Demerara. In 1796, he took up his brother-in-law’s

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9 Historians (including Linde Lunney in the Dictionary of Irish Biography and Barry Crosbie, Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 178) have maintained that John Crawford studied at Trinity College Dublin, although I have not been able to confirm this with any citations, or primary source evidence. Crawford’s three brothers all studied in Glasgow, so it is possible that he also studied there. William Crawford studied for the ministry in Glasgow, and Adair and Alexander also studied there: Gordon, ‘Crawford, William.’ Linde Lunney, ‘Crawford, Adair,’ Dictionary of Irish Biography. C.J. Woods, ‘Crawford, Alexander,’ Dictionary of Irish Biography.

10 Hereinafter the East India Company is abbreviated to “EIC.”

11 Hereinafter, “SMS.”

12 John Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew on the means of preventing the method of treating and origins of the Diseases most prevalent and which prove most destructive to the Natives of Cold Climates visiting or residing in Warm Countries by John Crawford, M.D.,” MHS, Box 130, Manuscript Collections of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland (MS 3000), 2. John Crawford, ‘Memorial of John Crawford, MD, Chief Surgeon of the Colony of Demerary to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury, 1795,’’ Wellcome Trust, WMS/Amer.98.

offer to join him in Baltimore. He settled there and became a mainstay of voluntary organisations in the city, until he died in 1813.\textsuperscript{14}

Hope Waddell’s Caribbean career was based in Jamaica, where he ministered to enslaved (and subsequently apprenticed and emancipated) Africans under the auspices of the SMS for sixteen years. Waddell and his wife Jessie arrived in Jamaica in 1829, a year before the Baptist War, a slave uprising which was concentrated in the north-west of Jamaica, where Waddell and his fellow SMS missionaries were based. The uprising, which involved tens of thousands of the 300,000 enslaved Africans in Jamaica, was short-lived, and was followed by a period of brutal suppression. Waddell left Jamaica in 1845 to establish a mission station in Africa, where he and his family remained until 1858. After his return to Ireland, Waddell published an account of his missionary career.\textsuperscript{15}

Crawford and Waddell were both firmly part of transnational communities. Crawford was a member of the so-called Republic of Medicine, and Waddell was part of the evangelical Presbyterian missionary world. But it was the British imperial world which initially enabled both men to enter into those communities. Just as Macartney, Burke and Madden went to London to pursue their careers, so Crawford and Waddell left Ireland to follow their callings. Crawford’s medical and scientific career commenced on board EIC ships, while Waddell had to go to Britain to secure a place in a foreign mission. To an extent,

\textsuperscript{14} Amanda Moniz, ‘‘Labors in the Cause of Humanity in Every Part of the Globe.’’ Transatlantic Philanthropic Collaboration and the Cosmopolitan Ideal, 1760—1815,’ (PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2008), 57.

\textsuperscript{15} Hope Masterton Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa; a Review of Missionary Work and Adventure, 1829—1858 (London: Nelson and Sons, 1863).
Hope Waddell was subsumed within Scottish imperial circles, but as this chapter shows, both he and Crawford retained their connections with Ireland throughout their lives.

This chapter draws primarily upon memoirs of the men’s careers. Waddell’s memoir of his missionary career was published in 1863 by the Scottish publisher Thomas Nelson and Sons, a specialist religious publisher.¹⁶ Crawford wrote ‘Memorials’ to the British Commissioners of the Treasury and to Lieutenant-General Mathew at the end of his Caribbean career, and these serve as his memoirs, although neither document was ever published.¹⁷ Crawford did publish on his medical discoveries, and a small collection of his personal letters are available. These sources illuminate the travails of both men’s careers in some detail, and something of their motivations. They detail the men’s work within the context of humanitarianism, and as such, they reveal a hitherto little-known history of Irish humanitarians operating in the Caribbean.

**Concern for Distant Strangers: Humanitarians in the British Caribbean**

Crawford and Waddell’s careers in the Caribbean were entirely different, but recent scholarship on the intersections between the history of humanitarianism and the history of the British Empire suggests that both men can be considered to have been humanitarians. The term ‘humanitarianism’ slowly entered into

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¹⁷ Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury.’ Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew.’
everyday vocabulary around the turn of the nineteenth century, but scholarship on the histories of humanitarianism and the British Empire has identified a “rise of concern for distant strangers” dating back to the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{18} Alan Lester and Rob Skinner have argued that this concern can be attributed to a number of factors, including its role in easing the class tensions of the industrial revolution; a religious sense of obligation, and the need for redemption; and “evolutionary” factors based on the advantages of reciprocity in a more interconnected and complex world.\textsuperscript{19} Alongside these factors, Lester and Skinner note the emergence of a sense of a “universal human,” beyond the boundaries of the familiar and proximate, but nonetheless worthy of assistance.\textsuperscript{20} In her research on the network of Anglo-American philanthropists which included John Crawford, Amanda Moniz observed the men wrote of living in an “Age of Benevolence;” an era which they believed was defined by kind feelings towards others (benevolence) that might prompt good actions on behalf of others (beneficence.)\textsuperscript{21}

Zoë Laidlaw’s study of humanitarianism in the nineteenth century has shown that the meanings of humanitarianism at that time in the imperial context are “mutable and complicated.”\textsuperscript{22} Although historians identify certain individuals as humanitarians, those men and women did not use the term themselves—rather they considered themselves to be abolitionists, philanthropists, Christians,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item 19 Skinner and Lester, ‘Humanitarianism and Empire,’ 732.
\item 20 Skinner and Lester, ‘Humanitarianism and Empire,’ 732.
\item 21 Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 4.
\item 22 Laidlaw, ‘Investigating Empire,’ 750.
\end{footnotes}
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evangelicals or missionaries. Moreover, as Laidlaw argues, these early humanitarians’ motivations “seldom derived solely from the desire to promote human welfare.” Self-interest almost always played a part, whether as a consequence of religious belief or as a result of economic or political concerns.\textsuperscript{23}

In Crawford’s case, his career was marked by a constant search for medical knowledge, and a desire to influence the treatment of patients. Whilst he instituted some measures in relation to diet, dress, living conditions and sanitation during his time in the Caribbean—which he argued improved survival rates amongst patients under his care—he was ultimately frustrated by his failure to influence imperial policy in these areas. His philanthropic endeavours in Barbados and Demerara were motivated by a desire to promote human health, but also by his self-interest in enhancing his status within the community of medical doctors, furthering scientific knowledge, and expanding his private medical practice. Indeed, medical men embraced medical charities such as hospitals, dispensaries and humane societies because these charities gave them the opportunity to observe large numbers of patients, and thus to dramatically increase their understanding of diseases.\textsuperscript{24}

As an evangelical Presbyterian missionary aligned with the Seceders, Hope Waddell was motivated by what Andrew Holmes describes as a “sincere commitment to the Gospel and to bringing about the millennium through

\textsuperscript{23} Laidlaw, ‘Investigating Empire,’ 750. 
\textsuperscript{24} Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 75.
missionary activity.” The Seceders initially exhibited the most interest in mission amongst Irish Presbyterians. Committed to confessional orthodoxy, Seceders avidly marked the signs of the times and had been deeply involved in establishing congregations in North America. At chapel during his childhood, Waddell would have witnessed the emergence of voluntary missionary societies, and heard prayers offered so that “the happy times promised are drawing near, when the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills.” Nineteenth-century evangelicals believed that by disseminating the Gospel they would bring about the millennium, such that the Gospel would be known the world over. While it is impossible to understand at this distance the contours of Waddell’s religious conviction, it is important to acknowledge, as Andrew Porter has urged, that evangelicals, nonconformists and others took their theology and their religion seriously.

Tracing John Crawford and Hope Waddell through their Caribbean sojourns reveals, again, the diversity of the Irish experience of the Empire in the British Caribbean. Elements which emerged in the imperial experiences of the men profiled in the previous chapters of this thesis also feature in the life stories of Crawford and Waddell. Like John Black and Edward Despard, Crawford

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26 Holmes, ‘Irish Presbyterian Attitudes to Mission,’ 724.
27 ‘Reasons for humiliation and thanksgiving, drawn up by Mr Millar, according to appointment, were read, corrected and approved of by the Associate Synod of Ireland,’ quoted in Holmes, ‘Irish Presbyterian Attitudes to Mission,’ 725.
fostered connections across imperial boundaries in an effort to put into practice the knowledge he gained during his imperial career. And like many of the Irish sojourners, Hope Waddell demonstrated an ability to withstand fierce opposition from vested interests within white planter society in Jamaica. Crawford and Waddell’s stories also reveal the imperial structures on which both initially depended for their humanitarian activities. These structures intersected with the transnational communities in which the men participated: medical science and philanthropy, and foreign mission, respectively.

John Crawford, MD

In April 1794, in “a very bad state of health,” John Crawford obtained leave from his post as the Chief Surgeon of the Dutch Colony of Demerary, and travelled to Holland to recuperate. Demerary, and neighbouring Essequibo, were Dutch colonies located on the north coast of South America. Both are now part of modern-day Guyana. While Crawford was recuperating in Holland, the Dutch Republic collapsed and was centralised as the Batavian Republic (a satellite of the French Republic); and Demerary was surrendered to Britain. These “imperious circumstances of the times,” as Crawford termed them, detained him in Holland longer than he had intended, but he kept busy. He obtained an MD from Leiden University (possibly a simple matter of paperwork), consulted with a botany professor on his plans for a Physic Garden in Essequibo, and lobbied

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30 Holland at this time was variously known as the Dutch Republic, the States General of the United Netherlands, or the United Provinces. Demerara was often called ‘Demerary’ at the time.
32 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 4.
the Dutch Council for West India affairs on the “disadvantages to which the
troops were exposed in that part of the world, and the means...most practicable
for obviating them.”33 After reading the terms of capitulation relating to
Demerary, Crawford wrote to the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury in
London, pressing his case to continue as Chief Surgeon in the colony, and
informing them of his long-held ambition to establish the Physic Garden. He
reported that while in Holland, he had discussed with the Dutch authorities his
plan to appropriate a few acres of government land for the garden, which he
proposed should be worked by government-owned enslaved Africans. Crawford
proposed that he “be employed to collect from the natives every plant
ascertained to possess medical properties, which should be cultivated for public
use,” and reported that he had arranged for samples from the garden to be sent
to Leiden for study.34 According to Crawford, the plan had been approved by the
Dutch, and he had been on the brink of appointment as “Physician General of
the Colonies of Demerary and Essequibo, and to have had the Superintendence
of this important institution.”35 Crawford concluded his letter by noting that
should the Commissioners decide not to reinstate him in Demerary, he was keen
to pass on “most cheerfully...every information and knowledge of these
countries acquired during a course of nearly thirty years, and an intimate
acquaintance with the colonies in question.”36

33 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 1.
34 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 4.
35 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 4.
36 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 5.
This episode reveals much about Crawford: his love of learning, his desire to communicate his expertise, and to put into practice the knowledge he had spent decades acquiring. His negotiations with the Dutch government also show that he was accustomed to moving in non-British imperial circles, and that he had every intention of settling within the Dutch Caribbean world—until the vagaries of the Revolutionary Era intervened. The Physic Garden never eventuated, and in 1796 Crawford left the Caribbean (and the British Empire) for good, settling in Baltimore with his two children, where he became a prominent member of medical, educational and philanthropic circles.37

Short biographies of Crawford have appeared in various publications since the 1920s, but Amanda Moniz’s recent scholarship provides the most detailed account of his life and work.38 This chapter builds upon Moniz’s scholarship but utilises Crawford’s life story in a different way. The lives of Crawford (and Waddell) are examined here in order to address questions about Irish connections with the Caribbean. Moniz did not dwell on Crawford’s Irish background; she considered him within the context of medical and philanthropic networks across the Atlantic. In her examination of the impact of the American Revolution on humanitarianism, Moniz argued that the activities of Crawford and his contemporaries were crucial to the endurance of the

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37 When he died in 1813 John Crawford was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Freemasons in Maryland, a position he held between 1801-05 and again from 1807. He was a founding member of the University of Maryland medical faculty.

Atlantic community of medical men interested in charity.\textsuperscript{39} As a “repeated migrant” (someone who travelled backwards and forwards between sites around the Atlantic world), Crawford helped to spread unfamiliar causes around the Britain Empire, the United States, and the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{40} Moniz’s research focused on a number of charitable movements, primarily the humane society for the rescue and resuscitation of drowning victims, and the dispensary movement, both of which attracted Crawford. Humane societies originated in Amsterdam in 1767 and spread around Europe and the Anglophone world over the succeeding decades. Dispensaries were free out-patient clinics for the poor, and this movement also spread around Britain and North America in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{41}

John Crawford was born in 1746 at Ballytromery, County Antrim. As already noted, his father Thomas was the Presbyterian minister at Crumlin for fifty-eight years.\textsuperscript{42} Of Thomas’ four sons, the eldest (William) became a minister, while the others (John, Adair and Alexander) all became medical doctors.\textsuperscript{43} The boys were educated locally, possibly by their father. The norm for medical students in the eighteenth century was to attend lectures at a university (often in the Classics), but not usually to attain a degree.\textsuperscript{44} Crawford’s medical career

\textsuperscript{39} Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 103.
\textsuperscript{40} Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 9.
\textsuperscript{41} Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 22.
\textsuperscript{42} Gordon, ‘Crawford, William.’ John Crawford’s mother was Anne Crawford, nee Mackay.
\textsuperscript{43} Gordon, ‘Crawford, William.’ Alexander Crawford was a well-known United Irishman and was imprisoned in 1797 with other northern radicals. William Crawford opposed the movement and regretted that some Presbyterians had deserted “the good old Whig principles’ of their forefathers:” Gordon, ‘Crawford, William.’
commenced with service on EIC ships. His first appointment as a surgeon was in 1769; but in order to secure that appointment, he would have previously served at least one voyage as a surgeon's mate. His first season as ship’s surgeon was on board the *Earl of Middlesex*, which took three voyages between March 1769 and May 1771 to Bencoolen (an EIC Post in Sumatra) and China, and included a visit to St. Lucia in the Caribbean. The journey afforded him the opportunity to develop his medical knowledge. On his return to London in 1772 he published a pamphlet outlining his discoveries regarding liver disease. The pamphlet was published by the London bookseller George Kearsley, to whom Crawford remained indebted for the rest of his life. Crawford’s next EIC journey was to Bombay aboard the *Marquis of Rockingham*, from April 1772 to September 1773. He was next listed as surgeon on the *Mount Stewart* for its journey to Bengal between February 1778 and January 1780, but it is unlikely that he was actually on board. Instead, in early 1778 he married Irish woman Mary O’Donnell; and they set out for Barbados. Research on the Crawfords’

45 The HEIC regulations regarding qualification of surgeons stipulated that before being appointed as a surgeon on one of the Company’s ships, it was necessary to have “performed one voyage in the Company’s service, as surgeon’s mate, or acted twelve months in that situation in his Majesty’s service in a hot climate: Charles Hardy and Horatio Hardy, *A Register of Ships Employed in the Service of the Honourable East India Company From the Year 1760 to 1810* (London: W. Heseltine, 1811), Appendix 118. (There was provision to waive this regulation, and a surgeon appointed without such prior experience.) NB surgeon’s mates are not listed in *Hardy’s Register*. Re qualifications: The regulations also stipulated that the surgeon produce a certificate from the Royal College of Surgeons, and from the Company Physician, as evidence of their qualification. Hardy, *Register of Ships*, 119. Attendance on RCS & Company Physician entailed visiting London.


48 Wilson, ‘Dr John Crawford,’ 117. The indebtedness most likely resulted from Crawford’s purchases of books from Kearsley, as he had an extensive library by the end of his life.

49 Hardy, *Register of Ships*, 55.

50 Hardy, *Register of Ships*, 76.

51 Lunney, ‘Crawford, John.’ Mary O’Donnell was from Trough, a town on the border of Counties Clare and Limerick. On his own account, Crawford was appointed Surgeon to the Barbados Naval Hospital in 1778 “from the commencement of the War with France, when she joined America;” and it seems most likely that he was already in Barbados when the appointment was made: Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew,’ 2.
first child, Eliza, suggests that she was born in 1780, and they also had a son, Thomas, soon after.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{The Late John Crawford MD RWGM of Masons in Maryland. Engraved agreeably to a resolution of Cassia Lodge, No.45 as a tribute in personal regard & of respect for the many virtues that adorn his Character, 1814. Source: Julia E. Wilson, ‘Dr. John Crawford, 1746-1813.’ \textit{Bulletin of the School of Medicine University of Maryland} 25 (1950): 116-132. (https://archive.hshsl.umaryland.edu/handle/10713/4319)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{52} Research on Eliza suggests she was born in London on 28 June 1780, although I have been unable to verify this, she may have been born in Barbados. Dorothy Mackay Quynn, ‘Maximilian and Eliza Godefroy,’ \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} 52 (1957): 3.
Barbados

Once in Barbados, Crawford was appointed Surgeon and Agent to the Naval Hospital by Admiral Barrington.53 When Barrington had arrived in Barbados in 1778 with orders to attack the French forces in the region, he was disappointed by the lack of a hospital on the island to accommodate the hundreds of ailing men in his fleet.54 Barrington reported to the Sick and Hurt Board in London that he had rented premises in Barbados and contracted with local merchants to provide a hospital with bedding for 100 patients, and had employed a surgeon—Crawford—who was a resident of the island.55 Crawford’s job proved trying. He later wrote that “vexation, disappointment, I may say misery was my portion, with very little interruption so long as I remained in the Island.”56

During the decade that he ran the hospital, Crawford consistently maintained that facilities were inadequate and supplies were short, and that ill-discipline amongst the patients exacerbated these problems. During the hospital’s first summer, Crawford had to accommodate 898 men in a space equipped for 100:

they were distributed amongst a number of houses very badly calculated for their reception, and as we had cradles for only one hundred, the rest were obliged to lie on floors, and were generally so close together that there was scarcely room left to pass betwixt any two of them.57

54 Cori Convertito, ‘Mending the Sick and Wounded: The Development of Naval Hospitals in the West Indies, 1740—1800,’ Canadian Journal of History 51 (2016): 526-527. There had been a naval hospital at Barbados during the Seven Years’ War, operated by a contractor, but this was closed down in 1773, due to the small number of men serving at that time in the Leeward Islands. Within five years, however, Barbados became a major staging post for Britain’s Caribbean battles against France.
55 Letter Rear Admiral Barrington, to Admiralty, 13 July 1778, ADM 1/310, TNA, cited in Convertito, ‘Mending the Sick and Wounded,’ 527. The Office of the Commissioners of the Sick and Wounded Seamen, known as the Sick and Hurt Board, appointed ships’ surgeons and their assistants, took responsibility for equipment and supplies and supervising the furnishing and equipment of hospitals and hospital ships.
The physician Gilbert Blane visited the Barbados Hospital in 1780, in his capacity as Admiral Rodney’s Physician of the Fleet. He attributed the high mortality rate there, which was “greater than what occurred afterwards in any of the hospitals that I attended, except that at Jamaica,” principally to overcrowding. As the fleet was “so much greater than had ever been known here before, there was not suitable accommodation for such numbers as it was necessary to send on shore.”58 This was exacerbated by the fact that despite nearby Antigua having a regular hospital which operated in peacetime as well as during war, “the fleets did not go there to put their sick and wounded on shore, as at Barbadoes.”59

Even after Crawford and his colleagues brought some order to the hospital, conditions remained wretched. Supplies of food, candles and bedding were entirely inadequate. The shortages were exacerbated by patients selling their bedsheets and hospital utensils in order to buy rum.60 In a letter to Admiral Parker in January 1780 Crawford wrote that rum, which he and his staff tried to keep out of the hospital, “often frustrates our best endeavours.”61 A month later, he complained to the Colonel in charge of the Barbados Garrison that he had 200 men in the hospital but that they were “guilty of every kind of irregularity:” drinking excessively, “wandering about the Town in the middle of the Day,” and deserting due to being given too much liberty. Crawford requested a guard for the hospital.62 A few months later still, he suggested that a wall around the

hospital might solve the problem, and submitted a plan for its construction to Admiral Rodney, then the officer in charge of the Leeward Islands station.63

The buildings used for the hospital were destroyed by a devastating hurricane in October 1780, along with much of Bridgetown. The “great hurricane,” which hit the island on 10 October was the most deadly ever to have battered the region.64 According to the Governor,

*The strongest colours could not paint...the miseries of the inhabitants; on the one hand, the ground covered with the mangled bodies of their friends and relations, on the others, reputable families wandering though the ruins, seeking for food and shelter: in short, imagination can form but a faint idea of the horrors of this dreadful scene.*65

Hardly a house remained in Bridgetown. Government House was destroyed, fortifications were ruined, most churches and sugar mills were damaged, and an estimated 4,500 people were killed.66 According to physician Blane, one of the buildings of the hospital was “entirely demolished by the impetuosity of the sea, which, having risen to a great height, dashed a ship against it, and twenty-three seamen were buried in the ruins.”67 In the aftermath of the hurricane, Crawford was finally able to secure the use of a larger house capable of accommodating

65 Schwartz, *Sea of Storms*, 93.
400 sick men. As a result, the Navy concluded that there was no immediate need to erect a permanent hospital structure.\(^{68}\)

From early on in his tenure, Crawford was determined to put into practice his own scheme to improve his patients’ diet. As surgeon and agent for the hospital, he was responsible for procurement as well as medical care. In an exchange with Admiral Parker in 1780, he argued that “the scheme of diet appointed by the commissioners of sick and hurt appeared to me very ill calculated for the climate we were in,” so he removed half a pound of meat from the patients’ rations, and substituted it with “milk, chocolate, sugar, and an additional quantity of bread.”\(^{69}\) Unfortunately for Crawford, Parker believed that Crawford had instituted the dietary changes so that he could favour particular contractors, rather than for medical reasons. According to Crawford, “from that moment [Parker’s] confidence in me was compleatly alienated.”\(^{70}\) In fact, Crawford consistently advocated throughout his career the health benefits of dietary changes, as well as changes to dress and abstaining from alcohol. In his Memorial to the British Treasury in 1795, he argued that Europeans in the Caribbean would be healthier if they followed the example of “aborigines of the torrid zone,” by reducing “our use of flesh-meat...and salt provisions should be altogether abrogated.”\(^{71}\)


\(^{71}\) Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 1-2.
Crawford took a leave of absence in 1782 owing to his own ill-health. Unfortunately, his wife died during the voyage home from Barbados, leaving Crawford with two infant children. How they spent the next four years is unknown, but when Crawford returned to Barbados in 1786 to resume his position at the hospital, he was an enthusiastic instigator of two medical charities—the humane society and the dispensary movement.\textsuperscript{72} Crawford’s younger brother Adair, also a medical doctor, was involved in both movements in London. During the period of Crawford’s leave of absence from Barbados (1782-86), Adair was serving as a physician to the Aldersgate General Dispensary, and as a Royal Humane Society medical assistant.\textsuperscript{73} These were professionals who were called to the scene of an emergency to oversee resuscitation procedures.\textsuperscript{74} It is reasonable to assume that Crawford spent at least some of his time away from Barbados in London, observing his brother’s involvement with these two medical charities—and perhaps even working with the charities himself.

In August 1786, Crawford wrote from Barbados on behalf of the “Governors of the Barbadoes General Dispensary” to the RHS in London, requesting that they share with him “the kind of apparatus which you employ with the plans of your Institution,” and proposing an ongoing correspondence between the RHS and the fledgling Barbados group.\textsuperscript{75} He reported that “we have lately established a

\textsuperscript{72} Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 87.
\textsuperscript{73} Hereinafter, “RHS.”
\textsuperscript{74} Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 86.
\textsuperscript{75} Letter to Dr Hawes, August 1, 1786, in \textit{Reports of the Humane Society; Instituted in the year 1774 for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned, for the years 1785 and 1786} (London: Printed for the Society, 1787), 170.
Dispensary here, which promises to meet with extensive patronage,” and that the Governors intended to add to the dispensary by establishing a humane society “endeavouring to restore to life, those apparently dead by drowning.”\textsuperscript{76} The humane society movement’s mission was “to restore such as have in an instant \textit{been numbered amongst the dead}, by some dreadful disaster, or by some sudden impulse of phrensy.”\textsuperscript{77} In addition to people drowning, the RHS’s beneficiaries included people apparently dead from hanging, noxious vapours, freezing and other causes of sudden death.\textsuperscript{78} The RHS offered rewards to people who retrieved victims, and followed the society’s resuscitation procedures. The rescuers were also required to fetch the society’s medical assistants (such as Adair Crawford) to the scene to oversee the resuscitations. A large part of the society’s activities involved publicising these rewards and resuscitation methods.\textsuperscript{79}

The dispensary movement dated from Europe in the seventeenth century but took hold in London during the 1770s after the establishment of the General Dispensary in Aldersgate Street in 1770, where Crawford’s brother Adair worked. The dispensary charities provided free outpatient care for the labouring poor and treated different types of maladies from those treated in hospitals. Members’ subscriptions funded the Dispensary—members had the right to recommend a certain number of patients based on subscription level, and patients need a recommendation to receive treatment. While laymen dominated

\textsuperscript{76} Letter to Dr Hawes, August 1, 1786, in \textit{Reports of the Humane Society}, 170.
\textsuperscript{78} Moniz, ‘Labour in the Cause of Humanity,’ 75.
\textsuperscript{79} Moniz, ‘Labour in the Cause of Humanity,’ 75.
hospitals, medical men established and operated the London dispensaries.\textsuperscript{80} Medical charities, such as the dispensary and humane society movements with which Crawford was associated, were at the forefront of philanthropy’s expanding reach in the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{81} The reasons behind this philanthropic movement, which also included the establishment of hospitals and asylums, have been much debated amongst historians. Most medical officers who attended the poor at dispensaries did so for free, although they did receive payment in other, less direct ways. Association with a dispensary could raise a medical officer’s profile and provide him with opportunities for public advancement, thus extending his social networks and potential patient base. These institutions were also a testament to the benevolence, civility and patriotism of the local elites who subscribed to the charities as members.\textsuperscript{82}

It is worth noting that John Crawford’s medical career spanned the period of time during which modern notions of medicine and the profession were being constructed. When Crawford first undertook his studies, the norm for those intending to become medical doctors was to attend lectures at a university, often in the Classics, but not usually to attain a degree.\textsuperscript{83} Many later obtained an MD at a different institution, as Crawford did at Leiden. At that stage, there was no such thing as “disciplinary coherence” within medicine, that is a product of modernity.\textsuperscript{84} Rather, medical practitioners operated within a public sphere of

\textsuperscript{80} Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 77-78.
\textsuperscript{81} Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 6. Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1362.
\textsuperscript{82} Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1362.
\textsuperscript{83} Boog Watson, ‘Two British Naval Surgeons of the French Wars,’ 213. Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1367. As already mentioned, it is unclear whether Crawford attended Trinity College Dublin, or a university in Glasgow.
\textsuperscript{84} Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1367-8.
discourse and a republic of letters which knew few disciplinary boundaries. Medical men were marked by their identities as scholars and gentlemen, and by the values and ideologies they shared.\textsuperscript{85} Within this \textit{milieu}, as Richard Brown has observed, \textit{pro bono} medical service at charitable institutions conferred significant social and symbolic capital in that it enacted the practitioner’s commitment to the values of benevolence and civic responsibility which underpinned the culture of gentility.\textsuperscript{86}

Over time, hospitals and dispensaries came to be seen as not just benevolent organisations, but also as spaces for the production of knowledge. Patients came to be seen as objects of medical knowledge. It is possible, therefore, that Crawford saw in organisations like the Dispensary, the opportunity to increase scientific knowledge, as well as provide himself with some social capital as he sought to branch out beyond his role as the Naval Hospital director.

The Barbados Dispensary was one of the first such organisations in Anglophone America; but it was short-lived.\textsuperscript{87} A subscription was opened in July 1786 to establish the Dispensary, and in October, a house in Old Church Yard, Bridgetown, was purchased for its operations.\textsuperscript{88} A report in the \textit{Barbadoes Mercury} noted that Governor Parry “and his lady, with a considerable number of other ladies and gentlemen liberally contributed.”\textsuperscript{89} The \textit{Mercury} article

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\item\textsuperscript{85} Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1368.
\item\textsuperscript{86} Brown, ‘Medicine, Reform and the ‘End’ of Charity,’ 1368.
\item\textsuperscript{87} Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 114. The Barbados HS was the third in Anglophone America.
\item\textsuperscript{89} Davis, ‘Notes on the History of the Jews in Barbados,’ 146.
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concluded that “Be the effects and the duration of this charity what they may, the public spirit and Humanity which actuated the founders of it, do them much honour.”

The minutes of a July 1787 meeting of the Dispensary’s managers reveal Crawford’s central operational role: he set the agenda for the meeting, and made a number of suggestions (all accepted) regarding the scope and operation of the Dispensary, and the establishment of the humane society. By its second anniversary in October 1788, the Dispensary reported that it had admitted 227 patients in its first two years, of whom 159 were released as cured. It seems, however, that some time after this second anniversary the Dispensary ceased to exist, beset by financial difficulties, and undermined by political conflict within the colony. The Barbados Humane Society folded along with the Dispensary.

Demerara

In January 1789 Crawford arranged two months’ leave of absence from his position in Barbados “in order to arrange some private affairs at Demerary.” Within a year, he left Barbados for the booming colony of Demerara, to take up his new appointment there as Chief Surgeon. He travelled with Hugh McCalmont, a young Irishman from Antrim who had begun working for Crawford two years earlier in Barbados. McCalmont went on to become one of

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90 Davis, ‘Notes on the History of the Jews in Barbados,’ 146.
91 Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 87.
92 Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 82-83. Moniz cites two articles from the Barbados Mercury, 21 July 1787 and October 21, 1788.
93 Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 84.
94 The RHS in London responded to Crawford’s 1786 letter and provided the gift of an RHS apparatus. In 1787, Crawford wrote to the RHS, thanking them for the gift but reporting that “we have hitherto had no cases which required our medical aid in this way.” Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 87.
95 Letter from John Crawford, 28 January 1789, Wellcome Trust, MS.8401.
96 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury.’
the wealthiest planters in the British Caribbean, and the two men remained lifelong friends and correspondents. Demerara was a Dutch sugar colony, but since the 1760s, most plantations there had been owned by British investors. The Dutch administrators of the colony had long encouraged foreign capital and entrepreneurs to settle in the colony. Many of the immigrants were British, mostly from Barbados and Antigua. They were attracted by free land and generous tax exemptions. In fact, the exodus of British capital, planters and enslaved workers in the 1740s had been of great concern to the British Governor of Barbados. The abundance of land made competition unnecessary, such that the Dutch and British planters in Demerara and neighbouring Essequibo co-existed peacefully. The Dutch administration was at times unwilling or unable to attend to the needs of the colonies, and as a result, the inhabitants took matters into their own hands. Planters in Demerara fostered connections with foreigners, and organised imports and exports, and even defence according to their own design. In his research on the region, Bram Hoonhout argues that moving beyond imperial boundaries was relatively easy in these under-governed colonies and was far more beneficial to planters than staying within the official framework. The fact that British settlers were permitted their own Anglophone religious services is indicative of the tolerant nature of society in Demerara. British residents served in the local, hence Dutch, governing

100 Hoonhout, ‘Smuggling for Survival,’ 213.
bodies, or if they did not speak Dutch, they could at least vote for these councils. Some, like Crawford, held positions of responsibility in managing public institutions. The fact that an Irishman was charged with overseeing medical care of Dutch military men is indicative on the trans-imperial nature of Demerara at the time.

Medical life was less hectic in Demerara than it had been in Barbados. Crawford took up private practice in addition to his duties at the hospital and barracks, and expended considerable energy lobbying the Dutch Governor General there to improve conditions. He argued that the hospital and military barracks should be relocated, as the hospital was “inadequate and injurious,” and had long been a “source of disease;” and that the military barracks were “in a wretched condition,” located as they were “in the midst of a town bounded by two canals” which were never sufficiently flushed by the tide.

Crawford lived in Demerara for about five years until early 1794, when he travelled to Holland to recover his health. When the Dutch Republic collapsed in 1795 and Holland was centralised as the Batavian Republic, a satellite of the revolutionary French Republic, Britain started occupying Dutch territories in the Caribbean. In Demerara, a British proposal to take the colony into ‘protective custody’ against France was declined by the local Dutch Council. In response the Dutch governor (a monarchist), secretly sided with the British and left the colony on board a British ship. The colony was then in British control.

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103 Crawford, ‘Memorial to the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty’s Treasury,’ 1.
until 1802, when it was returned to the Dutch under the Treaty of Amiens. After the failure of Crawford’s appeal to the British Treasury to retain his role in Demerara, he returned to the colony for a short period, before his move to Baltimore in the United States. Hugh McCalmon assisted in settling Crawford’s affairs in Demerara after his departure, including selling a house Crawford owned there, following up unpaid bills, and discharging Crawford’s debts. Crawford’s name was still appearing in the Essequibo and Demerary Royal Gazette as late as 1812 as a creditor in the final accounting of various deceased estates. Letters from Crawford to McCalmont indicate that although his brother-in-law in Baltimore had generously provided the family with a furnished house there, Crawford was in dire financial straits for much of his life.

The letters to McCalmont also provide a rare insight into Crawford’s views on Ireland. In December 1798 he wrote to McCalmont (then in Demerara) on the “gloomy...present state of Ireland.” Crawford’s younger brother Alexander, who practiced medicine in Antrim, was implicated with the United Irishmen and was arrested in 1797, although his role in the 1798 rebellion is unclear. Crawford wrote to McCalmont that the “storm has been long brewing,” which “now pervaded the whole land;” and he was “firmly persuaded it must end in its

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106 ‘Public Vendue...estate of F. Bynoe, deceased,’ Essequibo and Demerary Royal Gazette, August 11, 1812.
107 John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerara, December 19, 1798, MHS MS1246.
complete emancipation, I sincerely hope from every species of foreign influence.” It is unclear exactly which “foreign influence” Crawford hoped Ireland would break free from—British, or the French influence on the rebels of 1798.\footnote{John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerary, December 19, 1798, MHS MS1246.} Crawford concluded somewhat cryptically on the subject that “this is an age which promises the completion of the happy work, and I trust the most sanguine will have their hopes realised in due time.”\footnote{John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerara, December 19, 1798, MHS MS1246.} Given Crawford’s enthusiastic support for the “glorious” American revolutionaries (as he put it in a later letter to Thomas Jefferson), it is not unreasonable to assume that he applauded the Irish rebels’ attempts to escape British imperial influence.\footnote{John Crawford, Baltimore to Thomas Jefferson, October 18, 1803, National Archives (US) Founders Online, accessed February 9, 2018. \url{http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-41-02-0410}.}

In 1795, Crawford sent a lengthy document to Lieutenant General Mathew. It was an “abstract” of his “intended publication which...refers to the means of preventing the formidable train of maladies to which Europeans are so liable in hot climates.”\footnote{Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew,’ 3.} The abstract canvassed Crawford’s views on diet; dress; and the consumption of alcohol (“I have shewn that the Europeans who are the most abstemious experience disease in the least degree.”)\footnote{Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew,’ 20.} He advocated that Europeans should wear lighter clothing in hot weather, acknowledging that his suggestion would hurt British hatters and clothiers, but arguing that “it would serve our cotton manufactures, and at Dunstable, Hats, might be made which would effectually serve to guard the head against the dangers of the Sun.” He described how he had adapted a straw hat by covering it in glazed white linen,
and that his example was “followed by many others, and they are now very common both in Barbadoes and Demerary.”

Crawford also argued that the military stationed in the Caribbean should be provided with more employment, as well as with religious instruction. He suggested that the military be instructed in religion by Methodists (it is unclear why he specified Methodists), adding that religious authority might help restrain the sexual activity of soldiers with its “deleterious effects” on their health. Crawford also reiterated his conviction that location was crucial to health in the Caribbean, lamenting that knowledge of how to preserve health by proper location was neglected. Crawford never published the contents of his letter to Mathew, but he did publish aspects of it in a periodical he founded in Baltimore, the Observer and Repertory of Original and Selected Essays in Verse and Prose on Topics of Polite Literature, and then more formally in 1809 in the Baltimore Medical and Physical Recorder. Crawford argued in these articles that insects and their larvae were most likely a cause of infectious disease, but this theory was rejected by his contemporaries. At the time, it was generally believed that most diseases were spread through the medium of foul vapours or gases, rather than being spread by organisms as Crawford maintained.

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118 Doetsch, ‘Doctrine of Contagium Vivum,’ 89, 92-93. The Observer articles were entitled ‘Remarks on Quarantine Suggested by Dr. Caldwell’s Oration,’ and ‘Dr. Crawford’s Theory and an Application of it to the Treatment of Disease,’ and were published in 1806-1807 in serial form. The 1809 article was entitled ‘Observations on the Seats and Causes of Disease.’
119 Doetsch, ‘Doctrine of Contagium Vivum,’ 93.
120 Crosbie, Irish Imperial Networks, 179.
Crawford worked in private medical practice in Baltimore, and as a consulting physician to the Board of Health and the City Hospital. He assisted in establishing the Baltimore Dispensary, and other organisations including the Maryland Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge, and the Bible Society of Baltimore. He was Chairman of the Medical Faculty of Baltimore and occasionally lectured in medicine and natural science.\textsuperscript{121} Despite these activities and his high profile in the city, Crawford wrote towards the end of his life that “although I have held situations highly lucrative, the disposition of my mind has not led me to profit by them”—suggesting perhaps that he was generous in providing medical services, and not good at charging enough to cover his expenses.\textsuperscript{122} Crawford died in 1813, survived by his daughter Eliza. His estate was virtually worthless—except for his extensive collection of books on scientific and medical subjects, which formed the corpus of the fledgling University of Maryland’s Medical library.

Hope Masterton Waddell

Hope Waddell’s memoirs of his years in Jamaica have proven useful to historians as a first-hand account of the tumult of the Baptist War, which began on Christmas Day, 1831.\textsuperscript{123} There has not, however, been a sustained examination of Waddell’s career, and certainly very little within Irish historiography which considers him as emanating from an Irish context.\textsuperscript{124} In

\textsuperscript{121} Doetsch, ‘Doctrine of Contagium Vivum,’ 88-89.
fact, due to his position within the Scottish Missionary Society, Waddell is often assumed to have been Scottish.\textsuperscript{125} Granted, his contacts and networks were most likely predominantly Scottish, but his upbringing was Irish, and after he left missionary work he retired to Dublin, where he lived until his death in 1895. Although Waddell spent sixteen years in Jamaica, this chapter will focus on his experiences there prior to emancipation in 1834, as the remainder of his career is beyond the time period for this thesis. This chapter will trace Waddell’s experiences through the Baptist War, but rather than doing so in order to elucidate the events of the War, the aim here is to consider what empire was to him—as an Irishman—and what role, if any, his Irish background played in the humanitarian work he pursued.

Hope Waddell was born in 1804 in Monaghan, in the north of Ireland. Little is known of his early life, except that on both sides of his family he was descended from long-established Ulster Presbyterian families, and that his family was part of the Secessionist congregation at Cahans.\textsuperscript{126} According to his memoirs, Waddell moved to Dublin and commenced an apprenticeship with a general merchant and druggist business at seventeen years of age, but within a year he felt the call to mission—in his words, to “preach among the heathen.”\textsuperscript{127} With his parents’ support, he obtained a release from his apprenticeship and commenced studying for the ministry. The path to becoming a Presbyterian minister (and

\textsuperscript{125} For example, Hall, \textit{Civilising Subjects}, 153.

\textsuperscript{126} Lynn, ‘Waddell, Hope Masterton.’

\textsuperscript{127} Waddell, \textit{Twenty-Nine Years}, 15.
thus missionary) typically entailed undergraduate studies, followed by an examination by the applicant’s presbytery, then attendance at Divinity Hall.\textsuperscript{128} Waddell’s activities immediately after release from his apprenticeship are unknown, although William Addley noted that he studied Greek and Hebrew “at home,” presumably in the north of Ireland.\textsuperscript{129}

As a devout member of his congregation and community, in Cahans and then Dublin, Waddell would have participated in the evangelical revival which gripped protestant churches in Britain and Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A key feature of this revival was the formation of foreign missionary societies that aimed to spread Christianity abroad, with a particular emphasis on regions under British imperial control.\textsuperscript{130} The Presbyterian Secession tradition within which Waddell grew up was no exception. Despite synodical suspicion, a voluntary associational culture emerged in Ulster in support of missionary activism—in effect, cross-denominational activities to support missionary activity in Ireland and abroad.\textsuperscript{131} In 1812 Reverend Alexander Waugh visited Ireland. He was the minister of a Secession congregation in London, and had been deeply involved in the formation of the London Missionary Society there in 1795.\textsuperscript{132} After addressing Secession congregations throughout the northern provinces, Waugh wrote to his wife that “A spirit is awakened in the north of Ireland,

\textsuperscript{128} John Ross, \textit{The Present State of the Edinburgh Divinity Hall} (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1813), 10.
\textsuperscript{129} Addley, ‘Birth and Development of the Overseas Missions,’ 14.
\textsuperscript{131} Holmes, ‘Irish Presbyterian Attitudes to Mission,’ 716.
\textsuperscript{132} Addley, ‘Birth and Development of the Overseas Missions,’ 11.
which...promises to furnish powerful aid to the parent institution in London.”

We can speculate that as a child, Waddell might have attended such addresses, and learnt about the development of the notion of foreign mission.

By the early 1820s, as Waddell recognised his personal calling to mission, the Irish Presbyterian synods had begun to formally endorse the formation of denominational missionary structures. The SMS, which had been known as the ‘Edinburgh Missionary Society’ until 1819, dated from 1796. It became the unofficial Ulster Presbyterian foreign missionary society, as the General Assembly in Ulster had decided in 1796 not to undertake foreign missionary work. In 1824, the two Irish Presbyterian Synods (Ulster and Secession) welcomed representatives of the SMS to address congregations in Ireland. Perhaps this was Waddell’s first opportunity to act upon his missionary calling. In any case, he was accepted into the SMS the following year. He and his compatriot Thomas Leslie became the first missionaries of Irish Presbyterian origin to travel abroad.

At some point, Waddell moved to Edinburgh to further his studies—perhaps in 1825 when he became a member of the SMS. In 1829 he was ordained by the Edinburgh Presbytery of the United Secession Church. In September of that year he married Jessie Simpson in Edinburgh, and soon afterwards they set off for

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133 Addley, ‘Birth and Development of the Overseas Missions,’ 12.
137 Holmes, ‘Irish Presbyterian Attitudes to Mission,’ 717. In 1835, Waddell’s fellow Irishman Thomas Leslie went to Jamaica, but he died soon after. See Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 110-111.
Jamaica. Few unmarried missionaries left for the field as wives were integral to the success of missions. Waddell referred to his wife as his “true yoke fellow” in his memoirs, while his SMS colleague George Blyth described his wife more poetically as the “sharer of my joys and sorrows, and I may truly add labours too.” Missionary wives provided an important domestic base for their husbands, and were seen as modelling proper feminine domesticity to would-be converts abroad. In common with other protestant missionary societies, Presbyterian women were excluded from preaching, and thus were not recruited as missionaries in their own right. It is clear, however, from the memoirs of both Waddell and Blyth, that their wives were deeply involved in the work of the SMS, particularly in the provision of education.

Until the nineteenth century, missionaries were less prominent in the British Caribbean than in islands controlled by the Catholic Empires. The Spanish, French and Portuguese had spread Catholicism, but in the British world, Protestant churches had traditionally been too divided to make any commitment to overseas missions. This changed with the Protestant evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century, which, together with the British government’s commitment to increased toleration of religious differences, paved the way for the creation of foreign mission societies in Britain. The Baptist Missionary Society was formed in 1792, followed by the London

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138 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 15. Lynn, ‘Waddell, Hope Masterton.’
139 Anna Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, 1800—1860 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 46.
141 Midgley, ‘Can Women be Missionaries?’ 339.
142 Midgley, ‘Can Women be Missionaries?’ 338-339.
143 Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, 13.
Missionary Society in 1795, the Edinburgh (later Scottish) and Glasgow Missionary Societies in 1796, and the Church Missionary Society in 1799. The first foreign missionaries ventured to the British Caribbean islands in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Although no foreign mission societies were formed in Ireland, a number of British foreign missions were established to minister to the Irish, and it was in the auxiliaries of these organisations, and other local missionary and bible societies that Irish people first channelled their enthusiasm for mission by collecting money and offering prayers for the countries and people they sought to win for Christ. Irish historiography on foreign missions and missionaries is limited to work on this phenomenon, and also the work of Catholic missionaries, generally later in the nineteenth century.

Scholarship on the history of Christian missions surged in the last decades of the twentieth century, and into the first decade of this century. Whether approached as a matter of imperial history or the history of religion, scholarship on Christian missionaries cannot avoid addressing the interaction of the missions with the Empire. Many scholars have focused on evaluating the impact of foreign missions on the peoples with whom they worked, and elucidating “the nature of the encounter.” New imperial history altered the frame of reference

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of this historiography. In *Civilising Subjects*, Catherine Hall posited Baptist missionary activity not merely as imperial proselytising, or as an unwelcome thorn in the government’s side, but “as a complex practice that embodied many of imperialism’s contradictions.”\(^{149}\) Although he may have been disappointed by Hall’s disclaimer that she would not engage with theology, Andrew Porter similarly concluded that the interplay between foreign missions and the Empire was complicated.\(^{150}\) In *Religion versus empire?* Porter observed that notwithstanding many foreign missionaries’ own lack of steadfast imperial commitment, the possibility remains that they may have in fact been effective imperialists.\(^{151}\) In examining Waddell’s imperial career, therefore, it is important to balance the assumed depth of his religious conviction, with his engagement with the Empire.

Andrew Porter has argued that for Presbyterians of Waddell’s ilk, a key motivator for missionary work was a sense that atonement for past wrongs was required particularly of a nation such as Britain, which was seen almost universally as especially favoured by Providence—in religion, political stability, material wealth and technological advancement.\(^{152}\) In his exploration of Ulster Presbyterians’ attitude to mission, Andrew Holmes linked theological concerns with the Revolutionary Era. For Holmes, the primary reason for Presbyterian interest in missionary endeavours may be found in their “sincere commitment”

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\(^{150}\) Porter, *Religion versus empire?* 10. Porter referred to Hall’s statement that “My focus is on the social, cultural and political world of nonconformists; I do not pretend to be a theologian;” Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, 444, n.29. Porter argued that historians should recognise that Nonconformists, evangelicals and others took their theology and religion seriously and applied them to considerable practical effect.

\(^{151}\) Porter, *Religion versus empire?* 316.

\(^{152}\) Porter, *Religion versus empire?* 43.
to the Gospel and to bringing about the millennium through missionary activity. Millennial expectation—the vision of a time when Christ’s kingdom would reign over the earth and non-believers would be brought into God’s kingdom through the means of grace—was a prominent theme of sermons preached by both theologically liberal and conservative Presbyterians, and which surfaced in the popular literature of the day. Holmes argues that Presbyterian involvement in mission from the 1790s only makes sense when we consider how Presbyterians related this millennial expectation to the developments in the 1790s. The catalyst for Presbyterian involvement in missions between 1790 and 1840 was a conviction that they were living in extraordinary times—the revolutionary events across Europe in the 1790s (not least in Ireland in 1798) led to a renewed interest in the interpretation of biblical prophecy amongst a variety of Christian groups. The voluntary missionary societies founded in that decade (including the SMS) “were driven by their recognition that God’s purpose was to bring humanity to the point of submission to Christ and that it was the duty of the Church to fulfil God’s purpose through mission.”

Hall’s focus on nonconformists in Civilising Subjects signalled a new direction in scholarship on missionaries. The norm within the historiography had previously been to represent the church primarily as an agent of empire by

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156 Porter, Religion versus empire? 723.
157 Porter, Religion versus empire? 723.
focusing on the role of established denominations—those most closely aligned with the state. Yet the tactics and motivations of nonconformists (such as Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians) were often different, in that they sought to drive a wedge between “the realm of the spirit and the temporal affairs of government.”

Presbyterians preached of a God who was a righteous judge, in whose eyes all men were created equal. Such a vision inherently challenged the institution of slavery and the authority of the plantocracy in Jamaica. As Waddell’s experiences in Jamaica demonstrate, despite their differences, the Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries occupied the same space between the Jamaican elite and their enslaved congregations.

Historiography on missionary activity across the Empire tends to focus on the imperial element of missionary work. In contrast, the historiography of mission work in the British Caribbean, has been preoccupied with the missionaries’ relationship with white planter society, and with their enslaved congregations—less so on the missionaries’ relationship with the Empire. Missionary activity in, for example, India, Africa, or Australia involved an encounter with indigenous peoples; but the missionaries who went to the British Caribbean went mostly among enslaved peoples, far away from their homelands. Missionaries such as Hope Waddell ministered to “a people seeking ways through, or routes out of, enslavement;” an entirely different project from those who preached to people.

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159 Gikandi, ‘Roundtable on Civilising Subjects,’ 507-508.

who were in many cases fighting to avoid the initial imposition of colonial rule.\textsuperscript{161} The memoirs penned by Waddell and Blyth similarly dwelt upon their relationship with white planter society, and with their enslaved congregations, rather than on their interaction with the Empire more broadly.

The foundational works on missionaries in the British Caribbean—Hall’s \textit{Civilising Subjects}, and Mary Turner’s \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}—both concern Jamaica and take as their focus the Baptist missionaries there. Turner examined the disintegration of Jamaican slave society and attributed a key role in that process to Christian missionaries and their relationship with the enslaved men and women among whom they preached.\textsuperscript{162} She described the role Christianity played in providing enslaved people with a language for emancipation. The focus on Baptist missionaries is unsurprising, given their role in the so-called Baptist War of 1831 and their subsequent involvement in the anti-slavery campaign in Britain. Despite the focus on the Baptists, Turner drew upon Waddell’s memoir (along with those of other missionaries), particularly in relation to the events of December 1831.

The question of what knowledge and practices Hope Waddell carried with him to Jamaica, particularly in terms of religious belief, is important in contextualising the character of his missionary practice, and (if possible)

\textsuperscript{161} Alan Lester and David Lambert, ‘Missionary politics and the captive audience: William Shrewsbury and the Cape colony,’ in \textit{Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century}, ed. David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 110. Note that Hope Waddell experienced these two settings during his career—first in Jamaica, and then in Old Calabar in West Africa.

\textsuperscript{162} Turner, \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}.  

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discerning any Irish element therein. There is little modern scholarship on Presbyterian missionaries or the SMS, and even less on Irish Presbyterians’ engagement with foreign missions.\textsuperscript{163} John McAleer’s recovery of the private diary of Mrs Alison Blyth, the wife of Waddell’s colleague in Jamaica, provides a unique insight into the work and lives of the SMS missionaries and their wives in Jamaica in the 1820s and 1830s.\textsuperscript{164} A series of articles published by Andrew Holmes on Ulster Presbyterianism illuminates the specific nonconformist tradition from which Waddell emerged, including theological and evangelical concerns, institutional movements, and attitudes to foreign mission and slavery.\textsuperscript{165}

**Establishing a Mission Station in Jamaica**

Waddell and his wife arrived in Jamaica in December 1829, among scenes “to the eye the loveliest, to the heart the bleakest that can be imagined.”\textsuperscript{166} He made his anti-slavery stance clear at the outset of his memoirs, declaring that the more he had seen of the system, “the more does he condemn it, as unworthy of being maintained anywhere...It is the lowest stage of human society, and in its own nature debasing and essentially barbarous, detrimental, morally and physically,


\textsuperscript{166} Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 15.
to both masters and slaves...”\textsuperscript{167} At the time of Waddell’s appointment to Jamaica, Protestant missionary societies (including the SMS) did not explicitly condemn slavery, and sought to preserve a political distinction between themselves and the antislavery movement.\textsuperscript{168} Recruits were instructed to avoid disputes over slavery, and to avoid conversations on political subjects.\textsuperscript{169} The planters and proprietors in Jamaica, however, perceived the humanitarian attack on the slave trade and the appearance of missionaries as inextricably connected.\textsuperscript{170} Waddell noted in his memoirs that “the experience of evangelizing slaves was in progress, real interests depended upon the result, and all engaged in the work anxiously marked its progress.”\textsuperscript{171} It is worth noting at this point that Waddell penned his memoirs decades after emancipation, and as will be discussed further below, his anti-slavery leanings may not have been as clear to him in 1829 as he portrayed them in his memoirs.

The unpublished private diary of Alison Blyth (wife of SMS missionary George Blyth), who was in Jamaica at the same time as the Waddells, provides an insight into the complex situation in which the missionaries found themselves in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{172} Like Waddell, George Blyth was unequivocal in his condemnation of slavery in his memoirs, but his book was published in 1851, well after emancipation.\textsuperscript{173} As John McAleer noted, Blyth’s memoirs (and Waddell’s too) entered “the cultural bloodstream” at a time when Christianity and missionary activities were central to the social and political landscape of the Caribbean.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[167]{Waddell, \textit{Twenty-Nine Years}, iv-v.}
\footnotetext[168]{Turner, \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}, 8-9.}
\footnotetext[169]{Turner, \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}, 9.}
\footnotetext[170]{Turner, \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}, p.10.}
\footnotetext[171]{Waddell, \textit{Twenty-Nine Years}, p.19.}
\footnotetext[172]{McAleer, ‘The Sharer of My Joys and Sorrows,’ 209.}
\footnotetext[173]{Blyth, \textit{Reminiscences}.}
\end{footnotes}
endeavour were seen as “the great British bulwark against the evils of slavery and foreign, tribal despotism.” ¹⁷⁴ In contrast, Mrs Blyth’s personal diary was written more or less contemporaneously with the events she described, and reflects the complexity of the situation that the Waddells entered into in Jamaica. In describing her husband’s attendance at a public meeting in 1826, one of the first convened to campaign for reform in Jamaica, Mrs Blyth noted that her husband was loath to speak at the meeting. In her diary, she confessed her fear at him doing so “knowing spies were present.” ¹⁷⁵ Rather than making radical pronouncements against the institution of slavery, Blyth’s denunciations at the time were limited to denominational disputes. In this way, the missionaries treaded the tenuous line between accepting and working within the confines of slavery, and challenging it. Mrs Blyth’s diary reflects the “decidedly more ambiguous” stance of the missionaries towards emancipation at a time when the issue was genuinely a matter of debate. ¹⁷⁶

The distinction between events on the ground in Jamaica, and what was portrayed in missionaries’ memoirs, generally published years later, is important. Waddell claimed his opposition to slavery in no uncertain terms, and we know that his Presbyterian brethren in Ireland were at that time becoming more firmly committed to the abolition of slavery, both temporal and spiritual. ¹⁷⁷ It is entirely possible that this was his original and consistent conviction, but our understanding of his actions are mediated through his

¹⁷⁵ McAleer, ‘The Sharer of My Joys and Sorrows,’ 211.
¹⁷⁷ Holmes, ‘Religion, anti-slavery, and identity,’ 380-381.
published memoirs, thus it is not really possible to know whether he harboured abolitionist views when he first went to Jamaica or not. The limitations of missionary writing are clear. The first limitation is of genre: memoirs such as Waddell’s were the end-result of an efficient publication machine run by missionary societies and their supportive evangelical publishers. Missionary memoirs were produced to inculcate public support for missionary endeavours, ensure an ongoing supply of donated funds, and to encourage new recruits. Waddell’s memoirs, published in 1863 would have been out of touch with contemporary Britain if he had not maintained an anti-slavery stance. In any case, it is clear from the instructions given to novice missionaries, and the complicated events Alison Blyth committed to the pages of her diary, that the missionaries treaded a tenuous line.

Various protestant denominations had run mission stations in Jamaica since the mid-1750s. The first were German Moravians; followed by Baptist and Methodist missionaries in the 1780s. By appealing directly to the enslaved, and incorporating resonances of African religious practices, the protestant missionaries, including those with the SMS, became very successful in converting the enslaved population. These mission establishments experienced sporadic, often vehement, opposition from the Jamaica Assembly.

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178 Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, 6.
179 Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire, 6-7. Waddell’s memoirs were published by the Scottish publishing house, Thomas Nelson and Sons, which specialised in religious books, and books of travel and adventure by popular authors: University of Edinburgh Directory of Rare Book Collections, ‘Thomas Nelson,’ https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/crc/collections/special-collections/rare-books-manuscripts/rare-books-directory-section/thomas-nelson
and magistracy—acting in the interest of the island’s plantation proprietors.\textsuperscript{182} In 1812 the British parliament passed the \textit{Toleration Act} (popularly known as the ‘Grand Charter of the Dissenters’), which established the right of any person who swore oaths of supremacy and the scriptural declaration before a magistrate to become a preacher. In order to demonstrate acquiescence to the British government (at least on this issue), the West India Committee prevailed upon the island assemblies to promote religious instruction for enslaved Africans.\textsuperscript{183} This acquiescence by the Jamaica Assembly on religious freedom and the instruction of slaves was, on the whole, instrumental. As the plantation proprietor Richard Barrett told Waddell,

\begin{quote}
I must in candour own that I am not influenced by religious principles myself in this matter, but simply by self-interest. I have a bad set of people: they steal enormously, run away, get drunk, fight, and neglect their duty in every way; while the women take no care of their children, and there is no increase on the property. Now if you can bring them under fear of a God, or a judgement to come, or something of that sort, you may be doing both them and me a service.\textsuperscript{184}
\end{quote}

When Hope and Jessie Waddell arrived in Jamaica in 1829, the SMS presence on the island was relatively recent. George Blyth was the first missionary for the society in Jamaica; he and his wife Alison had arrived there five years earlier.\textsuperscript{185} The SMS mission had been instigated by a request from a group of Scottish

\begin{footnotes}
\item[184] Waddell, \textit{Twenty-Nine Years}, 37
\item[185] Blyth, \textit{Reminiscences}, 36.
\end{footnotes}
proprietors in Jamaica who had approached the Society in 1823. The proprietors requested a missionary to instruct their enslaved workers, and offered to bear half of the expense.\(^{186}\) Although Blyth reported that he was “courteously received” in Jamaica, he was hampered by an anti-slavery address given by a church elder in Edinburgh, which had made its way into the Jamaican newspapers: “If the slaves are still to be retained in the galling yoke of bondage, the gospel which you are sent to preach to them will support their minds under their trials, and cheer them with the hope of a better world.”\(^{187}\)

The Church of Scotland, which was the established Christian church in Scotland, was represented in Jamaica by the Kingston Kirk. The Kirk was not a missionary presence, and was patronised by white churchgoers, not the enslaved population. The presence of the two Scottish denominations in Jamaica led to some confusion amongst the white community in Jamaica, such that the SMS mission stations tended to be identified with the Church of Scotland and the Kirk. This afforded the missionaries a degree of protection from the persecution directed most vehemently towards the Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries.\(^{188}\)

\(^{186}\) Blyth, Reminiscences, 35.
\(^{187}\) Blyth, Reminiscences, 44.
\(^{188}\) Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 28.
Waddell established his mission station on the Cinnamon Hill plantation in the north-western region of Jamaica. Cinnamon Hill’s proprietor, Samuel Moulton Barrett, also owned the nearby Cornwall plantation—and he provided the Waddells with a house, “and every facility for the instruction of his people.”189 Cinnamon Hill and Cornwall were Waddell’s “key to the whole district…encircled by numerous estates, within an hour’s ride, containing

189 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 27-30. Samuel Moulton Barrett was the uncle of the author Elizabeth Barrett-Browning.
thousands of people” to whom he expected to gain access. The plantations were within about ten miles of Montego Bay and Falmouth, both of which Waddell anticipated preaching in. The first Sunday at Cornwall was initially a disappointment to Hope and Jessie Waddell. They rearranged their home to accommodate a congregation and rang their house bell. When no-one came, they walked through the “negro village” on the plantation, only to discover that all able-bodied slaves had gone to their provision ground or to the market. The Waddells brought the only residents of the estate they could muster—the “impotent folks, the blind, halt, withered”—and they each “preached the gospel” to half the group. In the evening, however, when the remainder of the estate’s slaves returned, “they cleaned themselves, and flocked into our house…and we closed the day rejoicing. Never again were the seats empty.”

Waddell’s memoirs describe how he and his wife spent their days. On weekdays he visited the surrounding estates to teach the slaves at their “shell blow” (dinner time) which lasted one and a half to two hours, depending upon the estate. During these visits, which he acknowledged were a “favour” from proprietors, he was permitted to preach and to teach orally, but not to teach the adults to read. Mrs Waddell remained at Cornwall, where she taught reading to all the enslaved and free coloured children who could come to the house. In the evenings, the house was filled with working children who could not come during

190 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 27, 30.
191 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 27.
192 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 32.
193 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 33.
194 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 34.
the day; Mrs Waddell taught in one room and her husband in the other. Waddell wrote that out of crop time, “the craving for lessons was insatiable.” During crop-time, evening classes “presented a peculiar scene” as the increased workload on the young people in the field and mill-yard meant that the students could barely keep their eyes open, so took turns sleeping and reading. The Presbyterian and Moravian missionaries ran the most successful schools for enslaved children in Jamaica, a function of the support they received from proprietors. The Waddells’ efforts were not without their detractors, however. Waddell described the difficulties he encountered with overseers on the plantations of absentee proprietors—on some estates slaves were punished for attending sermons or lessons, and on others he found dinner-time reduced such that preaching was curtailed, or sometimes impossible to undertake.

Natalie Zacek and Laurence Brown’s detailed study of the material culture of foreign missions in Jamaica in the early post-Emancipation years helps to fill in the gaps regarding the Waddells’ lifestyle in Jamaica. Zacek and Brown argue that whilst protestant missionaries (of all denominations) were committed to plain living, missionaries and their families were constantly aware of the necessity of cutting a respectable figure—which encompassed “clothing, transportation and the presence of servants in their households.” Missionaries were advised to bring clothing and supplies with them from

195 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 34.
196 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 35.
197 Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 87.
198 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 39.
Britain, due to high prices in the Caribbean. For example, an advice pamphlet for Methodist missionaries recommended that each missionary take “six flannel waistcoats or more, and two silk umbrellas,” one for rain and one for sunshade; “a boat cloak, that is made of camblet and lined with green baize, to keep the person dry, as many are killed by being wet.”

Clothes were fastidiously maintained. George Henderson, the son of a Jamaican minister, described how his mother would unpick their Sunday suits when they became worn and shabby, to re-dye and re-assemble them—in order to maintain appearances.

Few concessions were made to the climate in the Caribbean—something John Crawford lamented. Waddell referred to the arrival of his household effects (including a barrel of oatmeal), but his memoirs provide no other details of what he and his wife brought with them to Jamaica—he was more concerned with the exorbitant cost of transporting their effects from the port to the mission station.

Missionaries and their families avoided traveling any significant distance by foot, as a white person doing so (a ‘walk-foot buccra’) was apparently ridiculed by black and white West Indians alike. Missionaries travelled on horseback, which Waddell often noted in his memoirs, and many mission stations in Jamaica maintained two-horse chaises, despite complaints from their home organisations about the expense.

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201 Zacek and Brown, ‘Unsettled Houses,’ 496.
203 Zacek and Brown, ‘Unsettled Houses,’ 497.
chaise, because of an anecdote in Waddell’s memoirs. He related how on a journey to visit an ailing fellow-SMS missionary with his wife, they had a serious accident, in which “the left gig-wheel sank in a hole, and the horses staggered.”

The final aspect of material culture about which we can draw some conclusions from Waddell’s memoirs, is the employment of domestic servants. Missionary wives were often engaged in teaching and assisting their husbands with missionary work, and missionary families often spent three times as much on servants’ wages as did their London-based colleagues. Waddell makes passing references to a number of different servants throughout his memoir, including “our faithful servant Mary,” a “little servant boy,” and a servant named Jeffs who was a deacon in the church and accompanied Waddell on some of his circuits.

The most detailed description of a servant appears in his account of the family’s short stay in New Orleans in 1845, en route to Liverpool. When the family arrived in New Orleans, they were informed by a city official that Frances, Jessie’s “little maid-servant...a mulatto of about twelve years of age,” with “duties as a nurserymaid” was required to be “lodged in prison” for the duration of the family’s stay in the port city. It was contrary to the laws of the state “to bring foreign people of colour into it.” Waddell managed to avoid Frances’ imprisonment after appealing to three successively more senior officials, and

204 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 123.
205 Zacek and Brown, ‘Unsettled Houses,’ 497.
206 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 100, 123, 179-180.
207 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 219.
threatening to stay in prison with Frances. Waddell was under strict instructions to ensure that Frances leave the state within six weeks.\(^{208}\)

*The Baptist War*

As already noted, Waddell’s life and work have attracted little scholarly attention; however his first-hand account of life in Jamaica has proven useful to scholars of the Baptist War. At the end of their second year in Jamaica, the Waddells were caught up in this tumultuous event, which centred around the north-west region of Jamaica where they lived. The uprising was dubbed the ‘Baptist War’ because of the 99 slaves court-martialled in the aftermath, 25 were allegedly connected with the Baptist missions or Native Baptists.\(^{209}\) According to Waddell, “rumours of an impending servile war began to spread abroad and agitate the community” in early December.\(^{210}\) Waddell wrote in his memoirs that he “admonished” his congregation “on the subject,” assuring them that their freedom would come to them only in a peaceable and lawful way,—by the efforts of their friends in Britain,—while violence on their own part would surely retard its progress, and perhaps insure their own destruction.\(^{211}\)

After Christmas, “all was alarm” and attendance at Waddell’s mission dropped. At Spring plantation, Waddell discovered to his horror that slaves had broken into the overseer’s house and taken guns and pistols. He suggested that the men

\(^{208}\) Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 220.

\(^{209}\) Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 153. Native Baptists were African men who took on the role of Baptist missionaries.

\(^{210}\) Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 50.

\(^{211}\) Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 51.
leave the weapons somewhere overnight and that he would gather them without asking any questions, and replace them in the overseer’s house before the theft could be uncovered. The following day the weapons were returned “and nothing was again heard of the matter.” On his return to Cornwall, he “found confusion and dismay;” the nearby Palmyra plantation was on fire, which was the signal to the north-western part of Jamaica that the uprising had begun.

All western parishes of Jamaica were involved in the uprising, although notably the plantations on which the SMS preached and taught were not damaged. The destruction engulfed a high proportion of the largest properties with the greatest number of slaves, and in most cases the proprietor’s ‘Great House’ was destroyed, along with the sugar works. In many cases, the slave villages were destroyed by the government militia in retaliation. The leader of the uprising was Sam Sharpe, a Native Baptist who also attended services at a Baptist mission station. Other leaders were headmen (that is, senior slaves) or skilled workers on plantations, predominantly creoles rather than Africans. Most of the leaders had grown up on properties that had been exposed to preaching for more than a generation, including at Cornwall.

The morning after the uprising commenced, Blyth, Waddell and their families moved to nearby Falmouth for “their greater safety,” where they stayed with the family of a Baptist missionary. The Baptist, Wesleyan and Presbyterian

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212 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 53.
213 Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 159.
214 Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 152.
215 Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 152.
216 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 55.
missionaries gathered for a joint prayer meeting in the Methodist chapel, and
the following morning Waddell and Blyth presented a written memorial to the
local magistrates, in which they “deprecated the excessive and indiscriminate
severity towards the disaffected slaves.”\(^\text{217}\) Waddell was horrified by the
authorities’ response to the uprising, writing that if the masters had been as
forbearing of the slaves’ lives as the slaves had been of theirs during the uprising,
“it would have been to their lasting honour, and to the permanent advantage of
the colony.” Instead the uprising was “suppressed with unsparing vengeance.”\(^\text{218}\)
In the immediate aftermath, a magistrate remonstrated with Blyth and Waddell
that they should demonstrate their allegiances and serve with the militia—but
they declined to do.\(^\text{219}\)

In the aftermath of the Baptist War, much of the white population of Jamaica
turned on the missionaries. Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries were arrested
and driven from the island, and chapels were destroyed; Waddell’s home was
pulled down, and the missionaries were subjected to constant acts of “petty
malice.”\(^\text{220}\) The Anglican clergyman Reverend George W. Bridges formed the
Church Colonial Union, which identified the missionaries as its primary
enemy.\(^\text{221}\) According to Waddell, the CCU comprised most of the white
population throughout the Western half of Jamaica, and had the sympathy of
many others.\(^\text{222}\) The SMS missionaries lobbied the Jamaican House of

\(^\text{217}\) Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 56.
\(^\text{218}\) Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 66.
\(^\text{219}\) Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 59.
\(^\text{220}\) Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 78.
\(^\text{221}\) Turner, Slaves and Missionaries, 167. Hereinafter, the Colonial Church Union is abbreviated to “CCU.”
\(^\text{222}\) Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 76.
Assembly, protesting against the “flood of wickedness and oppression which was swelling over the land,” and requesting that enslaved people be permitted to observe the Sabbath and to hold markets on another day of the week.223 Their efforts had little impact, however, apart from inciting further vocal opposition from the Kingston newspapers and the Assembly.224 At the end of 1832, the British government began to bring its authority to bear, effectively censuring the Assembly by issuing a Royal Proclamation “to give full effect to the Law of the maintenance of toleration in matters of Religion and to co-operate in bringing offenders to justice.”225 The proclamation quelled the influence of the CCU, and permitted the gradual reinstatement of the Baptist and Wesleyan mission stations and the resumption of preaching and teaching by the SMS brethren.226

Throughout the Baptist War and its aftermath, Waddell and his colleagues demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of vehement opposition from much of white Jamaica. In Religion versus empire? Andrew Porter urged historians to recognise the reality of missionaries’ faith, their belief and trust in Providence, and their conviction of the reality and reliability of divine promises and revelation offered in the Bible. He argued that on this basis it is possible to explain the what he described as the “incurable optimism” and the persistence many missionaries exhibited in the face of hardship, death and opposition.227 Porter identified “theological providentialism” as central to the appeal of foreign

223 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 75.
224 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 76.
226 Waddell, Twenty-Nine Years, 188-189.
missions within evangelical Protestantism; openings for missionaries within the Empire were seen as providential opportunities “brought into existence and made plain by God himself.”

In June 1834, the Waddells left Jamaica due to Jessie’s ongoing ill-health. They were disappointed to be leaving the island as Emancipation Day approached, but Waddell used his time away to raise funds for the SMS in Ireland and Scotland. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland drew upon Waddell’s example in seeking new recruits for overseas mission. His letters from Jamaica were published in the *Orthodox Presbyterian* newsletter, and an early historian of the Presbyterian church noted that these letters and his visits to Ireland when on furlough “helped to widen the horizon” of his co-religionists. Waddell came to be considered as Irish Presbyterians’ “ministerial representative on the mission field.” After a year in Britain, Waddell left his wife at home in Scotland and returned to Jamaica. Moulton Barrett, the proprietor of Cinnamon Hill, was far less accommodating post-Emancipation. Even before Waddell had left in 1834 he had been “almost debarred” from Moulton’s plantation. Waddell was pleased to find another patron, the proprietor of the Easthams plantation, who provided land for Waddell to build a permanent church. The construction of the Mount Zion church, which was completed in 1838, was the attainment of a long-held goal for Waddell.

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228 Porter, *Religion versus empire?* 43.
229 Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 93.
231 Addley, ‘Birth and Development of the Overseas Missions,’ 55.
233 Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years*, 100.
From about 1839, Waddell together with SMS colleagues and some members of their congregation began working on plans to establish a mission in Africa. Waddell was one of those who strongly urged that a mission be sent to the homeland of so many of the former slaves in Jamaica.²³⁵ Lack of support from the SMS eventually drove the Presbytery in Jamaica to establish a new missionary society, with Waddell as the first agent and representative. With his wife and young children, Waddell left Jamaica in 1845 and by early 1846, the mission was ready to sail to Old Calabar, on the west coast of Africa.²³⁶ In 1858 Waddell returned with his family to Ireland and settled in Dublin, where he helped establish a missionary congregation. In 1864 he inherited the Kilmore estate in County Monaghan from a maternal uncle. Jessie died in Dublin in 1894, and Waddell the following year.²³⁷

**Conclusion**

The Caribbean careers of John Crawford and Hope Waddell demonstrate the diversity of the humanitarian endeavour in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whilst neither man would have used the word ‘humanitarian’ to describe himself, both were focused (for their own reasons) on the concern for strangers. Separated by a generation, their careers unfolded within very different geographic and political spaces within the Caribbean. By the time Waddell arrived in Jamaica, the Revolutionary Era was all but over—

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²³⁷ Lynn, ‘Waddell, Hope.’
yet he experienced one of the most tumultuous events in Jamaican history nonetheless. Both men were subsumed within transnational networks which sustained them through difficult periods during their sojourns—Waddell within the Presbyterian world, and Crawford within the medical ‘Republic of Letters’. In common with the other men profiled in this thesis, they both maintained their connection with Ireland whilst in the Caribbean, but Irishness was not the defining element of their identities.

As discussed in chapters Two and Three, Barbados (where Crawford lived) and Jamaica (where Waddell lived) had remained under British control since the late seventeenth century. The islands were not impervious to invasion during the Revolutionary Era, but were relatively stable British possessions. Barbados was Britain’s eastern-most Caribbean island, and when Crawford arrived in the late 1770s, it was of prime strategic importance. France entered the American Revolutionary War in 1778, and in response Britain’s strategy for victory shifted southward in the Caribbean. The Royal Navy planned to attack the lucrative island of St. Lucia in the southern West Indies to deliver a severe blow to the French forces, and Barbados was chosen to serve as a base due to its proximity to St. Lucia. Crawford, who was already in Barbados, was promptly appointed Surgeon to the newly-established hospital there, as the island was inundated with new (often ill) troops to the region. We do not know Crawford’s motivation for travelling to Barbados in the first place, but not long after his arrival he was

\footnote{238 Convertito, ‘Mending the Sick and Wounded,’ 526}
swept up in the requirements of the British military and his career remained on a war footing for many years.

After more than a decade in Barbados, Crawford moved to Demerara, following a well-established migration route from Barbados and Antigua to the relatively uncultivated frontier on the South American mainland. Demerara was a trans-imperial space: administered by Dutch officials, but with a majority British white population. As in Barbados, Crawford occupied a military ‘space’ in Demerara—he was again appointed to oversee medical care at the military barracks and military hospital. Perhaps his early forays into the General Dispensary and Humane Society in Barbados were an attempt to broaden his reach beyond the confines of military medicine and the military community. Crawford also sojourned in the Dutch imperial metropole, and spent his time there fostering scientific connections which would aid his plans for the Physic Garden in Essequibo and lobbying Dutch officials for their support. Despite being dogged by ill-health, Crawford envisaged a settled life in Dutch Demerara and its neighbouring colony Essequibo; he was clearly comfortable in this non-British imperial space. But when Britain took control of the colony in 1795, his plans for the Physic Garden were dashed and he took the opportunity to leave the British imperial world for good.

In Jamaica, Waddell’s experience was not dissimilar from Richard Madden’s. The early years of his sojourn were marked by hostility and contestation, which culminated in the Baptist War. As a missionary, Waddell was viewed with suspicion by most planters and slave-owners, who perceived the arrival of
missionaries in Jamaica as inextricably linked with the humanitarian attack on the slave trade and the push for emancipation.\textsuperscript{239} It is notable that like a number of other Irishmen profiled in this thesis, Waddell seemed prepared for (and indeed comfortable with) a degree of animosity as he pursued his professional life. Waddell recounted altercations with plantation overseers and attorneys who challenged his right to minister to enslaved people on their plantations, often when he had already received the proprietors’ permission to do so. Along with other religious denominations, he and his SMS brethren had to contend with the vitriol of the CCU and the opposition of local magistrates. Waddell also suffered violent attacks on his property and his mission stations.

In contrast to the military space within which Crawford moved, Waddell lived out his Caribbean life on sugar plantations. His day to day life took on the rhythm of plantation life, as he waited for shell blow to minister to his congregations, and worked around the schedules imposed upon the enslaved men, women and children by the requirements of the plantation. As already described, Waddell made a number of references to the enslaved (and later, apprenticed and emancipated) Africans who worked for his family. In contrast, Crawford’s account of his time in Barbados and Demerara is silent on the presence of enslaved Africans or free coloured people, despite the fact that he undoubtedly had domestic slaves in his household, and the hospital would have relied upon the labour of enslaved men and women.

\textsuperscript{239} Turner, \textit{Slaves and Missionaries}, 10.
One reference in a letter Crawford wrote to his friend Hugh McCalmont from Baltimore is revealing, however. He wrote that he was pleased to hear the news that Mr Green, a mutual acquaintance of theirs in Demerara was planning to marry his “housekeeper,” presumably an African or creole coloured woman, and retire to Germany. Crawford wrote that “to live in this Country [the United States] as he did when I was with you [in Demerara] is altogether inadmissible. For obvious reasons our state of society could not countenance it.” Crawford did approve of their plan to marry though, as “the interests of his numerous issue demand it.”

This comment reveals, again, the practice of European men living with African women, and the fact that it was not necessarily unusual for these couples to marry and live in Europe—and indeed Crawford approved of this, particularly for the sake of the couple’s children.

Both Crawford and Waddell’s wives accompanied them to the Caribbean, although Mrs Crawford died after his first stint in Barbados. Crawford’s accounts of his years in the Caribbean give no detail as to the life his wife and children led, and it is unclear whether his children returned to Barbados with him after his furlough in London. Research on his daughter Eliza indicates that she was very proficient at the French language, had connections with France and as an adult she translated French novels into English. As with most of the women in this thesis, there are tantalizingly few facts available to illuminate her experience of the Caribbean. But Eliza’s proficiency in French might suggest that

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240 John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerara, 19 December 1798, MHS MS1246.
241 Quynn, ‘Maximilian and Eliza Godefroy,’ 1-34.
she grew up in the cross-cultural currents of the Caribbean—or at least that she was well-educated in Britain or Ireland.

Hope Waddell’s wife Jessie is perhaps the most visible white woman in this thesis. We have nothing written in her hand, but her husband’s memoirs detail some of her activities at the mission station, particularly the role she played in educating enslaved Africans. In combination with Alison Blyth’s diary, and Zacek and Brown’s study of missionaries’ material culture, we can speculate upon the life Mrs Waddell led in Jamaica.242 Her experience, although comfortable judging from her husband’s memoirs and Zacek and Brown’s study, was markedly different from that of Harriet Madden, who spent much of her time in Jamaica living inside the ‘big house’ on her brother’s plantation.

The relative spaces that Crawford and Waddell occupied were dominated by the men’s respective transnational networks: medical science and religion. A feature of the medical community that Crawford entered by virtue of his education and his service on EIC ships, was the professional imperative to correspond with colleagues, by means of personal letters, as well as publications such as his 1772 pamphlet. Influenced by the burgeoning commercial economy of their day, medical men corresponded with one another and with other friends in the broader republic of letters about medicine and philanthropy, current events, and politics.243 The medical men Amanda Moniz studied (which included Crawford) prized the “literary and learned” correspondence they exchanged;

243 Moniz, From Empire to Humanity, 6.
they thrived on discussions about the latest empirical knowledge, treatments, theories about diseases and management of patients. Being citizens of this world was fundamental to their professional self-image.\textsuperscript{244} This community of correspondents was the most significant relative space within which Crawford moved. He supplemented his correspondence by acquiring an extensive library—and a concomitant debt to the London bookseller George Kearsley. When he died, Crawford’s library was in fact his most valuable asset.\textsuperscript{245} The tension between this expansive and intellectually fulfilling space, and the grinding nature of his daily work within the military and medical spaces of Barbados and Demerara, explains the sense of frustration which overlaid Crawford’s letters to the British Commissioners of the Treasury and to Lieutenant General Mathew at the end of his years in the Caribbean.

Based on Waddell’s memoir of his years in Jamaica, and on the scholarship of historians of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, it seems that the networks that Waddell participated in were primarily religious. He retained a close connection with Presbyterian congregations in Scotland and Ireland, not least because his activities in Jamaica depended largely upon their donations. As William Addley’s research suggests, Waddell was highly-regarded within the Church in Ireland and his reports from the field were widely disseminated within this community.\textsuperscript{246} Waddell’s memoir also suggests that he and his fellow SMS brethren, and their wives, developed relationships with missionaries from other denominations on the ground in Jamaica. The strength of these relationships

\textsuperscript{244} Moniz, \textit{From Empire to Humanity}, 51.
\textsuperscript{245} Wilson, ‘Dr John Crawford,’ 119.
ebbed and flowed as circumstances changed, but it seems that in times of difficulty (particularly in the aftermath of the Baptist War), the links between the denominations were crucial to the men in resisting pressure from planters and island officials.

Crawford’s ties with Ireland, as far as it is possible to detect from the archive, manifested in his ongoing connections with Irish associates. Hugh McCalmont remained a lifelong friend and patron for Crawford, and the letters Crawford wrote to McCalmont from Baltimore are full of references to mutual friends in Demerara, London and Ireland. Brief references to his family in the McCalmont letters also suggest that he corresponded with at least some of his brothers in Ireland, although no such correspondence has been found. Crawford clearly maintained a keen interest in events in Ireland, as evidenced by his commentary on the 1798 Rebellion in his letters to McCalmont. It is notable too, that when Crawford moved to Baltimore, it was at the behest of the brother of Crawford’s long-dead wife. His brother-in-law financed the move and helped Crawford to establish himself in the city.247

Crawford’s letter-writing style was relatively candid, and as such they provide insights into his inner spaces. Even the letters he wrote to officials betray the emotive depths of his frustration—the best example of which is his statement that his years at the Barbados hospital were marked by “vexation, disappointment, I may say misery...with very little interruption.”248 In his letters

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247 Moniz, ‘Labours in the Cause of Humanity,’ 58.
to McCalmont he was frank about his concerns for his adult children, his financial woes, and his fears for the future of the Caribbean world and the United States. In contrast, Waddell’s writing is tempered by the conventions of the genre of the missionary memoir. His book does contain some reflection on his motivations, but it is difficult to assess these in a way which explains anything more than the ‘approved missionary line.’ As Anna Johnston has observed in her study of missionary writing, such tracts were published to ensure an ongoing supply of donated funds, and to inculcate public support for missionary endeavours. There is little introspection in Waddell’s memoir, and certainly no discussion of spiritual doubts. Waddell did not shy away from laying out the trials and tribulations he and his fellow missionaries faced at the hands of the white planters—although even this fits into a narrative of good versus evil, in which the enslaved people to whom he ministered emerged triumphant from the bonds of slavery.

The tension between the physical spaces which Crawford and Waddell inhabited, and the broader networks with which they engaged, provides the clearest insight into their experiences as Irishmen within an imperial milieu. In order to commence their humanitarian endeavours, both men were dependent upon British imperial structures. Crawford’s introduction to the world of scientific discovery was on board EIC vessels which traversed various points in the British imperial world. Similarly, Waddell’s ability to minister in foreign lands was enabled by the British imperial presence in far-flung parts of the

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world. But once in the Caribbean, both men engaged with networks which extended beyond British imperial spaces. The network of men around the Atlantic world with whom Crawford corresponded, and whose books he consumed, incorporated the post-Revolutionary United States, France and Holland. Similarly, when he initiated the Dispensary and RHS in Barbados, he tapped into a network which extended far beyond Britain or Ireland. This suggests that Crawford’s inner, intellectual spaces were not limited by the boundaries of the British Empire. Waddell’s network too would have extended beyond the British Empire, to the vibrant evangelical Presbyterian community in the United States, which had close connections with his home in the North of Ireland. Life in the British Caribbean for both men enabled them to forge deeper connections with their transnational communities, and this was at the heart of their experience of empire.
Conclusion

To be Irish and involved in the British Empire in the Caribbean required careful maintenance and navigation of multiple networks, including family, mercantile and administrative networks; as well as the broader British and trans-imperial connections within the Caribbean. Time and again, the Caribbean lives of the Irishmen in this thesis demonstrate that, as Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton have argued, European empires were not “hermetically sealed systems,” and nor was British imperial power hegemonic.1 Irish sojourners tested some of the limits of the Empire and demonstrated the porous nature of its boundaries. The experiences of the ten men in this thesis also illustrate the contingency of imperial power by highlighting the interconnectedness of European empires in the Caribbean at ground level.

The findings of this thesis span Irish and British imperial historiography. By examining a diverse range of Irishmen alongside each other in this study, I have been able to identify some similarities in their experiences which constitute markers of the Irish experience of empire. My discoveries about their Caribbean experiences have revealed some nuances of Irish identity and enabled me to situate the men’s ‘Irishness’ within the context of their whole lives. For most of the sojourners a connection with Ireland was important but was never the defining element of their identity. The biographical subjects in this thesis, some of whom are new to scholarship, and some of whom I have

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considered in a fresh light, add to the accumulating body of work on what exactly Irish men (and women) were doing in the British Empire.

The Irish sojourners’ records and publications revealed much about their experiences, but there were some matters on which they were largely silent—and this in itself is revealing. Indigenous inhabitants, the presence of enslaved people in the men’s homes, and the role of female sojourners are barely discernible. Religion too, is absent from the accounts of most of the sojourners. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, it became evident early in my research that although Irish women did sojourn in the Caribbean, the archival traces they left are fleeting. We have learnt something of (English) Harriet Madden’s experience of Jamaica by means of the fragmentary remnants of her journal, but the glimpses we have of the other women who travelled to the Caribbean are all mediated through their husbands’ voices. So too, we can detect the presence of enslaved (and in the case of Edward Despard and Richard Burke, indigenous) people around the Irishmen, but they appear only as shadows, occasionally referred to directly, and only rarely given a name. The methodology I adopted in this thesis was effective in drawing out the male sojourners’ experiences, but to elucidate the lives of the women, indigenous and enslaved people around them requires a different approach.

The editors of *Ireland in an Imperial World* recently lamented that British imperial historiography has “almost entirely ignored Ireland.”[^2] They are not

the first to contend that historians of the British Empire, “not knowing quite how it fits into the British story,” have chosen instead to leave Ireland out. Yet historians of Ireland and of the Empire have long accepted that Ireland contributed a disproportionate number of men to the British military, and that Ireland played a significant role in the provisions trade across the Atlantic. Irishmen were also a key feature of British imperial administration. Few of the men I studied engaged explicitly with the question of Ireland’s (or their own) relationship with the Empire, but the experiences of men such as Richard Madden, George Macartney and Hope Waddell exemplified the types of complexities and anomalies which have led British historians to leave Irish stories out of their accounts of the Empire. It is in teasing out those complexities, however, that scholars can attain a richer understanding of the Empire as a whole. It is clear from this thesis that Irishmen were involved in an array of imperial projects in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era. Similar to Barry Crosbie’s finding regarding the Irish in India, the Irishmen’s experiences in the Caribbean reveal the “multifaceted and essentially pluralised nature of the ‘British’ imperial experience.” The findings which have emerged from this study, in common with other scholarship on Irish imperial participants, are relevant not only to the field of ‘Ireland and empire,’ but extend to British imperial historiography more broadly.

In an order to provide “thorough, multi-dimensional contextualisation” for the life stories in this thesis, I turned to David Harvey’s tripartite spatial model, as translated for historians by Tamson Pietsch. This model has enabled a nuanced understanding of the experiences of the Irish sojourners in this thesis. Tracing the men’s vital statistics of birth, death, education, marriage and career; the friendships and connections they forged; and the routes they traced across the Atlantic provides varying degrees of context, which in turn colours the world they inhabited. But this thesis demonstrates that a close study of the material, relative and inner worlds the men inhabited and created more effectively reveals the complexities of the Irish experience of empire, and enhances our view of the British Caribbean during the Revolutionary era.

Examining the absolute spaces the men occupied has emphasised the diversity within the British Caribbean, and the changing nature of British power in the region. British possessions during the Revolutionary Era were in a state of flux, with islands changing hands in times of war, and often reverting after peace treaties were signed. Even where Britain took possession of territory, power was often circumscribed. For example, Richard Burke’s tumultuous tenure as a Customs official in Grenada revealed Britain’s difficulties in enforcing its customs regime. The lack of clarity in the treaty which awarded Grenada to Britain exposed the latter’s customs regime to legal challenge, which hampered Britain’s ability to control shipping around the island and hence its ability to benefit from the new territory. In Trinidad, we have seen through the life of

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John Black the uneasy co-existence of British and Spanish legal and administrative systems, which continued for decades after the British took the island. It is one thing to apprehend these complexities at an academic level, but another thing altogether to view them from the ground up through the experiences of people who lived there.

Observing Burke’s actions in St. Vincent, or Black’s in Trinidad reveals the space between what we know about a place and the reality of administering or doing business there. The value of the tripartite spatial analysis is in focusing on that space between the ‘facts’ and the men’s experiences. In many cases, that space is characterised by silence; in others, the tension is apparent. In that space, we can observe the operation of the Revolutionary Era on the ground. Often, the impression is of ‘business as usual’ in the Empire—as in John Crawford’s career, or in Black’s. But in other situations, such as Edward Despard’s sojourn in Honduras, or Marcus Rainsford’s in St. Domingo, the ructions occasioned by the Revolutionary Era were all-encompassing.

Wherever possible through the thesis, I have mapped out the sojourners’ domestic arrangements from the available archival material. We know that all of these men would have had enslaved Africans waiting upon them in their Caribbean homes, but only John Black and Hope Waddell mentioned the enslaved people who shared their quotidian lives—and even then, only in passing. Again, the space between what we know would have been the case, and what the men’s archives reveal, is silence. The questions raised by that silence hint at the men’s inner worlds. Did they believe that their Irish
correspondents would disapprove of them sharing their domestic spaces with enslaved men, women and children? Or were they inured to slavery?

Most of the men in this thesis commented on slavery in a general sense at some point, and their views on the subject reflect the contradictions of the age. Some, like Black, supported the institution wholeheartedly. Even as emancipation approached, he railed against the financial ruin amongst the planter community that he attributed to “the ill-founded calculations of his Majesty’s Ministers and the ridiculous philanthropy of Mr Wilberforce.”

Marcus Rainsford and Samuel Watt’s views on slavery changed over time, but both initially subscribed to the view that enslaved Africans faced greater evils in Africa, and that their situation in the Caribbean was “in many respects, superior to that of the labourers or the artizans of Britain.” Two years before Rainsford published *Black Empire*, John Crawford, by then resident in the United States, urged Thomas Jefferson to enact emancipation. Crawford was certain that enslaved Africans across the Caribbean and South America were bound to follow the example of St. Domingo. He argued that “the people of this country fought gloriously for their liberty,” but that “the Glory they acquired on that brilliant occasion would be wholly eclipsed, by their refusing to grant to those who are under their authority what they have a right to claim.” Most of the men in this thesis adopted what we would recognise today as a

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7 John Black, Trinidad, to George Black, Belfast, October 5, 1808, PRONI D4457/294.
8 Samuel Watt, Barbadoes, to James Watt Junior, Ramelton, September 20, 1804, PRONI MIC135/1.
paternalistic stance towards the enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, including Hope Waddell and Richard Madden, who were actively involved in emancipation in Jamaica.

Envisaging the communities and networks that the sojourners moved within in the British Caribbean as a type of ‘space’ has emphasised the fact that the men’s Irish networks (and their relationship with their birthplace) was one element of their lives in the Caribbean, but it was by no means always the dominant relative space. The men’s relative worlds were mapped by the movement of people, letters and goods between Ireland and the Caribbean, but also by those around the Atlantic world, and in the Irish community in London. Most of the men in this thesis cultivated Irish contacts, particularly those involved in commerce. For each man in this thesis, I have sought to establish the degree to which ‘Ireland’ as a relative space existed in his life. Half of the men retired to Ireland, which speaks to their connections to family and their homeland. I found no evidence of formalised Irish associational activities in the Caribbean, other than the fact that John Black and his family celebrated St Patrick’s Day with Irish friends in Trinidad.

Religious observance and community was, somewhat surprisingly, largely absent from the lives of the men in this thesis. Aside of course from Hope Waddell, for whom religion was a central element of his identity, the only references to attending religious services or engaging with a religious community, appeared in John Black’s letters and Harriet Madden’s journal. Black’s comments to his brother in his letters suggest that he was ambivalent
as to which Christian denomination he adhered to and this suggests he had no strong connection with a religious community during his Caribbean life. He noted that his wife and children went to Catholic services in Trinidad, but when his daughter Adele set off for Belfast, Black wrote to his brother that he was “almost indifferent whether it be protestant or Romish,” just as long as she had religion of some sort “instilled” in her.10 As noted in Chapter Three, Harriet Madden converted to Catholicism at some point during her life, but she attended Anglican services soon after her arrival in Jamaica—without her husband.11 Unfortunately only fragments of her journal survive so it is not possible to assess the extent of her involvement in the Anglican community during her sojourn—or whether her marriage to an Irish Catholic man was a point of contention.

The men in this thesis were all part of communities constituted by the milieu in which they operated: administrative, abolitionist, military, mercantile, scientific and religious. Uncovering the variety of communities in which the men participated—in person and remotely (via letters, or by keeping up with medical literature, as John Crawford did), has revealed the finer shades of identity often missing in scholarship on the Irish, or on any ethnic group for that matter. As the individual biographies have shown, Ireland’s prominence in the sojourners’ lives varied between the men. Ireland was one of a number of interlocking cultural spaces they inhabited. To focus only on their Irishness is to render them one-dimensional and overlooks the diversity within the Irish

10 John Black, Trinidad to George Black, Belfast, March 20, 1803, PRONI D4457/288.
11 ‘No. XXII. Mrs Madden’s Journal of their first visit to the West Indies.’ RIA MS24 O14, folio 157.
community. As Orla Power, Barry Crosbie and others attest, the Irish in the Empire (or at home), were by no means a homogenous group.\footnote{Crosbie, \textit{Irish Imperial Networks}, 4. Orla Power, ‘Friend, Foe or Family? Catholic Creoles, French Huguenots, Scottish Dissenters: Aspects of the Irish Diaspora at St. Croix, Danish West Indies, c.1760,’ in \textit{Transnational Perspectives on Modern Irish History}, ed. Niall Whelehan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 30.}

Overlaying the relative worlds that the men created and inhabited, and the physical spaces in which they lived, were the men’s inner ‘relational’ worlds. These inner spaces, produced by experiences, memories, fears and dreams, are the most difficult to access. My ability to draw upon the inner spaces of the Irishmen in this thesis has depended upon the type and quantity of archival material available, the genre of the material, and the way in which the men expressed themselves. As I noted in the conclusion to Chapter One, with very little in the soldiers’ own voices, it was virtually impossible to assess the relational spaces they occupied. We do catch glimpses, however. Edward Despard’s insistence later in life that he “exerted every nerve” in attempting to balance the conflicting interests of the people living in Honduras, and the fact that he adopted an approach to land distribution contrary to the Baymen’s desires (and for that matter, British norms), suggest his frustration with the status quo, and his conviction that he could effect positive change.\footnote{‘The Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King,’ NMM CRK/4/8. Transcription in Jacqui Livesey, ‘Nelson and the Humble Petition of Edward Marcus Despard to the King, 1803,’ \textit{Navy Records Society Online Magazine}, November 11, 2016. Accessed online: \url{https://www.navyrecords.org.uk/magazine_posts/nelson-and-the-humble-petition-of-edward-marcus-despard-to-the-king-1803/}} Similarly, Rainsford’s decision to publicly declare his deep admiration for Toussaint L’Ouverture, so much at odds with received opinion in Britain, demonstrates
his openness to new experiences and possibilities—and the importance he placed upon human connection, regardless of skin colour.\textsuperscript{14}

Anger at poor treatment or at missing out on opportunities for advancement fashioned personal spaces that, although interior, intersected with and acted upon the circulating material world constituted by the men’s communities and networks. Both of these spaces in turn helped form the localities in which the men lived and the sites though which goods and information travelled—the plantation, the courtroom, the hospital and the interiors of homes.\textsuperscript{15} Some of the Irishmen spelt out elements of their inner worlds in their letters. John Crawford used “vexation,” “disappointment” and “misery” to describe his time at the Naval Hospital in Barbados.\textsuperscript{16} Richard Madden’s fear of physical violence was so palpable that he left his post within a year. John Black’s letters were punctuated with outbursts of fury, frustration and longing for home. Thinking about how these inner spaces played out in the physical locations where the men lived, and in the communities and networks they interacted with, reveals much about the imperial world in the British Caribbean, and the impact that had on the Irishmen. Frustration was a common theme in the men’s experiences: frustration with local authorities, with conflict between regulation on the ground and rules imposed by London, and with the operation of patronage networks which at times excluded Irishmen. The men’s

\textsuperscript{14} Marcus Rainsford, \textit{A Memoir of Transactions that took place at St. Domingo, in the spring of 1799} (London: R.B. Scott, 1802), 22.

\textsuperscript{15} Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 449.

\textsuperscript{16} John Crawford, ‘A Letter Addressed to Lieutenant General Mathew on the means of preventing the method of treating and origins of the Diseases most prevalent and which prove most destructive to the Natives of Cold Climates visiting or residing in Warm Countries by John Crawford, M.D.,’ MHS, Box 130, Manuscript Collections of the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland (MS 3000), 110-111.
reactions to their experiences in the Caribbean demonstrate the resilience which was required in order to carve out a Caribbean life. Despite natural disasters, crop failure and political upheaval, John Black persisted with his sugar plantation, and maintained an intermittent administrative career. John Crawford moved on from his failed philanthropic ventures in Barbados, to his plans for establishing a Physic Garden in Essequibo. Samuel Watt found new business partners after the failure of his venture with Mr. Cummings. Hope Waddell persisted with his missionary efforts despite the attempts of the Church Colonial Union to close down his mission, and the upheaval of the Baptist War. All of these experiences, and the men’s responses to them, attest to the tenacity required to succeed as a white sojourner in the British Caribbean.

A characteristic which most of the Irishmen in this thesis shared was their high threshold for conflict. Across the range of social spheres surveyed in this thesis, the Irish participants faced animosity from within white British Caribbean society in one form or another. Most of the men in this thesis had first-hand experience of the multiple ethnic and religious divisions which marked Ireland during the Revolutionary Era. As such, they were accustomed to living their lives against a backdrop of deep-seated differences. Were the men accustomed to navigating their way around divisions and conflict? Macartney certainly had experience of this during his time in Dublin as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. According to Edward Despard, his eldest brother had “raised a small corp of volunteer cavalry” during the 1798 Rebellion; and John Crawford’s youngest brother was imprisoned during the
1790s for radical activities in Antrim. Richard Madden was born amidst the turmoil of the 1798 Rebellion. Although this did not render the Irishmen impervious to conflict, the fact that most of the men in this thesis demonstrated an ability to withstand a high degree of animosity suggests that this was a marker of the Irish experience of empire during the Revolutionary Era. For example, Madden was aware as soon as he disembarked in Jamaica that he was pitted against the Jamaican press, as well as the plantocracy and incumbent magistrates. Hope Waddell withstood years of opposition, threats and actual violence at the hands of sections of the white community in Jamaica. We have seen the extent of John Black’s clashes with authority. Macartney identified the opposing sides in Grenadian white society but withstood that pressure. Granted, the animosity sometimes flowed from the fact that the men were engaged with other imperial powers—such as John Black or Edward Despard. To be clear, the ability to absorb animosity is not an exceptionally Irish trait, but the fact that so many of the men in this thesis shared this experience confirms that this was a feature of the Irish experience of the Empire in the Caribbean.

Turning to the inner, or relational spaces, which were identified through this thesis, David Harvey proposed identity as a key feature of this space but acknowledged that it is the most difficult to measure, as identity can be fluid.

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and multiple. As already noted, Irishness was not always the central element of the sojourners’ identity. We know that all of the men in this thesis participated in networks and communities besides Irish ones. We can also gain insights into their identity by considering the distinctions between one kind of sojourner and another. The aims and preoccupations of soldiers, merchants, colonial officials and humanitarians differed. The men’s choice of careers tells us something of their motivations in travelling to the Caribbean, which in turn reveals something of their inner spaces. The ten biographies in this thesis make clear that the men did not travel to the Caribbean because they were Irish, they did so to pursue financial or heavenly rewards, to aid their ascent up the administrative ladder, or to attain knowledge. The men’s Irish identities shifted in and out of their experiences in the Caribbean, sometimes in the foreground, but often not.

By attending to the absolute, relative and relational spaces that the ten Irishmen inhabited and created, this thesis reveals fresh perspectives on the world of the British imperial Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era, and on the Irish experience of that world. As Tamson Pietsch argues, this spatial framework has a number of potential benefits for historical scholarship. The two which have emerged through this thesis are that, first, it permits a more precise understanding of what we might think of as the British imperial world in the Caribbean, highlighting the extent to which its boundaries depend on

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what we measure. The second is that taking account of the different spatial realms provides a novel way of talking about power and inequality.

In relation to the former benefit, this thesis confirms that at times during the Revolutionary Era, the British Caribbean existed as a relative space beyond the formal boundaries of the British Empire in the region. This is because Irishmen such as Crawford and Black continued to engage with the Empire and conceived of themselves as a part of that imperial world, even as they lived and worked in localities formally controlled by Holland and Spain respectively. Despite living in Demerara and Trinidad under foreign control, both men reached across ever-changing imperial borders to remain effectively inside the British Caribbean. This reminds us that borders in the Caribbean during the Revolutionary Era were permeable and frequently subject to change, and that British power in any one place was never quite assured. The outcome of Irishmen such as Black and Crawford (among others) pushing into physical spaces beyond British control, but remaining a part of the British imperial space, was that they acted as agents of the Empire (if perhaps unwittingly) in extending British influence.

With regard to the second benefit, Pietsch suggested that it is at the intersection of the material, imagined and local worlds of countless people that the uneven landscapes of global connection and the unequal cultures of empire and colonial society were made. Applying this to my thesis, the ‘uneven

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19 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 457.
20 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 458.
21 Pietsch, ‘Rethinking the British World,’ 458.
landscapes of connection’ are suggestive of places like Grenada, Trinidad, Demerara and Honduras. British power was unevenly applied in these places, which led to divergences between the experiences of Irishmen there, as opposed to places like Barbados or Jamaica. How the Irishmen experienced the British Caribbean depended very much upon the specificities of the local, as well as the bonds of connection between those sites and Ireland, or the imperial centre in London. For example, Samuel Watt may have experienced commercial difficulties in Barbados and Jamaica, but he was situated in the commercial nexus of the British Caribbean, with a strong connection with Ireland too. This afforded him a smoother commercial ride than John Black, who was in a more liminal space, with patchier packet ship connections, fewer links with home, and trans-imperial complications such as the continued operation of Spanish law under British rule.

The Revolutionary Era acted to destabilise the old certainties of the imperial past. The revolutions in France, America and St. Domingo threw the social order in the Caribbean into a state of flux and re-drew borders between empires. Few of the Irishmen profiled in this thesis commented explicitly on the series of revolutions around the Atlantic—or indeed the Rebellion in Ireland in 1798—but we know from their biographies that many of them witnessed first-hand the ructions caused by the revolutions, their attendant wars and the spread of radical ideas. Despard’s egalitarian tendencies were on display in Honduras, and Rainsford was deeply affected by his visit to

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revolutionary St. Domingo. Daniel O’Meara commanded a corps of black soldiers, and fought against newly-emancipated men in St. Lucia, who had taken up arms with Revolutionary France. John Black often alluded to his fear of revolutionary contagion from St. Domingo to Trinidad, and John Crawford’s increasingly anxious letters to his friend Hugh McCalmont in Demerara indicate that he took a keen interest in the “critical” events unfolding in the Caribbean at the beginning of the nineteenth century.23

Judging by the Irishmen I have studied, one effective way of managing the turbulence of the Revolutionary Era was to nurture trans-imperial connections, however fleeting. To be Irish enabled a degree of flexibility within the Caribbean which English (and perhaps Scottish) men lacked—ambiguity regarding Irish men’s loyalties could be turned to advantage, but for the most part, their British counterparts would have found this far more difficult to navigate. Thomas Truxes observed that during the Seven Years War, the Irish merchants based in Bordeaux possessed a considerable ability to walk “the fine line of political allegiance.”24 The same can be said of many of the men profiled here. Despard, Rainsford, Crawford and Black all reached across imperial borders to develop relationships with their counterparts in the French, Spanish and Dutch empires. George Macartney’s role as Governor of Grenada was to manage the divisions between the French and ‘English’ parties as Britain


attempted to consolidate its hold on the Ceded Islands. The ability to reach across imperial borders—whilst not exclusively an Irish attribute—was certainly a marker of the Irish experience of empire in the Caribbean during this period.

A key finding of this thesis is the diversity of experiences amongst Irish sojourners in the British Caribbean. Even within the social spheres demarcated by the chapters of this thesis, the men’s experiences varied enormously. Examining these lives in detail has also exposed the diversity within the British Caribbean itself, and the local character of British imperialism. By examining the way that men like Macartney, Black, Despard and Madden interacted with the administrative structures in Grenada, Trinidad, Honduras and Jamaica respectively, we have seen the patchwork of regimes which emerged within the British Caribbean. Britain could not standardise its administrative structure across the region, and the result was an uneven distribution of power. A close examination of the Irishmen’s lives has demonstrated the contingent and varied experience of imperial rule, and the asymmetries of power that existed across different sites in the British Caribbean.25

In a thesis investigating life in the Caribbean it is hardly surprising that race has emerged as a dominant theme. A number of the sojourners were silent on the topic of their interactions with enslaved men and women—notably Crawford, Macartney, Burke, Watt, and Crawford. Crawford did comment on

the system of slavery in general in his correspondence later in life with Thomas Jefferson, and he wrote to Hugh McCalmont of a mutual friend’s intention to marry his “housekeeper” and mother of his children, evidently a coloured woman.²⁶ Although Watt himself was silent on the relationship, we know of his co-habitation with a coloured woman in Jamaica from a letter Watt’s nephew penned.²⁷ Madden, Waddell and Black provide insights into slavery, at both the systemic level and the quotidian. What was most striking, however, was the many and varied ways in which the military men in this thesis interacted with enslaved and free coloured men in their working lives. As explained in Chapter One, there has been very little scholarly engagement with the everyday, non-operational, British military presence in the Caribbean, and thus little engagement with the question of interaction between Europeans and Africans within the military. Roger Buckley opened up the social history of the military in the Caribbean, and highlighted the British practice of arming enslaved men, but scholarship in the field had stalled until recently. My research has revealed that Despard, Rainsford and O’Meara all worked closely with, commanded and recruited enslaved and free coloured men. Slavery was as much a part of the military experience in the Caribbean as it was a part of other aspects of life, such as the plantation machine. My research highlights the little-known history of the West India Regiments, and the Irish connection with them. Research is ongoing in Britain on the participation of African men within the

²⁷ As noted in Chapter Two, Watt obviously enquired after Palmyra in a letter to his nephew John after he left Jamaica, although we only have the latter’s response in that particular exchange: John Watt, Kingston, to Samuel Watt, November 28, 1825, PRONI MIC135/1.
British military, but the engagement of the many Irish officers in the WIR with their enslaved recruits is a subject which would benefit from further research.

In his reflections on new directions for British imperial biographies, David Lambert noted the achievements of emerging scholarship that applies the notion of imperial biographies to career-types beyond elite colonial governors, and work which considers the non-human elements of imperial lives. In this regard, Lambert suggested that a focus on non-human elements such as infrastructure would be fruitful in attending to the materialities of imperialism.28 In this thesis, I have responded to both of these challenges, by expanding the range of imperial subjects, and by attending to their interaction with the non-human element of space, through which the men moved. By incorporating non-elite Irish sojourners across a range of social spheres, this thesis has exposed a wide range of activities which took place under the *aegis* of the Empire, and which were enabled by imperial structures. As Karen Kupperman argued in relation to the Atlantic, the people who travelled around the margins were at least as important as the governors and directors who so often dominate the historical narrative.29 Utilising Irishmen, who were generally not from powerful or wealthy families, and many of whom had no connection with Dublin let alone London, has avoided overestimating the Empire’s power. Antoinette Burton warned against an approach, in writing imperial history, that overestimates the power of the imperial state. She argued that while the “empire’s global dimensions were always in the process of

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becoming hegemonic by design,” the effects were always in “flux, rarely articulated, [and] perpetually in need of reiteration.”  

Viewing the Empire in the Caribbean through the lens of the Irish sojourners’ lives has decentred the account of the Empire from the metropole, and has emphasised this sense of flux.

Perhaps the most ‘elite’ man in this thesis is George Macartney, but an examination of his background demonstrates that his hold on elite status was often tenuous. Extending the range of subjects beyond the elite has exposed a wide range of imperial projects, ranging from the West India Regiments, the colonisation of Central America and intercolonial slave-trading. Richard Burke’s attempts to acquire land in St. Vincent illuminates virtually-forgotten aspects of contact with the indigenous occupants of the island. Viewing the British Caribbean through the experiences of men from a range of backgrounds, some of whom are entirely new to scholarship, has provided a markedly different perspective on imperial structures and projects from the old-style imperial biographies of elite men which dominated the field in previous centuries.

Another benefit of extending the range of imperial subjects in a biographical approach to Empire has been the ability to reveal links beyond the metropole and periphery connection. As already noted, many of the men in this thesis had no connection with Dublin, let alone London. Admittedly the men in

Chapter Three—Macartney, Burke and Madden—all travelled first to London before their Caribbean sojourns. But other locales have featured in this thesis. Hope Waddell (and possibly John Crawford) went to Scotland to prepare for an imperial career. The Black family’s Atlantic network existed alongside and intersected with the British imperial world. Belfast was the node in the Black family network we know the most about, but this is perhaps simply a function of the fact that it is the correspondence between Black and his brother George which survived. Samuel Watt revealed the financial link between Barbados and Jamaica and London, but his network with the north of Ireland was strongest. Even Despard, with his line of communication to the Governor in Jamaica and the colonial secretary in London did not appear in this thesis as a metropolitan man. There are parallels between Despard’s experience and that of Governor Glen of South Carolina. Joshua Piker described Glen as a Scot with limited exposure to London and an increasing amount of experience in the Americas—an imperial official who was not a metropolitan, yet an agent of a London-centred imperial politics who lived out the “overlapping provincialisms” that characterised much of imperial society.”

Questions of Ireland and empire underpin this thesis. I uncovered very little explicit engagement with the matter of Anglo-Irish or Irish-imperial relations in my research, except for some commentary by John Crawford in the wake of

the 1798 Rebellion, and by George Macartney in his capacity as Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which pre-dates his Caribbean posting. In 1773, Macartney maintained that Ireland was one of “the inferior branches” of Britain’s Empire, and that it would be best served by joining with Britain, albeit as a “subordinate...dependant.” 32 Crawford, for his part, seemed to welcome the “struggle” in 1798. It is unclear, however, from his letters exactly which “foreign influence” he hoped Ireland would break free from—British, or the French influence on the rebels of 1798. 33 Given Crawford’s enthusiastic support for the “glorious” American revolutionaries (as he put it in a later letter to Thomas Jefferson), it is not unreasonable to assume that he applauded the Irish rebels’ attempts to escape British imperial influence.

In common with their Scottish counterparts, for most of the Irish sojourners profiled here, the Empire constituted a career opportunity, a path to levels of professional and economic (and in Waddell’s case, ecclesiastical) attainment which were limited by economic realities or social barriers at home. 34 It does not follow, however, that the Empire meant the same thing to each Irishman. As Catherine Hall argued in Civilising Subjects: “different colonial projects give access to different meanings of empire.” 35 Stephen Howe recently echoed this when he suggested that embracing analytical diversity in studies of Ireland and empire reflects the multiplicity of forms of empire itself; not just variation

32 George Macartney, Account of Ireland in 1773 (London: 1773), 55.
33 John Crawford, Baltimore to Hugh McCalmont, Demerary, December 19, 1798, MHS MS1246.
across time, “but the coexistence of very different kinds of empire within the same system, at the same time.”\textsuperscript{36} Just as the nature of the Empire changed over time, and took different forms in different locations around the globe, so the Empire as (for example) Waddell conceived of it was surely different from the way each of the other men in this thesis conceived of it. For Madden, the Empire provided an opportunity to play a direct role in anti-slavery; for Black and Watt, it presented a commercial opportunity for their extended families. Crawford’s early experience in the East India Company, and his sojourn in the Caribbean connected him with a network of medical ‘explorers’ who utilised imperial formations to further their knowledge and communicate their findings. Each of the men profiled in this thesis took on a different ‘colonial project’ during their sojourn, which renders it impossible to generalise about what the Empire meant to the Irish sojourner. The close-range perspective that my methodology has enabled suggests that there was no one monolithic ‘empire’ in the men’s experiences in the Caribbean. Rather, each utilised a version of the imperial formation in his own life to suit his aspirations and his community.

This research project has at times been an exercise in embracing what Stephen Howe called the “hybrid, ambivalent, complex, exceptional” elements of imperial service, as embodied by the ten Irish sojourners.\textsuperscript{37} It is clear from many of the men’s experiences, however, that they perceived no contradiction between their discomfort with aspects of the imperial state, and pursuing the


\textsuperscript{37} Howe, ‘Minding the Gaps,’ 137.
opportunities the Empire presented to them.\textsuperscript{38} The diversity of their careers, and the way that they approached their Caribbean lives, only strengthens the sense of the Empire as a multifaceted formation. This in itself is a significant insight, and it confirms the importance of incorporating a range of imperial subjects and experiences within the study of the Empire.

Teasing out the men’s experiences, together with a careful elucidation of the spaces they inhabited and created, has revealed much about both the Irish experience of the Empire, and about the operation of the Empire itself. To be Irish in the British Caribbean, particularly during the Revolutionary Era, required tenacity and the ability to withstand conflict. It was characterised by an eye for trans-imperial opportunities, and the ability to push boundaries, physically and metaphorically. Some of the men in this thesis demonstrated a flexibility of identity, as they played upon the misconception that the Irish were a homogenous group. Many of the sojourners profiled here engaged more than one empire simultaneously throughout their Caribbean lives—at times extending the reach of the British Empire, and at times carving out individual opportunities for themselves. This thesis has surveyed the quotidian aspects of the sojourners’ lives from Jamaica in the West, to Barbados in the East, and through British outposts in Central and South America. We have seen Irishmen inhabit British imperial spaces under foreign rule. Their experiences have revealed the vagaries of day-to-day life in the British Caribbean, and on a larger scale, they have illuminated the contingent and varied nature of imperial

rule, and the asymmetries of power that existed across different sites in the
British Caribbean.39

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