

Enlightened Dissent: The voices of anti-imperialism in eighteenth century Britain

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ABSTRACT

“Enlightened Dissent: The voices of anti-imperialism in eighteenth century Britain”

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This dissertation explores and analyzes anti-imperial sentiments in Britain throughout the long eighteenth century. During this period of major British state formation and imperial expansion, there were a surprisingly large number of observers who voiced notable and varied concerns and opposition towards numerous overseas ventures, yet who have not since received significant attention within the historical record. Indeed, many critics of British imperialism and empire-building, from within Britain itself, formed extensive and thoughtful assessments of their own nation's conduct in the world. Criticism ranged widely, from those who opposed the high economic costs of imperial expansion to those worried that a divine retribution would rain down upon Britain for injustices committed by Britons abroad. Such diversity of anti-imperial perspectives came from a clearly enlightened minority, whose limited influences upon broader public opinions had little effect on policies at the time. Successive British administrations and self-interested Britons who sought their fortunes and adventures abroad, often with little regard for the damage inflicted on those whom they encountered, won the political debate over empire-building. However, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the perspectives of many of these individuals would increasingly become highly regarded. Later generations of reformers, particularly “Little Englanders”, or classical liberals and radicals, would look back reverently to these critics to draw inspiration for refashioning the empire and Britain's position in the world. These eighteenth century ideas continued to present powerful counter-arguments to the trends then in place and served to inspire those, in the centuries that followed, who sought to break the heavy chains of often despotic colonial rule and mitigate the ravages of war and conquest.

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INTRODUCTION

Many scholars have been captivated by the ironic observation of the late nineteenth century imperial historian John Robert Seeley that the British “conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind”.¹ This often quoted phrase has commonly served as a starting point for an analysis of the philosophical justifications and legal legitimization that British imperialists and apologists have offered for the expansion of the British Empire between the seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries.² But what of those who questioned or criticized the emergence of empire, and why, during the same period? Despite post-colonial developments and a burgeoning literature on the impact of the British Empire in global history, the voices of contemporaries who raised significant objections to empire, for a range of moral, economic, political, constitutional, and cultural reasons, have yet to be sufficiently habilitated by historians of the British Empire. This dissertation serves to redress the existent imbalance by considering anti-imperialism in Britain in the midst of the overseas imperial expansion during the long eighteenth century.

One of the first historians to directly address the topic of anti-imperialism within Britain was Robert Livingston Schuyler, who wrote three articles on the issue: “The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire”; “The Climax of Anti-Imperialism”; and “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England”, published, respectively, in 1920, 1921 and 1922.³ The first examined the problem of imperial military expenditures, and the desire

¹ John Robert Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), 8.

² For instance, see Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³ See Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire,” *The American Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1920): 18-36; Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Climax of

on the part of successive British governments to rein in costs of empire or to shift the burden and responsibility to the colonies themselves. Attempting to tax colonists for this purpose had failed disastrously in the Thirteen Colonies in the 1760s and 1770s, and until the mid-nineteenth century the British bore almost the entire economic burden of expansion, except notably in India. The second article dealt more broadly with early to mid-nineteenth century anti-imperialist thought, primarily linked to classical liberalism and the Manchester School, as well as “Little Englanders” associated with William Gladstone. The third publication then traced back many of those ideas to eighteenth century individuals, such as Adam Smith and Josiah Tucker, who had earlier framed the debate over empire in Britain, and in turn, inspired those later generations with their anti-imperial sentiments and ideologies. Thereafter, these articles formed part of his more extensive book on the subject in 1945, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade*, in which Schuyler primarily linked anti-imperialism to the early classical liberal critique of mercantilism, or the ‘Old Colonial System’ and the advocates for free trade.⁴ In this regard, Smith and Tucker were among the foremost eighteenth century critics.

Schuyler’s work focused heavily upon Smith, the moral philosopher and political economist, whom historian Goldwin Smith noted was revered by nineteenth century Liberals as the original “Little Englander”.⁵ However, he spent even more time examining the writings of Tucker, best known as the Dean of Gloucester from 1758-1799, whose economic liberal thinking was highlighted in Schuyler’s 1931 book, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings*.⁶ Schuyler also briefly mentioned James Anderson, Sir John Sinclair, Arthur

Anti-Imperialism in England,” *Political Science Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1921): 537-560; and Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England,” *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1922): 440-471.

⁴ Robert Livingston Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 [1945]).

⁵ Schuyler, “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England,” 440.

⁶ Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931).

Young, and Jeremy Bentham, as contemporaries concerned with the economics of the mercantile system. He additionally considered the sympathies that the reformers Major John Cartwright and Granville Sharp, and the radical Richard Price, had for the American colonists, yet noted that they were not really advocates for separation, as was the anti-imperialist Tucker. Schuyler pointed to the influence of this economic thinking upon the 1786 Anglo-French commercial treaty, as well as the vindication of anti-colonial arguments following the reestablishment, and improvement, of trade between Britain and the United States after 1783. However, he noted that these ideas did not seriously influence public policies, domestically or within the empire, until after the Napoleonic Wars. His history of anti-imperial thought in Britain was then carried forward by the Philosophical Radicals, and other reformers, including utilitarians and classical liberal economists, who successfully influenced major domestic and imperial reforms.⁷

Another foundational study regarding imperial ideologies and debates over empire in Britain came from Klaus Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, originally published in 1944.⁸ In this work, he identified and examined countless metropolitan authors and their perspectives regarding colonies between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, effectively covering a very broad spectrum of attitudes towards the empire and imperialism over a considerable period. His examination was very good at providing a context and assessing arguments for and against empire-building. Primarily, these debates revolved around the economics of empire and the benefits or costs to Britain. This present dissertation has incorporated aspects of that research, though has more specifically focused upon those individuals who emerged within the latter group, and within a much narrower time span.

⁷ On this theme, see William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817-1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); and more generally, Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?: England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 309-371.

⁸ Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944).

Additionally, the influential 1965 work of Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, was an important starting point regarding the historiography of the many economic problems of empire.⁹ The first two chapters that dealt with Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham were particularly focused upon the late eighteenth century context, and the remainder of the book built upon those foundations and moved into the era of reform in the nineteenth century, in much the same way as Schuyler had earlier done. Similarly, Bernard Semmel's *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850*, expanded upon the work of John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in reforming the debate over anti-imperialism, particularly in the nineteenth century, by explaining the nature of a metropolitan 'official mind' and the importance of colonial peripheries on British imperial policies.¹⁰ Most notable was Semmel's revision of the notion that critics of the 'Old Colonial System' and free trade reformers were not necessary anti-imperialists, as many did not share Richard Cobden's Manchester School cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, or pacifism.

Building upon this pioneering scholarship, some of which is now nearly a century old, research on British anti-imperialism in the nineteenth century and the champions of decolonization in the twentieth century has especially flourished. For example, Bernard Porter's *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, recently reconsiders radical critiques of New Imperialism.¹¹ He began with an assessment of mid-nineteenth century classical liberal thought, and then traced its evolution into the early twentieth century where he analyzed it

⁹ Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

¹⁰ Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Also, see John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-15. For an opposing point of view see Oliver MacDonagh, "The Anti-Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 14, no. 3 (1962): 489-501. For an assessment of Gallagher and Robinson, see Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 68-92.

¹¹ Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, 2nd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008). The first edition of this work was originally published in 1968.

alongside Labour and socialist critiques of jingoism and empire. Primarily, Porter focused upon this highpoint of European conquest and imperialism, especially in Africa; with respect to Britain in particular, he considered the specific significance of the Boer War and John A. Hobson's 1902 publication of *Imperialism: A Study*.¹² More recently, Gregory Claeys' *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920*, examines intellectual scepticism and philosophical antagonism towards empire.¹³ Much like Porter, he considers opposition within Liberal and socialist circles, which he also links with the anti-imperialism of Positivism. Additionally, he revises notions that many early nineteenth century reformers, including utilitarians, were anti-imperial. Mira Matikkala's *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain*, likewise considers late nineteenth century anti-imperialism, as part of the extensive debates over defining the true national identity and in the intellectual separation between the idealized colonization of the settler empire and the aggressive nature of imperialism.¹⁴ This work especially served to reappraise the "Little Englander" tradition in anti-imperial thought, which framed debates around the well-being of domestic liberalism, in emphasizing Englishness, liberty, constitutional rights, good economy, and Parliamentary reform processes, all qualities and ideals that an authoritarian empire threatened.

Anti-imperial historiography is substantially addressed in Miles Taylor's 1991 article, "Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century", in which he revisited the late eighteenth century critiques of empire and those who inspired later radicals.¹⁵ Though he was primarily interested in the nineteenth century, he noted

¹² J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: James Nisbet & Co., Limited, 1902).

¹³ Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

¹⁵ Miles Taylor, "Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19, no. 1 (1991): 1-23.

the longstanding significance of the Commonwealth Whigs and the fears of executive power, as well as earlier criticisms of empires of conquest and the associated corruption, or the parasitic nature of foreign money and influences. As this dissertation was underway, Jack P. Greene published *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, an excellent assessment of critical and supportive, metropolitan and colonial, perspectives regarding the British Empire.¹⁶ This is the best recent study that provides a thorough analysis of the intellectual construction and dialectics of empire. In incorporating critiques that employed the language of alterity, Greene traced the establishment of the colonial Briton as a British ‘other’, alongside humanitarian and constitutional arguments that identified challenges and problems with imperial networks.¹⁷ Still, compared to the nineteenth and twentieth century contexts, there has been considerably less published regarding eighteenth century commentators upon empire, especially before mid-century. Far fewer scholars have considered even earlier precedents in anti-imperial thought or examined similar debates within their seventeenth century contexts.

This study has many obvious challenges since notions of empires and imperialism are shrouded in complexities and terminological ambiguities. As was noted in Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt’s *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960*, back in the mid-1960s, the concept of imperialism had changed its definition a dozen times since the 1840s.¹⁸ Since then, the historiography too has also evolved considerably. However, it is perhaps even more difficult to comprehend what it meant in the eighteenth century, before the many later recognizable processes of colonialism were formalized and regularized, and when

¹⁶ Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁷ Regarding questions of identities, including metropolitan notions of ‘Britishness’ and colonial ‘otherness’, as well as the concept of alterity, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2009); and her earlier article, Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309-329.

¹⁸ Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism: The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965 [1964]), xiii.

institutions dedicated to organizing and ruling empires, such as the Colonial Office, were in their infancy. Indeed, the concept is both highly charged and problematic, since, as Anthony Webster has pointed out, historians have been unable to agree on one specific definition of imperialism.¹⁹ Examining ideologies surrounding imperial origins help to elucidate the many different conceptualizations of eighteenth century empires. Philosophical justifications for their foundation, existence, maintenance, and expansion have been framed according to multiple and competing ideological currents. One of the best studies in this regard has come from James Muldoon, who, in *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800-1800*, explored the concept of empire, as a political construct with a diverse associated language and multiple interpretations throughout the medieval and early modern periods.²⁰ More specific to the British Empire, was the classic 1961 posthumous work of Richard Koebner, *Empire*, in which he explored notions and legacies of the Roman ‘imperium’ as a way of structuring and comparing early modern conceptions and understandings of Britain’s empire.²¹

More recently, David Armitage has engaged with the similar theoretical and political antecedents that underpinned the empire, noting the watershed nature of the Walpolean era, where the nation faced an epistemological struggle between the irreconcilable concepts of *imperium* and *dominium*, or respectively public sovereignty and private control, reflected in the

¹⁹ Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire*, 3-4. Also, regarding debates over the English Caribbean empire in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015). Additionally, see two recent historiographical assessments of the British Empire, Tony Ballantyne, “The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography,” *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 429-452; and John M. MacKenzie, “The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 99-124.

²⁰ James Muldoon, *Empire and Order: The Concept of Empire, 800-1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).

²¹ Richard Koebner, *Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966 [1961]). Also, on the genesis of empire, see Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 1, *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

intellectual divide over the overt exercise of power abroad as part of the Spanish question.²² In particular, Armitage points to the warnings of Francis Hutcheson, who, in his 1730s critiques of “grand unwieldy empires”, argued based upon the Lockean foundation that occupation alone did not provide juridical authority to control distant territories, which was especially true if the British lacked the moral authority to cultivate new lands and satisfy imperial desires, according to the maxims of humanity.²³ Building on these ideas was David Hume, who urged conciliation with Spain, since the opposition’s clamour for war mistook the true interests of the nation.²⁴ However, the burgeoning ideologies of imperial patriotism, rooted in one conceptualization of British history, promoted an aggressive form of nationalism that over the long-term “fostered dissolution rather than integration.”²⁵

One of the most important studies on the intellectual critique of empire comes from Sankar Muthu, who, in *Enlightenment Against Empire*, examined Enlightenment discourse in the long eighteenth century as a challenge to the established forms of imperialism. He identified this clearly anti-imperialist intellectual current as an historical anomaly and something that has received considerably less attention from scholars than more issue-specific topics, such as slavery.²⁶ He charted the “uphill battle” that many individuals such as Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham fought, arguing that these and many other Enlightenment figures offered “spirited attacks upon the foundations of empire.”²⁷ Though Muthu’s work does not focus specifically on British anti-imperialism, he has engaged with many key intellectual and

²² For an assessment of early modern and modern European perspectives towards empire-building, as well as the legal justifications for the occupation of territory, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²³ David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 188. Also, on Locke, see David Armitage, “John Locke: Theorist of Empire?,” in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 84-111.

²⁴ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, 189.

²⁵ Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, 170-1.

²⁶ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3.

²⁷ Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire*, 4.

political elites who dared criticize their governments and proprietors of the many forms of imperialism, within the contexts of the broader European Enlightenment.

A more targeted study, and one that built on Muthu's work, comes from Jennifer Pitts in her examination of imperial liberalism in Britain and France. *A Turn to Empire* traces the transition from late eighteenth century intellectual criticism of imperial structures and practices to the early nineteenth century utilitarian impetus to reform and expand them.²⁸ The first section is the most useful here since she focuses exclusively on critics of empire, of whom Smith and Burke serve as the two best examples from the period. Burke's treatises drew heavily on Smith's writings on justice and morality, and he became the best known critic of imperial excesses and abuses. His arguments clearly reflected his interests in reforming institutions and conforming actions abroad to adhere to the "most stringent standards of equity and respect for the rule of law."²⁹ Smith's criticisms were more expansive because of their varied and deep economic, moral, and political sophistication, which ran counter to "an increasingly widespread popular enthusiasm for a belligerent and expansionist colonial policy."³⁰ Yet, one must also consider that he spent the greater part of his adult life examining these issues, while Burke questioned the morality of Britain's empire primarily within Parliament. Though Burke did not singularly devote himself to the many questions of empire, he did notably confront specific imperial issues that concerned his peers and the public at large, chiefly regarding America and India.

Despite these recent advances in the historiography of imperial ideologies, and in light of research upon early modern imperial expansion and experiences, much remains to be considered about the doubts and serious reservations that Britons had towards the empire during its

²⁸ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2. Regarding imperial ideologies, particularly within the context of British India, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²⁹ Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 61.

³⁰ Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, 52.

foundational stages, between the Restoration and the Napoleonic Wars. As the history of the empire in this period has been primarily explored and shaped around those who argued in favour of imperial expansion, engaging thoughtfully with their less prominent, but equally passionate opponents and critics has presented a clear challenge. Yet, it is doubtful that the new-found nationalism and identities forged in Great Britain during the long eighteenth century were widespread enough to silence those concerned with the growth of the fiscal-military state and empire.³¹ Surely not all Englishmen and women were actively, or even tacitly, encouraging imperial conquests and foreign acquisitions. Indeed, as this thesis reveals, there were many diverse and heterodox perspectives within early modern Britain about the nature of their society, as well as the state and empire. Many held contrarian viewpoints and identified notable concerns about the emergent British Empire. Criticisms typically appeared in response to a specific and acute economic or political problem, though in many such instances a more general opposition to empire-building was revealed in these debates, often alongside other anti-imperial arguments. These debates occurred among political elites within Parliament, and also in public spheres, such as in the press, as well as in the flourishing coffeehouses, where ideas and events more broadly reflected the intersections of the state and society, and wider audiences of engaged Britons participated in significant discussions.³²

These complex intellectual currents confronted many established economic doctrines and the political foundations of imperial thought. Philosophers and public figures alike argued against empire-building which they recognized and characterized as immoral, expensive,

³¹ The notion of Britishness has been examined most notably in Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2009). See also, her earlier article, Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309-329.

³² For more on politics and the public sphere see Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (London: Longman, 2000); Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Ileana Baird, ed., *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coterie* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); and Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

unsustainable, and a tangible threat to “traditional English liberties”. This view was perhaps best illustrated in Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-89).³³ Other crucial figures, including Edmund Burke, whose strong criticisms of government policy in America in the 1770s and the EIC in India in the 1780s and 1790s, provided important starting points for this research. Criticisms took many forms and were also present in the writings of conservative commentators, such as Josiah Tucker and Samuel Johnson, who despised the aggressive foreign policies of patriot Whigs, as well as the radical, dissenting, and democratic ideals that were so prevalent in the American colonies. Moreover, many political economists and commercial writers, throughout the period, railed against the doctrines of mercantilism; the Navigation Acts; the monopolies of imperial chartered companies, such as the East India Company; and the general inefficiencies and burdens of the imperial economic model. Such liberal critiques of early modern empires have typically been traced to Adam Smith, but were in fact present in the much earlier writings of Sir Dudley North, Roger Coke, and Henry Martin, among others. In addition to Smith, associated Enlightenment figures Francis Hutcheson and Joseph Priestley challenged the notion that acquiring extensive dominion was beneficial for the country; concurrently, David Hume worried and warned about the nation’s impending moral and financial bankruptcy. Such ideas were also reflected in the reform-minded and radical thought of Catharine Macaulay, Major John Cartwright, Richard Price, and Jeremy Bentham. Furthermore, the extensive debates over slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, involving William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and Granville Sharp, drew upon, and inspired, similar sentiments.

Though such significant anti-imperial sentiment came from a distinguishable and vocal

³³ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols., (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776-1789). Gibbon has been exhaustively analyzed in J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 5 vols., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999-2010). In light of Pocock’s monumental work on Gibbon, this dissertation pays only limited attention to Gibbon’s influence on imperial discussions at the time.

minority, it is very difficult to gauge the exact level of engagement or support they would have attracted. This is reflective of the fact that early modern state control over information and national narratives did limit the voices of “others”. Though the British press was relatively free after 1694, intellectual opponents of powerful interests and those who opposed the direction of the government often faced threats of legal repercussions and publication suppression. The existence of such practical obstacles, including press censorship and the threat of lawsuits, has perhaps been best highlighted with the famous libertine John Wilkes in the 1770s.³⁴ However, the seriousness of challenging the political establishment and insulting the monarchy was even better reflected in the case of the radical republican James Callender in the 1790s. Following the publication of *The Political Progress of Britain*, he was forced to flee his native Scotland to Ireland and then the United States, while his publishers spent three to six months in prison.³⁵ Despite such challenges, it is clear that critics typically approached the many problems of empire and associated crises with a great deal of concern and often a high level of intellectual acumen. Yet, such critical perspectives regarding imperial processes and institutions, or that offered warnings about empire-building, were not particularly well-heeded at the time.

This research also engages with broader studies of imperial history that have become increasingly sophisticated in recent decades.³⁶ Notably, traditional definitions of empire or

³⁴ Many scholars have written about the significance of John Wilkes. For instance, see the classic work of George Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); as well as more recent studies from Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2006); and Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

³⁵ James Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain; or an Impartial History of Abuses in the Government of the British Empire, in Europe, Asia, and America*, 3rd ed. (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1795). The government was atypically repressive in the 1790s, particularly after Revolutionary France declared war on Britain in 1793.

³⁶ For an assessment of the newfound interest and scholarship in imperial history, and a discussion of the historiographical changes over the past several decades, see Jennifer Pitts, “Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism: An Appendix,” in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 351-387. Debates over imperialism have evolved significantly since the profound ideological divisions between Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Schumpeter, from nearly one century ago, shaped two very different versions of the history of European empires. Their two studies, using varied terminologies in defining

imperialism, based largely on formal political domination, have been greatly expanded upon by Marxist scholars, who emphasize important socio-economic and hierarchical dynamics.³⁷

Orientalist theory has challenged western stereotypes, and more recent scholarship focuses on human networks integrally bound to imperial experiences that have undoubtedly shaped our own world. In recent articles Tony Ballantyne and John MacKenzie have traced many of these significant advances within British Empire historiography.³⁸ While its many legal, institutional, and political legacies have long been established, scholars such as Miles Ogborn, Alison Games, and Maya Jasanoff have developed an extensive literature on the many socio-cultural bonds of empire as well.³⁹ Such investigations into these aspects of human activity have revealed the complexities of individuals and organizations operating within and influencing ever-changing imperial boundaries and conditions. Andrew Porter, for example, has examined the work of missionaries and the building of varied religious networks that often encouraged the expansion of empire and reinforced nineteenth century imperialism. Yet, they could also prove disruptive, especially when there were ideological or power struggles between religious and secular

crucial concepts such as capitalism, particularly in the context of New Imperialism, have long served as starting points for scholars interested in examining contrasting perspectives regarding imperialism. See Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Petrograd, 1917); and Joseph Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes* (New York: Augustis M. Kelley, Inc., 1951). N.B., Schumpeter's work was originally published in German in 1919; the 1951 edition was the first published English translation. The early twentieth century economic debates over empire were highlighted in Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire*, 40-67.

³⁷ For instance, see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944); as well as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). Marxist theories regarding imperialism have been critiqued in Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1990). For a recent consideration of Hegelian and Marxist thought regarding colonies and empire, see Gabriel Paquette, "Colonies and Empire in the Political Thought of Hegel and Marx," in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 292-323.

³⁸ See Tony Ballantyne, "The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 429-452; and John M. MacKenzie, "The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 99-124.

³⁹ See Miles Ogborn, *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage, 2006).

authorities.⁴⁰ At least two generations' worth of post-colonial research has also greatly expanded imperial discourses beyond the simple ruler-ruled paradigm, with respect to nationality and ethnicity.⁴¹ Furthermore, gender historians have challenged an interpretation that the hierarchical ordering of empire was based upon class lines alone.⁴² These developments have all sharpened our understanding about the realities of empire and its implications for the many people involved directly on the ground or at sea, and in turn on those who felt the effects back in Britain.⁴³

The British Empire consisted of a complex set of ever-evolving hierarchical institutions and systems that were either underpinned or justified by fluctuating and competing ideologies of imperialism. Many imperial networks evolved unevenly, often through a combination of deliberate design and required pragmatism, from their geneses in the sixteenth century until decolonization in the twentieth century. While some formal political relationships have been maintained through Commonwealth institutions, they exist alongside other important informal influences and bonds.⁴⁴ So, what then does it mean to be an anti-imperialist? The short answer would be anyone critical of these very entities and who stood in opposition to or voiced concerns about the rising tide of empire. A relatively expansive view has been considered here to engage

⁴⁰ Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

⁴¹ Major studies in this regard have emerged since the publication of Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). For example, see C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Also, see Dane Kennedy, "Imperial history and post-colonial theory," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no. 3 (1996): 345-363.

⁴² Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); as well as Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Also, see Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴³ Recent scholarship has shown that no one motivation or ideology underpinned imperial rule. For instance, see Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character: The Illusion of Authority* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009); and David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For more on how empire shaped metropolitan identities and cultures, see Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴⁴ For more on the genesis of empire, see Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, plunder and settlement: Maritime enterprise and the genesis of the British Empire 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). On decolonization, see Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

with the varied and extensive debates surrounding early modern imperialism, incorporating arguments against imperial misadventures and strong critiques of systems, institutions, and people who constituted and symbolized the empire, at home and abroad. This dissertation examines many multifaceted arguments, of varying merit and strength, which reflect a diverse range of opinions and degrees of criticism or ambivalence about the empire.

Primarily, this research focuses upon these public eighteenth century debates through the use of printed source materials. The vibrant eighteenth century print culture relied upon numerous personal relationships, between writers, editors, and printers. Many publishers also had wealthy benefactors, who typically exerted significant influence over what was published; but, in order to be financially successful, they also needed to reach readers and sell advertisements. Consequently, this medium of communications and exchange, by necessity, performed multiple functions in disseminating information, and shaping events, while also assisting in reflecting ideas and reinforcing pre-existing ideologies, among engaged readers. As historical sources, printed materials therefore provide important windows through which to access such communities within this distant world. This examination of printed texts, including newspaper articles, treatises, pamphlets, and essays has served to engage with the manifestations of the notable public discussions of these many crucial issues that interested and affected people within Britain at the time. Less emphasis has been placed upon these perspectives as they appeared in private correspondences, journals, and diaries. In approaching the study in this way, the intention has been to broadly consider the significance of the empire among metropolitan writers, as well as their audiences, and to contextualize the most important anti-imperial ideas that emerged, and persisted, throughout the period. By also drawing upon the varied writings of many different polemicists and social commentators, some prominent and others more obscure,

over such a wide time-frame, this research elaborates upon, elucidates, and comprehensively analyzes these extensive arguments that galvanized sustained and parochial public debates about early modern empire-building and imperialism.⁴⁵

This dissertation addresses a wide range of historical themes and historiographical issues regarding the ever-changing nature of the British Empire during the formative eighteenth century. It has been structured primarily along theoretical and thematic lines, based upon the types of arguments commentators used, and in a somewhat deductive manner, while secondarily considering both geography and chronology. The first chapter considers how many Britons broadly conceived of their nation's empire and addresses the significant negative concerns that were raised. It is the broadest in scope of the four chapters, in examining the widely perceived and felt effects of empire upon Britain itself, and as such establishes a general and domestic context for the eighteenth century critique of empire. The subsequent three chapters are dedicated towards addressing more specific criticisms that were directed towards particular aspects and regions of the empire, though in each case there are important threads of continuity as familiar themes are often revisited, though typically in slightly different ways. As the empire consisted of many diverse communities and networks of engagement, so too did associated criticisms vary widely, depending greatly upon time and place.

The eighteenth century was the period of major state formation in Great Britain, itself,

⁴⁵ The perspectives of many different writers have been considered throughout this dissertation. The goal was to evaluate a wide range of sources and feature a balance of lesser known commentators, alongside more famous figures who presented similar arguments. Additionally, the intention was to trace back criticisms of imperialism that were prevalent during the late eighteenth century Enlightenment to earlier periods, considering worldviews and the use of reason in argumentation. Authors with the strongest or most passionate works were generally favoured over those who were merely skeptical or ambivalent towards empire. However, commentaries that were more fragmentary in nature, or that did not carry sustained critiques of empire, were incorporated as a way of complementing the more prominently featured pieces and in evaluating the nuances of the varied imperial questions. Quotations from the extensive primary sources have been reproduced so as to maintain the integrity of the original texts as much as possible. Some are quite lengthy in nature and were included this way in order to properly contextualize many intertwined complex ideas and sentiments.

with the unification of the island kingdoms under one ‘composite monarchy’ and polity, as part of the long-term process of ‘internal colonialism’.⁴⁶ In the post-1688-9 Glorious Revolution era, Britain was shaped by many political, economic, and social forces at home; and, as Elizabeth Mancke has noted, among others, by significant pan-European early modern empire building.⁴⁷ Yet, the emergence of the officially Protestant and commercial society that built upon sixteenth and seventeenth century foundations and reigned supreme on the world’s oceans by 1815 was not neatly achieved. Linda Colley, in particular, has shown how the nation was forged according to an aristocratic ideal of Britishness, which combined conquest on the battlefields and success in the marketplace, effectively marginalizing dissent through victories.⁴⁸ Extensive work has also been done by John Brewer and Lawrence Stone on the rise of essential institutions, and the bureaucratic apparatus, including the Bank of England and the Royal Navy, as components of the “fiscal-military state” that made global expansion possible.⁴⁹ The growth of the empire during this period meant the rise of both economic activity and militarism, two features that have become integrals part of the contradictory British imperial identity.⁵⁰ Bruce Collins’s recent work in this area has additionally contributed to our understanding that there was never one imperial directive or one ideology that underpinned the empire. Furthermore, in *A Free Though Conquering People* P. J. Marshall also examined these many faces of empire, pointing out that there was a definite change around mid-century from the notion of a British Empire of sea-based

⁴⁶ Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 2013), 1-14. Also, as the originator of the concept in British imperial history, see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Mancke, “Empire and State,” in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, 2nd ed., eds. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 193-96.

⁴⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed., 1-9. See also, her earlier article, Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309-329.

⁴⁹ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 27-30; 57-65. Also, see John Brewer and Eckhart Hellmuth, eds., *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Lawrence Stone, ed., *An Imperial State At War: Britain from 1689-1815* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁵⁰ Bruce Collins, *War and Empire: The Expansion of Britain 1790-1830* (London: Longman, 2010), 3-19.

trade and liberties to one of increasing autocratic and bureaucratic rule.⁵¹

Other scholars, including Marie Peters and Nicholas Dirks, as well as P. J. Marshall, have also studied crucial individuals, such as William Pitt the Elder, the first overtly imperialist prime minister, or the infamous Robert Clive, who actively pursued British expansion in India.⁵² The volume of literature currently available on such imperial figures roughly corresponds to the real growth of empire during this period. However, the historiography has been far too one-sided, since the opposing forces are much less frequently discussed. For, how is it that Parliament could shift so severely from Walpolean retrenchment to Pittite imperialism in the span of two decades? Surely, by mid-century all Britons had not become rabid imperialists. Domestic resistance to the Hanoverian state came primarily in the forms of Jacobite uprisings and ongoing tensions with Catholics in Ireland, but there was also visible opposition at home to the pressures of empire.

Bob Harris, in *Politics and the Nation*, has traced some of this sentiment that can be described as anti-imperialist in nature. He noted that the dynamic Walpolean era society, with the rising prosperity of the “urban middling ranks” was highly engaged in political life, but that imperial expansion was “not usually viewed as a national goal.” Though the economic interests of many were tied to the empire, on the whole, “[m]erchants were notably unsteady in their support for British military action overseas.”⁵³ A considerable amount comes to us from correspondence and the flourishing print culture from this period, upon which Troy Bickham has

⁵¹ P. J. Marshall, *“A Free Though Conquering People”: Eighteenth-Century Britain and Its Empire* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003). Also on imperial ideologies, see Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵² See Marie Peters, *The Elder Pitt* (London: Longman, 1998); Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁵³ Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 105-6.

done extensive work.⁵⁴ Newspapers were sources of information on current events, where issues related to war and diplomacy were extremely popular. Heroes were created and victories celebrated, while misadventure and incompetence were disparaged.⁵⁵ Harris was also concerned, though, with exposing the patriotic exaggerations of the strength of the navy, while addressing the “deeply entrenched attitudes and feelings,” some stemming “from hostility towards the political and financial system which had developed in Britain since 1689” associated “with continental war and diplomacy.”⁵⁶ He was not alone in pointing out such inconsistencies. Jeremy Black has also addressed this issue, noting that the gap in our understanding of British perceptions towards war, peace, and empire throughout the 1720s and 1730s has problematically confirmed that the popular clamour for war against Spain at the end of the latter decade appeared seemingly out of nowhere and encountered only minimal resistance.⁵⁷

Varying degrees of criticism existed towards early modern imperialism, though most notable were perhaps arguments related to the many economic problems of empire-building. Such concerns considered the acquisition and settlement of colonies, exploitation of resources, and management of trade networks as ways to build national wealth and power.⁵⁸ These discussions have provided critical insights into how empires were perceived and also revealed the centrality of determining English well-being and the national interest. Many of the engaged commercial writers also had a direct personal engagement with imperial endeavours, while critics, typically did not benefit or were deliberately excluded from or harmed by these enterprises. Others appeared more dispassionate, and attempted to display a greater objectivity,

⁵⁴ For instance, see Troy Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

⁵⁵ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 106-115.

⁵⁶ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 115.

⁵⁷ Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 99-126.

⁵⁸ One of the broadest and most significant studies came from Klaus Knorr, who identified and examined countless authors and their perspectives towards colonies and empire. See Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*.

in their analysis. However, the consequences of imperial expansion upon others were not always a part of these discussions, resulting in a rather narrow debate over empire. Still, these complex debates over the political economy of empire form one crucial aspect of the varied debates over seventeenth and eighteenth century imperialism. While such critics may not have been universal opponents of empire, their perspectives reflected an opposition to empire as it then existed.

Historian Peter Miller has shown how the ideologies of empire transformed the definitions of the “common good”, which was framed around the interests and self-preservation of the state. The strongest argument often became the augmentation of commerce, as a means of assuring national glory and independence, something achieved with a Machiavellian ruthlessness.⁵⁹ However, the early British Empire was officially defined by its commercial activities, not its territorial acquisitions, and as a bulwark against continental universal monarchies.⁶⁰ Therefore, British power was intellectually framed as an exercise of benign authority, defensive in nature, and in the service of the common good. This intellectual tradition had long existed among British scholars, certainly through much of the seventeenth century, as noted by Arthur Williamson in *An Empire to End Empire*. Here he revisited J. G. A. Pocock’s studies on Cromwellian-era writings, including those of James Harrington, who envisioned in the spread of utopian, or radical, republics an anti-imperial imperialism.⁶¹ The logical extension of this, of course, would be the growth of empire to prevent empire. In real terms, this logic served as a rationalization of British expansion over that of Spain, and later France. Though this type of rhetoric was often employed throughout the eighteenth century and it was not entirely baseless, it

⁵⁹ Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 152-3.

⁶⁰ Miller, *Defining the Common Good*, 156-7.

⁶¹ Arthur H. Williamson, “An Empire to End Empire: The Dynamic of Early Modern British Expansion,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68, no. 1-2 (2005): 227-256. Also, see James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (London: Printed for D. Pakeman, 1658). This treatise was notably assessed in J. G. A. Pocock, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Pocock also contrasted Harrington’s notions of utopia with those of earlier theorists Thomas More and Francis Bacon.

reveals more about many conceived of empire than what it actually was. Modern observers would be especially quick to point out the many apparent inconsistencies between what the British Empire was theoretically supposed to represent and the realities on land and at sea.

In terms of reality, as opposed to the realm of the philosophical, the debates over foreign policy were largely focused on either involvement on the European continent or across the Atlantic, but Britain was in fact continually engaged in both theatres simultaneously. The result was a generally limited critique of successive Whig, and to a lesser extent Tory, administrations for either focusing too much attention on either the old or new worlds, but which did not address, holistically, the issue of political or military involvement abroad. The debate, therefore, was somewhat superficial since it effectively separated Britain's conflict with France in Europe or elsewhere. Effectively, then, debating the "common good" meant arguing over how and where Britain should exercise its power, not whether they should or should not exercise it.

Ultimately, only the most extreme eighteenth century critics of Britain's role in the world faced the insurmountable challenge of attempting to entirely redefine the national interest, by supporting neither the European wars of conquest and maintaining the balance-of-power nor maritime commerce, overseas empire, and continental disengagement. This proved increasingly difficult, and in many instances these seemingly competing positions and visions proved indelibly connected on the issue of security, at home and within the overseas empire. Such was the case when imperial theories were put to the test during the Seven Years' War, where commercial viability in British North America was threatened. This debate over the common good played itself out between Pitt's insistence on the necessity of the "bloody and expensive" war, while Lord Bute argued that, in fact, British security was harmed "by the continuation of a war that was not only increasingly unpopular, but terribly expensive."⁶² Richard Whatmore has

⁶² Miller, *Defining the Common Good*, 173-4.

also pointed out that David Hume recognized this and the likelihood that the two competing political and economic powers “might destroy themselves because of their ongoing war for international supremacy”, something that French theorist Pierre-Daniel Huet had discussed approximately half a century before.⁶³ The major impediment to disentanglement was that maritime trade had been aligned with the national interest, which, by extension meant all the routes and the dispersed colonial frontiers, had to be defended at any cost.

Recently, historian Steve Pincus has sought to revise the notion that mercantilist doctrines served as economic dogma by ruling elites, Whig or Tory, since policies and theoretical debates were constant features of early modern discourse.⁶⁴ Despite any desired absolute control a mercantilist system might provide rulers, in managing international trade, such laws proved absolutely unenforceable in practice. Also, smuggling and piracy were ongoing illegal economic activities, though clearly they were not universally despised. In fact, the lower priced black-market goods provided by smugglers were usually welcomed by consumers. Further, the Royal Navy could not realistically police all British-Atlantic coastlines at all times. However, such prohibitory laws were on the books and were enforced with varying degrees of effort and efficiency. They also proved a major concern for a number of late eighteenth century intellectuals and theorists of political economy, who were later labelled as classical economists. Their ideas were not generally accepted by a majority of ruling elites, in their own time, but they certainly laid the early philosophical foundations for later reformers who more forcefully

⁶³ Richard Whatmore, “‘Neither Masters nor Slaves’: Small States and Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century,” in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 56-7. See also, Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Le grand tresor historique et politique du florissant commerce des hollandois, dans tous les etats et empires du monde* (Rouen, 1712).

⁶⁴ See Steve Pincus, “Reconfiguring the British Empire,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2012): 63-70; and Steve Pincus, “Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2012): 3-34.

challenged many pre-existing imperial structures and commercial policies.⁶⁵ Anthony Webster has also highlighted these contrarian ideas, in his analysis of how imperialists justified their actions. He particularly examined the work of Hume, who “challenged the intellectual foundations of mercantilism” and remained on the whole “[d]eeply sceptical about the supposed benefits of empire.”⁶⁶ The historiography on this enlightened and economic anti-imperialism has largely focused on individuals like Hume, who represented a minority perspective during his lifetime and helped lay the intellectual foundations for early nineteenth century liberalism. Though clearly a significant figure while he lived, and a celebrated individual within the historical record, such anti-imperial sentiments were far more extensive within eighteenth century and he was not a lonely voice in the wilderness.

Kathleen Wilson has also extensively considered these issues in *The Sense of the People* and to a lesser extent in *The Island Race* which examined, respectively, Hanoverian popular politics, as well as the construction of imperial identities and cultures. In particular, her focus was on the post-1730s equation of maritime and commercial expansion with the British national interest, with respect to social and economic developments, which was, in turn, reflected in the language and attitudes of the British in self-perception and with respect to their many roles in the world.⁶⁷ Her position was that these issues were far more complex than has been thought. For instance, identities were always in a state of flux or transition, especially in a period where nationalities were less well defined and borders less absolute.⁶⁸ Furthermore, though one policy prescription and goal was so strongly voiced, and not without justification, it cannot sufficiently

⁶⁵ For a recent and thorough study of mercantilism, and about discussions surrounding early modern societies and economies, see Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶⁶ Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire*, 26.

⁶⁷ Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 158.

⁶⁸ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1-28.

address the inherently divergent aspirations of all individuals within an entire kingdom. This notion of there being one crucial national interest has also been challenged by Harris, who claimed that popular sentiments towards the ever-changing “conditions of international conflict and rivalry” were in fact “more volatile and changeable”, than enthusiastic and patriotic, and were better characterized by ambivalence, and in some instances, contradictions.⁶⁹ Nancy Koehn, in *The Power of Commerce*, also points out that this “fundamental ambivalence” was not only characteristic of the people, but was an ongoing theme of parliamentary debate, particularly during the 1760s, when the many “statesmen’s conflicted views of empire” were being aired.⁷⁰

Imperial enterprises were also expensive endeavours. Territorial acquisitions often required large upfront capitalization, while long-term gains were seldom guaranteed. Bob Harris has noted the ever-escalating costs associated with empire-building and how Britain increasingly had “to mobilize unprecedented resources to fight France.”⁷¹ Defeat certainly meant the loss of men, money, and potentially territory. Yet, even victory did not guarantee the recovery of wartime expenses, making it typically the second worst possible outcome of a conflict. What was certain, however, was the fact that each conflict was sure to expand the national debt by public borrowing. By extension, this always meant higher levels of taxation, often as existing rates were increased and as new goods were subjected to taxes; as well, it undermined the government’s commitment to the gold standard, since the Bank of England feared a run on the bank and a drain of specie. John Brewer has especially noted that government revenues grew during the eighteenth century mainly from heightened levels of borrowing and taxation, while income from

⁶⁹ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 8.

⁷⁰ Nancy Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 184.

⁷¹ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 9.

general economic growth was a small by comparison.⁷²

The costs of empire were something that drew major antipathy and not just because of the upward spiral of the figures involved. Building on Paul Langford's earlier work, Bob Harris noted that serious debt tensions first emerged at the turn of the century and subsided somewhat during the Walpole years.⁷³ However, from the mid-century onwards there were major naval expansions and an increase of garrisons stationed in the West Indies and North America. Notably, P. J. Marshall drew from Brewer's research in estimating the approximate increase of men under arms from 113,000 to 190,000 between the War of Austrian Succession and the American Revolution, while costs grew from £8,750,000 to over £20 million, respectively. He cautioned, however, that the "price of empire cannot be precisely quantified because imperial commitments cannot be strictly defined."⁷⁴ What is certain, though, is that imperial expansion placed an ever-greater obligation on Britain's human and financial resources, throughout the century. This periodically triggered an outcry against financiers, most particularly against prominent Jews, and a more general criticism of what Harris noted was a "sinister plutocracy," since only a small connected group of peers, officeholders, and City merchants, could benefit from government contracts to supply armies and from related investment interest.⁷⁵

Some clearly benefitted from the fiscal-military state apparatus. While positions as tax collectors or as part of the bureaucracy were sinecures, the individuals hired to carry out these functions generally enjoyed stable employment and reliable incomes. Those who supplied the

⁷² Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 100. Also, see P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967).

⁷³ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 115. Also, see Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁷⁴ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, 59.

⁷⁵ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 116. The foundational text on this subject and the post-Glorious Revolution "financial revolution" is P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England*. Also, see the more recent work of Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

army and navy were also direct beneficiaries of this system. Additionally, specific industries, such as coal, textiles, and metallurgy were clearly boosted by war.⁷⁶ Yet, while positive developments in these areas are relatively easy to quantify it really only represents one side of the economic equation, since the system inexorably imposed economic and social costs on others, some very visible and others less so. The vast majority were expected to bear the increasing financial burdens, since the accumulated debt and interest charges had to be primarily serviced through taxation, which Harris argued “fell heavily on trade and the poor”.⁷⁷ Eliga Gould also noted that government deficits and taxes on beer, candles, soap, and clothing, which were needed just to maintain British commitments to stability in Europe, disproportionately burdened “the humblest ranks of English society”.⁷⁸ Indeed, regular increases in excise taxes on non-luxury goods, as well as tariffs were overwhelmingly tied to the growth of the imperial state and its engagements abroad, since they were the most common sources of government revenue.⁷⁹

Wilfrid Prest pointed out that during peacetime, from 1714-1739, defence spending accounted for 39%, and interest payments were never less than 44%, of total government expenditures; while those numbers would change to roughly 66% and 25%, respectively, from 1740-1748. Over the course of the eighteenth century “at least fourth-fifths of government revenues were earmarked for foreign and military expenditure.” Consequently, from 1693 to 1815 the level of taxation “rose more than fivefold in real terms” and the “massive fiscal burden [was] by far the highest in Europe.”⁸⁰ It was highly expensive to maintain armies in the field and navies at sea, and the war years were often the leanest. This does not even take into account

⁷⁶ Wilfrid Prest, *Albion Ascendant: English History 1660-1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 259.

⁷⁷ Harris, *Politics and the Nation*, 116.

⁷⁸ Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 38-9.

⁷⁹ Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, 156-7.

⁸⁰ Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, 258. For more on taxation during this period, see Patrick K. O’Brien, “The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815,” *The Economic History Review* 41, no. 1 (1988): 1-32.

social and welfare spending, mandated by the Poor Laws, which were funded through the local parish rates and private charities. During wartime, and for years afterwards, further strains were placed on community rate payers, since both poverty and dearth were greatly aggravated, in part because of the special assistance required by returning and wounded veterans.⁸¹ When the costs of empire-building were further added to the expenses of foreign affairs, related to pre-existing engagements and European alliances, the continuous strain placed on the Treasury becomes most evident. This pressure often accounted for the struggles over public policy that took place between Cabinet ministers, which usually pitted the men of the Treasury against those engaged in foreign affairs, and managing colonial as well as imperial conflicts.⁸²

Increasing consumption taxes always came with a price, however, in discouraging honest economic activity and weakening domestic demand.⁸³ Taxes and tariffs also fuelled smuggling. Most famous were probably the attempts to impose new, extractive taxes on the Thirteen Colonies following the Seven Years' War, which weighed heavily on the minds, if not the accounts, of colonial elites in their calls for secession.⁸⁴ Indeed, Nancy Koehn noted how the attempt to raise revenues through the Stamp Act disastrously backfired. The imposition of this tax triggered wide-scale commercial disruption as part of a major colonial protest and boycott, causing British exports to North America to drop by a considerable 15% in 1765.⁸⁵ The result was actually a drop in revenue for the Treasury. However, such taxes were the predictable consequences of ever-greater government expenditures and escalating debts, which were largely driven by wartime spending. During the years of the American Revolutionary War, the

⁸¹ On this issue, see Nicholas Rogers, *Mayhem: Post-War Crime and Violence in Britain, 1748-53* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); and Douglas Hay, "War, Dearth and Theft in the Eighteenth Century: The Record of the English Courts," *Past & Present* no. 95 (1982): 117-160.

⁸² Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 224-5.

⁸³ Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, 259.

⁸⁴ Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 106-147.

⁸⁵ Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 185-6.

government spent nearly £30 million on an annual basis, while the conflict itself drove up the national debt by approximately 90%, from £127,300,000 to £242,900,000.⁸⁶

By the time of the French Revolutionary Wars in the 1790s, the weight of debts had reached unprecedented levels. In 1797, the Bank of England was forced to temporarily abandon the gold standard,⁸⁷ and in 1799, the government introduced its “massively unpopular income tax”.⁸⁸ Though this tax only directly affected the wealthiest, it represented a major new incursion into the ‘financial liberties’ of the nation. The rates were graduated, ranging from two pence to two shillings per pound for those earning over £60 to over £200 per year. While some accepted their new financial obligations under the tenets of *noblesse oblige*, others feared that this tax would remain even after the war as a source of continued administrative and central power. The resistance somewhat echoed the earlier complaints towards the land tax, but the war was expensive and Napoleon was a perceived threat to the survival of Britain itself. Overall, such escalating direct and indirect taxes, combined with the wartime disruptions of industry and trade, and harvest failures also contributed to a “very great grumbling amongst the poor.”⁸⁹ However, the Younger Pitt was able to justify his position, given the enormous debt accumulated throughout the century and out of immediate wartime necessities.⁹⁰

The extensive commentary and supporting literature on these economic subjects shows that there was significant discord towards policies that were conceived of as ways to build national wealth and support the British state. Many writers recognized that establishing colonies and waging distant wars came with significant risks and costs. Even if an overseas colony was

⁸⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 23-4; 30-1.

⁸⁷ On this issue, see Scott N. Duryea, “William Pitt, the Bank of England, and the 1797 Suspension of Specie Payments: Central Bank War Finance During the Napoleonic Wars,” *Libertarian Papers* 2, no. 15 (2010): 1-17.

⁸⁸ Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, 300. For more on taxation from 1799 onwards, see Martin Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan: The Politics of Taxation in Britain, 1799-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Prest, *Albion Ascendant*, 300.

⁹⁰ See O’Brien, “The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815,” 18-22; and Daunton, *Trusting Leviathan*, 43-5.

considered valuable, questions often remained as to whether Britain actually benefitted. While imperial apologists would continually make the case for colonial expansion, opponents saw such possessions and engagements as drains on Britain, in terms of money and the people who left the country. While colonies offered the prospect of acquiring vast resources, critics challenged the notion that empire-wide trade networks, as intended with the Navigation Acts, or commercial monopolies, were useful, as they were difficult to enforce and generally fanned the flames of international tensions. Many imperial projects were expensive endeavours that offered major economic and political gains for the kingdom, but average Britons were typically expected to support such ventures whether or not they paid off. These associated arguments formed many of the extensive economic criticisms of colonies and the empire, at varying stages, while the prevalence of such attitudes generally depended upon broader contexts.

The second chapter of this thesis examines the intertwined histories of the sugar industry and the slave trade and considers metropolitan criticisms of the nature of empire in the Caribbean, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century. These were two of the most important businesses in the eighteenth century and were essential aspects of the imperial Atlantic economy, which involved many Britons directly and indirectly. Sugar was then by far the premier agricultural and tropical commodity that Europeans consumed.⁹¹ Though historically only a luxury for the wealthy, it was by this time enjoyed by the broader public as well, and from the 1750s until the 1820s, was Britain's largest import.⁹² Yet, those who made their money in this most highly profitable enterprise did so through the widespread use of African slaves. This was one of the most brutal of businesses, and one whose cruelties and injustices were

⁹¹ Richard B. Sheridan, "The Formation of Caribbean Plantation Society, 1689-1748," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, P. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 399.

⁹² J. R. Ward, "The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, P. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 421.

increasingly recognized by observers. Two types of criticisms existed in this period, one economic and the other humanitarian; by the end of the eighteenth century they together formed a powerful critique of both the sugar plantation complex and slave trade.

In particular, economic commentators were concerned about the high costs of maintaining tropical island colonies, the artificially high price of sugar in Britain, and the inefficient nature of the sugar business. This was part of the broader challenge towards the 'old colonial system', or the economic regulations of trans-Atlantic commerce. Engaged political economists argued that the special relationship between the planters, or the West India interest, and the government was harmful in many ways.⁹³ Firstly, prohibitive tariffs that effectively forced domestic Britons to buy sugar only produced in the British sugar islands caused them to pay artificially high prices. Secondly, as taxpayers, those same Britons were expected to support British economic and political interests in the islands. Additionally, these monopolistic policies would, in the long run, undermine the industry itself by limiting competition and discouraging innovation. Such economic critiques focused mainly upon the British public as the losers in this arrangement, while not always considering the victims of human trafficking and enslavement. However, in the eighteenth century, it was one of the important criticisms of imperial networks and politics of sugar. Most prominent in this regard, were writers such as Joseph Massie and Arthur Young. These similar economic arguments would also be made by Adam Smith and Josiah Tucker, among other reformers, in making the case that slavery was an abhorrent institution and that slave labour was inefficient.⁹⁴

⁹³ The classic study of the West India interest is Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Also, regarding the significance of Bristol as a metropolitan port in trans-Atlantic trade, see Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol & the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁹⁴ See their respective works: Joseph Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade* (London: printed for T. Payne, 1759); Arthur Young, *Travels During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789. Undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources, and national prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (Bury St.

The more prominent humanitarian cases against slavery and slave trade were made by evangelical and social reformers such as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce.⁹⁵ They were less concerned about the health of the sugar industry than about the suffering of Africans at the hands of merchants and slave owners in the British Caribbean and American colonies. Their extensive campaigning offered a much more engaging and ultimately effective attack on the island plantation interests, since arguments targeting the immorality of slavery and its trade inspired Britons far more thoroughly than economic studies that showed they were paying too much for their sugar. The successful, yet long campaign to abolish the slave trade strongly reflected changing sensibilities towards human suffering in the late eighteenth century, and in many ways also represented an important rejection of a powerful network within the eighteenth century Atlantic empire.

In *The Persistence of Empire*, his study on British political culture during the American Revolution, historian Eliga Gould drew heavily on the works of Colley, Brewer, J. C. D. Clark, and C. A. Bayly, in arguing that broad Asian and American imperial pursuits held tremendous metropolitan appeal.⁹⁶ Though such sentiments were never universal or constant, associated political interests and actions had to be at least somewhat reflective of this popular opinion.

Edmund's: J. Rackham, 1792); Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1776; and Josiah Tucker, *A Series of Answers to Certain Popular Objections, Against Separating from the Rebellious Colonies, and Discarding them Entirely; Being the Concluding Tract of the Dean of Gloucester, on the Subject of American Affairs* (Gloucester: R. Raikes, 1776).

⁹⁵ Many substantial histories have been written about those who campaigned against slavery and the slave trade. Some notable examples include Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, eds., *Quakers & Abolition* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Saving Souls: The Struggle to End the Transatlantic Trade in Africans* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007); David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilization of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998).

⁹⁶ Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*. Also, see Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd ed.; Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*; as well as J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty 1660-1832: Political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989).

Consequently, Britain's imperial standing compared to that of France was important and issues surrounding the empire were a persistent theme in the Georgian political world,⁹⁷ becoming increasingly important through the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. Gould also cautioned, however, that because of "the passive character of British patriotism", popular support for imperial policies in North America was always "susceptible to imaginative reconstruction."⁹⁸ This ideological ambivalence and vagueness of identities could be exploited or manipulated for political purposes, which would in turn shape the historical record, and subsequently, pose many methodological challenges for historians examining popular support for the empire.

In fact, as the third chapter illustrates, there were many distinct criticisms in Britain regarding British and wider European colonization in the Americas. Some of these concerns reflected an ignorance of foreign and distance places, yet others related more towards specific imperial projects or adventures. Many, including Roger Coke and William Petyt, worried about the ongoing issue of emigration and depopulation in Britain, as well as the enormous expenses required to provision and support distant colonial settlements.⁹⁹ Yet, most commentators throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who weighed in on these complex imperial questions were neither completely against nor in favour of British empire-building within North America. Political economists and commercial writers, such as Josiah Tucker and Arthur Young, typically evaluated each territory, or colony, independently and assessed its merit on a case by case basis.¹⁰⁰ Other commentators, such as Samuel Johnson and James Anderson, more broadly considered the harmful nature of European imperialism, colonial rivalries, and warfare, alongside

⁹⁷ Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, xvii.

⁹⁸ Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, xxiv.

⁹⁹ They made those arguments most profoundly in Roger Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated, that the Church and State of England, are in Equal Danger with the Trade of it* (London: J. C., 1671-5); and William Petyt, *Britannia Languens, or, a Discourse of Trade* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring and S. Crouch, 1680).

¹⁰⁰ For instance, see Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (Bristol, 1755); and Arthur Young, *Political Essays Concerning the Present State of the British Empire* (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1772).

the destruction of native populations and land dispossession.¹⁰¹ It is clear that there were many diverse and complex debates regarding British involvement in North America and within these divergent perspectives, there was considerable anti-imperial sentiment.

There were also many economic and legal challenges associated with North American expansion in the mid-eighteenth century. For instance, New France did not provide any obvious or immediate financial gain, despite the fact that, during the Seven Years' War, ministers had been determined "to fight the war at all costs."¹⁰² Not all in positions of authority had been in agreement though, as historian Philip Lawson has noted. He pointed to the critical commentary of William Cavendish, the 4th Duke of Devonshire, who served briefly as prime minister in 1756-7, that Quebec was little more than "a long barren tract of country". It had cost Britain millions of pounds to capture and would require ongoing funding from the Treasury for its administration and defence, since the per annum income was estimated at only £40,000.¹⁰³ In fact, the view from the British press in the 1760s and 1770s was of a largely similar vein. Critics decried the massively expensive conquest of Canada, which was ridiculed as the "Irishman's prize".¹⁰⁴ Additionally, when Britain seized Quebec in the 1760s, the prospect of effectively ruling a settled foreign population posed immediate concerns. Not only were they expected to maintain order locally, but this territorial expansion would have a definite effect back in Britain.¹⁰⁵ This was a major acquisition for the early modern empire, and would test British resolves in official commitments towards religious and ethnic toleration, something that P. J. Marshall noted would

¹⁰¹ Two good examples come from Samuel Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," *The Literary Magazine* No. 4 (July 15 – August 15, 1756): 161-65; and James Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies, Considered* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1782).

¹⁰² Elizabeth Mancke, "Empire and State," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, 210.

¹⁰³ Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 4.

¹⁰⁴ Philip Lawson, "'The Irishman's Prize': Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774," *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 3 (1985): 575-596.

¹⁰⁵ Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), ix-x.

become a defining source of recurrent tension within Britain's 'new' empire.¹⁰⁶

The fourth and final chapter is dedicated to the many and varied concerns Britons had towards British involvement on the Indian subcontinent and throughout the eastern empire. In particular, it considers significant and longstanding debates surrounding the controversial East India Company (EIC).¹⁰⁷ This royally chartered corporation grew to become one of the largest imperial entities in history, between its founding in 1600 until its ultimate demise in 1874. In the seventeenth century it gradually established an English commercial presence in Asia, which then provided the foundations for British territorial expansion in India in the following century. As such a significant economic and political organization in this period, it was likewise also one of the most highly debated entities.¹⁰⁸ In Britain, countless publications concerning EIC business, diplomacy, and military affairs circulated throughout the eighteenth century. The Company famously employed writers to defend its special position on account of the 'good work' it was carrying out on behalf of the nation. In opposition, a host of critics, including ex-employees and other merchants excluded from the Indian Ocean trade, spoke out against the many persistent problems they identified with the existence and nature of the organization.

The extensive debates surrounding the East India Company, and its empire in India, were important aspects of anti-imperial discourse within seventeenth and eighteenth century Britain. Commercial writers and political economists, such as Roger Coke and Henry Martin, weighed in on many significant debates over the Company, in examining how they affected Britain's

¹⁰⁶ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, 206.

¹⁰⁷ There are many substantial histories about this organization, including K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965); John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: HarperCollins, 1993); Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); Anthony Wild, *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600* (New York: Lyons Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ For a history of the economics and debates over the Company, see William J. Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

economy and society.¹⁰⁹ These individuals perhaps best illustrated the many problems Britons perceived about the EIC. This study covers a significant time span, during which there was a major transformation in the power dynamics on the Indian subcontinent, though certain concerns about the Company were present throughout. Most notable was the condemnation of the legal monopoly they enjoyed over British trade with the east, which countless writers argued vociferously against and perhaps even more blatantly defied. From this privileged position, the Company's presence in India transitioned over time from that of a commercial nature towards regional conqueror and political power.¹¹⁰ In Britain, this generated major criticism towards the nation's militaristic and violent imperial policies, as the Company pursued conquests on the Indian subcontinent.¹¹¹ This concern was most prevalent in the second half of the eighteenth century, but some had been warning of this at a much earlier time. These extensive critiques have provided many important examples of eighteenth century British anti-imperial thought, chiefly related to the negative impact of Britain in the world, through the EIC, as well as in the adverse effects that were being felt domestically.

The relative historical neglect of distinctly anti-imperialist sentiments has in many ways marginalized intellectual and popular critiques of imperialism and empire-building within eighteenth century British history. While many excellent studies have highlighted a handful of

¹⁰⁹ For instance, see Roger Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation of the Coyn of England, and how the East-India Trade may be Preserved and Encreased* (London: Printed for Roger Clavel, 1696); and Henry Martin [Martyn], *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade* (London: Printed for A. and J. Churchill, 1701).

¹¹⁰ The nature of this transformation has been recently contested within the historiography. More traditionally, it was understood that the East India Company did not have the capabilities to engage in major conflict or seize Indian territories until the 1750s. For instance, see Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993); Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*; and P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). However, this view has been challenged in Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Stern has suggested instead that the directors were empire-builders and that the EIC had a propensity for aggression from the very beginning.

¹¹¹ This was probably best illustrated through Burke's critique of empire during the trial of Warren Hastings, which Nicholas Dirks likened to a gilded spectacle in *The Scandal of Empire*. Also, on Burke, see Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

Britons who voiced their concerns towards the empire, their arguments have tended to be considered as merely representative of either a xenophobic or isolationist minority, and have not always been given a fair assessment. The result has been that many historiographical discussions regarding legacies of the British Empire have mainly been shaped around the debates defining the empire as either positive or negative in human history. Indeed, questions of whether many saw their empire-building process as a force for good or bad in the world, or, if Britain's imperial expansion was preferred to that of other European powers, are more often considered than the larger philosophical problems that more profoundly questioned the existence or nature of empires.¹¹² This prevailing narrative has been shaped by prominently featured sources and is certainly more common in nineteenth and twentieth century political debates between the competing conservative, liberal, and socialist visions of Great Britain's ideal place in the world. In many ways, however, this history, which has also been projected backwards and informed discussions about what Britons felt about their own fledgling empire during the long eighteenth century, has not taken into account many very significant anti-expansionist perspectives.

In large measure, such debates reflect the extent to which the British imposed upon, and exposed yet others to, their values, customs, legal and political systems, and their weapons of war; while, to a lesser degree, feeling the reverse effects at home. By elucidating these varied and extensive anti-imperial arguments from the eighteenth century, this study significantly reappraises the views that seemingly only appeared within a philosophical stream of a fringe intellectual minority. It also makes clear that there was a much more general, and popular, reluctance and disquiet towards empire-building processes, especially with respect to the very

¹¹² For more on the rich historiography of early modern European empires in a comparative sense, see John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); and P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*.

high human and financial costs. In fact, degrees of criticism abounded much more widely than has been previously understood, particularly with respect to Parliamentary activity or forced human interactions within the imperial framework. As such, the distinguishing characteristic of the British Empire, as a supposedly “libertarian” idealized community of merchants and settlers, particularly as championed in North America, hardly squares with the reality, or even many metropolitan perceptions of empire in Britain. Additionally, while the notion of a “Little Englander” has today acquired a pejorative connotation, associated with xenophobia or isolationism, many such critiques of empire were genuine. This is perhaps more reflective of a trend within the historiography of twentieth century British history, regarding the empire coming home amid contemporary themes of globalization and the official breakdown of nation-states, but many critical intellectual antecedents existed throughout the early modern period with the earlier constructions of those very entities associated with nation-building and imperialism.¹¹³

Ultimately, this dissertation expands our understanding of negative perspectives and doubts that metropolitan writers had towards a growing Imperium, as existed in the long eighteenth century. It also considers individuals and ideologies that were critical of, and hostile to, imperialism and empire-building more generally. In so doing, this research builds significantly upon the pre-existing historiography of nineteenth century Victorian era anti-imperialism, and seeks to show the genesis of similar sentiments in the eighteenth century, though some of which originated in the seventeenth century, and grew over time into the full-blown critique of empire in the high imperial period. Additionally, this research on anti-imperial

¹¹³ For more on the twentieth century contexts, see Judith Brown and William Roger Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 4, *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). For a recent historiographical assessment of the empire, see John M. MacKenzie, “The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 99-124. For a current examination of the British Empire in world history, see John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2012). Also, see a recent critique of Darwin’s work, Bill Schwarz, “An Unsentimental Education. John Darwin’s Empire,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 125-144.

sentiments in eighteenth century Britain helps to bridge the traditional divide between the domestic and imperial streams of British historical writing, while engaging with broader Atlantic world and global histories.¹¹⁴ In considering how major events, as well as the actions committed by individuals, organizations, and governments abroad, concerned and affected people throughout Great Britain, this study lends itself to a more thorough re-evaluation of imperial ideologies in the interpersonal webs and networks of exchange during a formative period in the *Imperium*. Such an examination of dissenting and contrarian voices also serves to revise any notions of ideological uniformity, or constant and deterministic models of British imperial expansion throughout the long eighteenth century. It also provides precise historical contexts to, and insights into, overarching arguments related to imperial growth, neo-colonialism, and the various forces of globalization in the contemporary world.

¹¹⁴ For more on this subject, see David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, 13-29; and David Armitage, "Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?," *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 427-445. On Atlantic history and the American Revolution, see Francis Cogliano, "Revisiting the American Revolution," *History Compass* 8, no. 8 (2010): 951-63; and concerning global empire, see H. V. Bowen, "British Conceptions of Global Empire, 1756-83," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26, no. 3 (1998): 1-27. Also, regarding the broad connections between the many revolutions within the European Atlantic empires, and their global contexts, see David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

CHAPTER ONE: QUESTIONING THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EMPIRE

“The rulers of Great Britain have, for more than a century past, amused the people with the imagination that they possessed a great empire on the west side of the Atlantic. This empire, however, has hitherto existed in imagination only. It has hitherto been, not an empire, but the project of an empire; not a gold mine, but the project of a gold mine; a project which has cost, which continues to cost, and which, if pursued in the same way as it has been hitherto, is likely to cost, immense expense, without being likely to bring any profit.”

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1776)¹

Criticism of early modern empires came in many forms and with varying degrees of engagement and severity. Most notable though were the vast number of individuals who wrote about the many economic problems of empire. Such debates over empire-building, including the acquisition and settlement of colonies, exploiting resources, managing trade networks, and building national wealth and power, provide critical insights into what empires meant to many at the time.² They also revealed the centrality of determining the national interest, which the vast majority of authors claimed to be defending.³ At the same time, regard for others and the outward consequences of imperial expansion was not always a part of these considerations. The result is that many of these discussions about how Britain might best benefit seem firmly rooted to a particular time and place in history, and therefore appear rather parochial. Indeed, most of

¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1776), 2:587.

² One of the most important studies on these many topics came from Klaus Knorr, who identified and examined countless authors and their perspectives towards colonies between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. His work covered a very broad spectrum of attitudes towards the empire and imperialism over a long period of time. While he examined arguments for and against empire-building, those that emerged within the latter group, from the late seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries, are most crucial to this study. Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944).

³ Issues regarding the “common good” as well as the “national interest” have been most thoroughly addressed in Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

these writers were involved, in some way, in imperial or commercial enterprises and had vested interests. Many critics, on the other hand, did not benefit or were deliberately excluded from or harmed by these enterprises. Others were more dispassionate, and perhaps displayed greater objectivity, in their analysis. Yet, whether motivated by self-interest or not, assessing the complex political economy of empire is one crucial aspect of the varied debates over seventeenth and eighteenth century imperialism. Though such critics may not have been opponents of empire universally, they were definitely opposed to their empire as it existed at the time.

The extensive literature available on many of these economic topics shows that there was significant displeasure and disunity over many established and haphazard policies that were conceived of as ways to enhance the wealth of Britain and the prestige of its monarchy. In particular, many writers acknowledged that establishing colonies came with extensive risk and unnecessary expense. Then, provided that such a colony was even viable, in terms of people being able to survive in potentially a hostile or unhealthy environment or to thrive economically, it was questionable as to whether the mother country even benefitted from the arrangement. While many apologists of empire would make the case that colonies would be profitable, opponents saw such possessions as a drain on Britain, as such projects required money and the people who left were effectively removed from the domestic labour and skill pools. Though colonies provided the potential to acquire resources and perhaps corner the market in a given product or locale, many challenged the notion that closed trade networks, as envisioned with the Navigation Acts, or monopolies were beneficial or even viable in the long run, as they were hard to enforce and tended towards inflaming animosities and jealousies. On the whole, imperial projects were expensive endeavours and while they typically offered the promise of huge financial windfalls to be generously showered on the nation, the people were in fact drowned in a

sea of debts and taxes to support such enterprises, as well as the associated military establishments. Thus, there were many extensive critiques of colonies, and empires, at all stages of development and support for or against such perspectives varied greatly given domestic and geo-political circumstances.

Debating Demography and the Utility of Colonies

One of the oldest critiques of empire was that the establishment of colonies would effectively drain the mother country of valuable and scarce resources. Extensive capital and labour would by necessity go into the peopling and development of new territories. Even provided that the land was uninhabited, and therefore no wars of conquest, displacement, or dispossession took place, it was still an expensive proposition and the odds of failure were high. While many empire enthusiasts argued that the risk was worthwhile, and the benefits would eventually accrue, other commentators were concerned about the fact that money and people were leaving the nation. This was particularly the case among economic theorists and commercial writers associated with early modern ‘mercantilism’. Though the label is in many ways problematic, as it is an ill-defined blanket term, these perspectives generally reflected the importance of building state power and national prosperity, within the context of finite wealth and the world’s resources. There were, however, significant debates over many economic issues, regarding government regulation, the domestic economy, international trade, and empire, even within so-called mercantilist theory.⁴

⁴ Debates over the specific definition of mercantilism have long been a part of economic and political histories of the early modern period and as related to empire. This evolution in our understanding can be traced through the rich historiography. Two foundational twentieth century histories of mercantilism are Eli Heckscher, *Mercantilism*, 2nd ed. (London: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1962 [1935]) and Parakunnel J. Thomas, *Mercantilism and the East India Trade* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1963 [1926]). Regarding economic discussions and debates more generally, for the seventeenth century, see Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). For a thorough contemporary assessment see Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford:

In terms of early studies or crude assessments of demography, most writers in the period agreed that people were a source of wealth for the nation. This was closely related to discussions about what constituted wealth itself, and created a conundrum.⁵ With regards to the peopling of empire, advocates argued that sending individuals abroad would help diversify resource production, preferably to the exclusion of others, as well as spread national influence and culture. Further, these places would be useful areas to send undesirables, such as convicts or the unemployed. In times of economic hardship, such colonies could even be an outlet for excess labourers. However, there were obvious problems with these arguments. For instance, unskilled or unwilling individuals were hardly the ideal candidates for the settling of a successful colony, particularly in an unfamiliar or hostile environment. On the other hand, the skilled labourers who would likely fare much better were of clear economic value and surely would be useful at home.

One of the most prolific writers during the Restoration and then the Glorious Revolution period was Roger Coke, from Thorington in Suffolk. Briefly educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, he wrote on a number of topics of political and economic importance, displaying his radical and heterodox thinking. In his major treatises from the 1670s he warned systematically of the many dangers facing the English state and Church, from domestic unrest and economic turmoil, to the heightened commercial and military competition from abroad, and provided

Oxford University Press, 2013). Traditionally, political economists and commercial writers before Smith were painted with the same brush as being "mercantilists". Such individuals were considered broadly as protectionists, nationalists, monopolists, and aggrandizers of state power, or even supporters of absolutism. Subsequently, this line of thinking which dictated commercial policies was overturned by classical economists who generally advocated a *laissez-faire* approach regarding government, as it related to the individual and commerce. These were the ideas adopted by liberals in the nineteenth century. Yet, this simplified narrative that describes an important change in perspective towards the economy does not entirely account for the many diverse and divergent perspectives of writers associated with either group. More recent research has shown that mercantilism, or what Smith called "the mercantile system", can hardly be considered as a monolithic or universal ideology or clearly articulated philosophy of government and economics, in the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth centuries. In fact, commercial and imperial policies were extensively debated in the centuries that preceded the rise of classical economics, and the exploration of this is an important part of this dissertation.

⁵ On demography and identity see Lisa Forman Cody, *Birthing the Nation: Sex, Science, and the Conception of Eighteenth-Century Britons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

possible solutions. With respect to the English colonies and plantations, he offered very critical assessments. He noted how emigration to these places was draining England of people and making the country weaker and poorer, even though their possession aggrandized the power of the state. Moreover, by focusing too much attention on building up such overseas territories, domestic industries and trades closer to home had languished. Thus, colonial enterprises were coming at a significant, and perhaps unexpected, cost to England.

Coke's case against the value of the plantations first focused on the loss of traditional domestic industries, and their associated European-wide trades, which had historically employed many people throughout England. In particular, he was concerned about the decline of manufacturing, mining, and fishing. He wrote that

before the Crown of *England* had the accession of the *American* Plantations, we lost above 480000 *lib.* yearly, in the dying and dressing the woollen Manufactures of *England*, for want of men to do them; and perhaps as much, for want of those men who were employed abroad upon our wool; and as much in the Manufactures of Tin and Lead; and above 1372000 *lib.* in the Fishing Trade: and now we have opened a wide gapp, and by all encouragement excited all the growing youth and industry of *England*, which might preserve the Trades we had herein, to neglect them, and betake them to those of the Plantations.⁶

Though he did not provide extensive statistics to prove his points, he did offer a sharp contrast towards the state of these select industries before and after the acquisition of the western plantations, while additionally considering laws that had changed regarding consumption and naturalization. "Before we had the *American* Plantations, I say, we had besides our Staple at *Antwerp* of woollen Manufactures, the sole Trade to *Turkey, Muscovy, Spain, Portugal, France*, and up the *Elb*; whereby *Germany, Jutland, Holstein* and *Denmark* were supplied with them."⁷

⁶ Roger Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated, that the Church and State of England, are in Equal Danger with the Trade of it* (London: J. C., 1671-5), 16.

⁷ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 17.

Likewise, he noted, “so in the Fishing Trade, we supplied *Muscovy, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy* in a very considerable measure, with white Herring, Ling, and Cod caught upon our Coast”.⁸ Additionally, “we had moreover the sole Trade to *Greenland*.”⁹

The image he presented here was of a commercially successful England, which supplied crucial staples to much of Europe and largely dominated in those key markets. However, the negative consequences of colonial acquisitions then dealt heavy blows towards these sectors. For

[a]fter we were possessed of the *American* Plantations, the *Dutch* began to partake with us in the Trades of our woollen Manufactories to *Turkey, Muscovy, Spain, Portugal, France*, and up the *Elb*; our Staple at *Antwerp* declined, and as we encreased in the *American* Plantations, so our Trades of woollen Manufactures proportionally decreased, as much to their advantage as our loss. *Here Reader consider the condition of the poor Countrey-man*; whilst we not only from this cause have lost so great a Trade in our woollen Manufactures, but by omitting the inspection into them, they have lost their Reputation abroad.¹⁰

Thus, he lamented the decline of a previously cherished industry, blaming the misguided focus upon acquiring distant plantations and uncertain dominions. Yet, manufacturing was not the only domestic trade suffering as a consequence. In addition, “[t]o intend the Trades of our Plantations, we neglected the Fishing; whereby we soon lost all the Trades we had to *France, Spain, Portugal, Muscovy*, and *Italy* for white Herring, Ling, and Codd-fish, to the Dutch; we have only retained the Trade of Red-herring”, this last species having only been sustained because of their proximity to England and the fact that they had to be cured immediately upon being caught.¹¹

With regards to exact statistics in this industry, he deferred to those directly involved, writing, “[h]ow much the Trades to *Spain, Turkey, Portugal*, and up the *Elb* have been abated within these thirty years, the Merchants can best tell.” However, English fortunes in commercial

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 17-8.

¹¹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 18.

fishing were clearly in a declining trend, which portended ever further losses to their Dutch rivals. He then warned against complacency in retaining the trades England still enjoyed,

[a]nd if, *Reader*, thou thinkest much that the Fishing Trade should be abated, when as it is impossible the *Dutch* should ever get that of Red Herrings from us, though they have that of white Herring, Ling, and Codd caught upon our Coast; yet this is very true in the *Iseland* fishing, where we have not one fourth of that Trade we had thirty years since; and I am told by an *Iseland* Fisher-man (with whom I am concerned) that whereas within these five years the *Dutch* had not one Vessel in that Trade, last year their fishery there was more than the *English*. So as that Trade, & the *New-Found-Land* fishing Trade are in danger to be utterly lost by us, as well as that of white Herring, Ling, and Codd caught upon our Coast: for we not only continue the pressures which are complained of... but give the *Dutch* many more occasions of gaining these Trades.¹²

Even though England still controlled fishing in certain species, owing to a clear geographic advantage, there were no guarantees that would not be lost as well. The Dutch had proved superior in cornering so much of the northern fishing markets that they seemed likely continue to prosper, while English fishing, in turn, languished. It was a case that he later restated, and to which he added additional arguments as to why the fishing industry should be better attended to, instead of the plantation trade. He further commented that

[t]o intend the Trade to our Plantations, we neglected the Fishing Trade, whereby the *Dutch* soon became possessed of it, and thereby have acquired this incomparable advantage above us in the Trade of our Plantations, that as we employ only our ablest men thither, who in the diversity of Clime and Diet are very subject to Diseases and Mortality, and leave the impotent men, women and children at home without employment; they employ four times more men in the fishing Trade, than we do to our Plantations, and three times more to the benefit of their State, and also all sorts of impotent people, women and children; and have this advantage above us in time of War as well as Peace, that all hands employed in the fishing Trade are at home, and serviceable, when they are at War, whereas

¹² Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 19-20.

the Inhabitants in our Plantations are of no use or benefit to us in War; which was very apparent in our late War with them.¹³

So, while many commentators might have consoled themselves, and the nation at large, with the argument that the loss of one trade was a necessary sacrifice that merely reflected the attention paid to another, the issue was far more complicated. From Coke's perspective the fishing trades had been far more beneficial to the well-being and strength of the nation, as a whole, than the riskier plantation trades, which in certain regards had in fact been detrimental to England.

Clearly, the loss of these trades did not only affect those directly involved in such industries. Britons who went to the plantations were often some of the hardest working, and were then subject to great uncertainties, such as disease, while abroad; on the other hand, some of the least able remained at home, unsupported and vulnerable to economic weakness and external aggression. Coke also pointed out other negative incidental consequences, commenting that

[t]o this we add the lamentable condition of the Church-men upon the Coast of *England*, now it hath lost the fishing Trade; which before did contribute a competent allowance to supply a Curate. Within these twenty years, the Living of *Alborough* in *Suffolk* was judged to be worth above 100 *lib.* a year; now it hath lost the *Iseland* Trade, the Living will not maintain a Curate without voluntary Contribution of the Parish: and the whole tract of that part of the Coast of *Suffolk* is become so desolate and unfrequented.¹⁴

He later followed up on his remark here that English coastal communities were suffering as a result of their declining trades, noting that not only was this problem evident in Suffolk. This condition was far more widespread, for “after the *American* Plantations were inhabited by the *English*, the Coast of *England* (which should be the Glory, Strength, and Ornament of an Island) soon became decayed, and in a great measure unpeopled (except *Yarmouth*, which is a Town but

¹³ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 27-8.

¹⁴ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 22.

of one Church, though capable of a better Trade than *Amsterdam*.)”¹⁵ So, Yarmouth, in Norfolk, appeared to be one bright spot amid the broader doom and gloom. However, it appeared only a minor consolation to Coke, as he argued that it was far from reaching its much greater potential, as possibly superior to the great *entrepôt* of Amsterdam.

While this was certainly a lofty goal, it was perhaps entirely fanciful, considering the widespread depression of English industries and the multitude of challenges that then existed. He then noted the numerous factors that had been weakening the kingdom, stating

[i]n this condition we were, when the late Massacre and Wars hapned first in *Ireland*; nor did the War stay there, but universally was diffused over *England* and *Scotland*: nor did the loss of our men in England end here; but to the undoing of the Nation, *Oliver* made War upon *Spain*, whereby, besides the loss of men at *Hispaniola*, we got a new Plantation at *Jamaica*, which will maintain more men than are in *England*; to people this, and re-people *Ireland*, not only the Coast of *England* became desolate, but the Countrey much more thin and un-inhabited: and to this it pleased God to add the late great Plague, whereby the Inhabitants are reduced to so few.¹⁶

The problems he identified were political and demographic in nature, owing to mismanagement and depopulation.¹⁷ Here, he shrewdly linked England’s declining fortunes with events of the preceding decades and the Cromwellian regime, perhaps offering the opportunity for a national renewal. While little could have been done to mitigate the losses as a result of disease, he notably lamented the tragic loss of lives throughout the kingdoms from the man-made disasters of warfare. He also disregarded the value of the new plantation of Jamaica, which placed him in opposition to the planter and shipping interests at the time.¹⁸ This acquisition, among others, had cost treasure and lives, and would continue to drain the kingdom of people.

¹⁵ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 27.

¹⁶ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 28.

¹⁷ For more on questions of demography into the eighteenth century see David Victor Glass, *Numbering the People: The Eighteenth-Century Population Controversy and the Development of Census and Vital Statistics in Britain* (Farnborough: D. C. Heath, 1973).

¹⁸ The sugar colonies and Jamaica, in particular, are discussed more thoroughly in the second chapter.

In addition to his disdain for the plantations, he was also critical of the recent emigrations to Ireland, which had further depopulated England. Noting the depressed state of the nation, he added that “[t]o this condition is the Kingdom reduced by ours peopling our *American* Plantations, and re-peopling *Ireland*; which it pleased God to augment by so many men as extraordinarily died in the late great Plague, and the late Civil and Foreign Wars”.¹⁹ While many earned their fortunes, and some even infamy, just across the Irish Sea, Coke was instead very dismissive of the value of that island to the English kingdom, remarking that “*Lands are valuable as the Trade of the place is*. From hence it is, that in the Kingdom of *Ireland* Lands (which are naturally very fruitful, yet having little or no Trade) are of little or no value.”²⁰ So, even though some individuals and families might have done well in Ireland, as a whole, England did not benefit from this emigration. His case here largely rested on the argument that the loss of so many people within the kingdom had contributed to declining English land values. He wrote,

[f]rom hence it is, that the value of Lands was generally fallen all over *England* (except near *London* or some Trading places) about one fourth part; and though we have great Reason to thank God, that two of the Causes of diminishing the value of the Lands of *England* be ceased (*viz.* the late great Plague and the Wars;) yet that of peopling *Ireland* from *England* every day encreases, and so much to the advantage of those men who will leave us to Plant in *Ireland*, that though Lands be so much fallen in *England*, yet any man may purchase in *Ireland* for one quarter of the value he can in *England* .*viz.* for less than five years purchase; and stock it for less than one sixth part of the Charge as in *England*: from whence we are scarce secure of any industrious man in *England*, but that all the growing youth and industry of *England* will forsake us, to improve their fortunes in *Ireland*, where they may do it with so much advantage and security above what they can hope for in *England*.²¹

While he did not necessarily blame individuals who saw better opportunities for themselves in Ireland than in England for emigrating, he expressed a clear disappointment that there were not

¹⁹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 34.

²⁰ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 8.

²¹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 24.

more prospects for people at home, as so many domestic industries had been discouraged.

Thus, Coke presented a bleak picture of the state of England at the time, and as well offered a negative outlook towards the future. These perceptions were in no small part linked to the nation's ambitious territorial acquisitions and populating of overseas settlements. As to the direction colonial policies should take, either directly or indirectly, he wrote "[s]o, *Reader*, I leave it to thee to judge, whether the seeking of more Plantations will be any ways advantageous to the Trades of *England*. And whether the peopling *Carolina* from the residue of the people of *England*, will not be so much more pernicious to the Trade of *England*, by so many men are as diverted from the trade of *England* to people it."²² His was the case for pessimism, particularly as related to the value of overseas plantations to the mother country, and in this regard he was certainly not a lone voice at the time.

One anonymous author, identified only as a "lover of his countrey and well-wisher to the prosperity both of the king and kingdoms", also explored the problem of population decline in England, and the subsequent falling rents. His pamphlet, directed towards Parliament in 1673, offered many suggestions for economic development so that public debts could be effectively managed and the king would not have to yearly petition for more funding.²³ Amid a number of proposals was his argument for promoting immigration and the "[n]aturalization of all Foreign Protestants, and for granting Liberty of Conscience"²⁴ to address the population shortage. "There is nothing so much wanting in England as People", he claimed, "and of all sorts of People, the Industrious and Laborious sort, and Handycraft-men, are wanted to Till and Improve our Land;

²² Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 18.

²³ "A Lover of his Countrey, and Well-wisher to the Prosperity both of the King and Kingdoms," *The Grand Concern of England Explained* (London, 1673). Historian Paul Slack has suggested that the author of this publication was possibly Edward Chamberlayne. He was just one of many writers who addressed the crucial debates surrounding England's economic turmoil and were concerned with decline. See Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information & Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 130.

²⁴ *The Grand Concern of England Explained*, 13.

and help to Manufacture the Staple-Commodities of the Kingdom; which would add greatly to the Riches thereof.”²⁵ There were many reasons for this; notably he cited, “[t]he two last great Plagues, the Civil Wars at Home, and the several Wars with *Holland, Spain, and France*, have destroyed several hundred thousands of Men, which lived amongst us”. Indeed, the period of publication was one of particular distress in England, as the last major outbreak of plague and the Great Fire had only recently occurred, while the country was engaged in the unpopular Third Anglo-Dutch War at the time. “[B]esides”, he continued, “vast numbers have Transported themselves, or been Transported into *Ireland*, and other our Foreign Plantations”.²⁶

The loss of so many people, for a variety of reasons, including emigration and transportation, particularly to the American and Caribbean colonies, was a problem. It was something that amounted to, and aggravated, national economic decline.²⁷ After all, these people, “when they were living amongst us, did Eat our Provisions, Wore off our Manufacturies; imployed themselves in some Calling or other beneficial to the Nation; the want of which calls for a supply of People from some place or other”.²⁸ He then explained how the situation was even worse than it might seem on the surface and how it would continually be so, for,

the Men thus lost from amongst us, are of greater consideration; and the loss more mischievous to the Kingdom, than merely the death or removal of so many Persons, considering that they were Men in the prime of their years, in perfect strength, such, who had they not dyed, or been killed, or removed, might every year have begotten Children, and thereby encreased the World; So that three times the number of Children might have been better spared than they.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. This quotation also partially appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 72.

²⁷ Indeed, many Restoration writers made this case, which ran counter to arguments supporting emigration that ran through the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Conversely, these same arguments concerned about England’s depopulation would also be used to support greater slave importations to the plantation colonies. See William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom’s Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 29.

²⁸ *The Grand Concern of England Explained*, 13.

²⁹ Ibid.

His extrapolation of numbers then showed that the losses of people were to be felt with ever-greater effect. He then turned from tragedy and warfare to shaming those who would voluntarily leave and not replenish the stock of English labour. As

notwithstanding the great mischief this Nation hath sustained by the loss of these Men, yet so inconsiderate are the Inhabitants thereof, concerning their own Interest, (which, if possible, is to have the Kingdom full of People) that they are taking up another way to prevent the peopling thereof for the future, there being almost all over *England* a Spirit of Madness running abroad; and possessing Men against Marrying.³⁰

He then blamed men for choosing mistresses, instead of taking wives and building families to increase the population. In each of these arguments, the author lamented the loss of people, and in this regard, the colonies and plantations were viewed as a burden on the domestic economy. However, the primary purpose here was perhaps not to disparage empire, but to provide a justification for greater immigration and encourage religious toleration, as he further posited “[h]ow many thousands have left *England*, and gone to seek shelter in Forreign parts, for the persecution they were under for their Consciencs, who otherwise, with their Families, would have Continued amongst us?”³¹

The issue of depopulation was one that continued through the decade and was strongly contested by commercial writers at the time. In 1679 Slingsby Bethel, a controversial political figure, as a noted republican and former MP, also weighed in on the debate over the depopulation of England and the value of overseas dominions and plantations. His pamphlet particularly warned of the rising power of the French and the decline of English trade as a consequence of poor economic policies and a shortage of labour. The solution that he proposed was to encourage English trade in emulation of the Dutch, by promoting population growth and

³⁰ *The Grand Concern of England Explained*, 13-4.

³¹ *The Grand Concern of England Explained*, 15.

reducing the burden of duties. In particular, he was very enthusiastic about developing an English fishery, which would then provide a nursery for sailors in times of need. “But, Sir,” he wrote, “because great Trades cannot be managed, or things effected, without multitude of people, it would be prudence to invite Foreigners into this Nation, and to live here under such qualifications, as the Wisdom of the Nation shall think fit.” He then continued that “[a] small Countrey well peopled, will be able to effect things of more advantage and grandeur, than a great Dominion ill stocked.”³² He showed particular admiration for the Dutch Republic in this regard, which was a very densely populated and prosperous country, roughly the same size as Yorkshire.

His commentary provided no support for England’s peopling of colonies, as he regarded this emigration as a drain on the nation. The exception in this case was that of Newfoundland, which he considered valuable as a base for Northern Atlantic fishing operations. Yet, this was to be a more seasonal and commercial operation, which England should capture instead of rival Europeans, and not a widespread or permanent resettlement. Instead, he lamented the deliberate encouragement of the latter type of colony, with a warning for the English, writing, “[h]owsoever I cannot observe, that it doth any ways comport with the interest of State, to suffer such multitudes of people to pass out of his Majesties Kingdoms into other Princes Dominions, or the Western Plantations, thereby to disfurnish ourselves of people; the sad consequences and effects whereof, are too visible in the misfortunes of *Spain*.”³³ He used the Spanish example, as likely the most glaring at the time, to make the case that imperial expansion had depleted that country of able-bodied men, and thus made it increasingly difficult to raise an army for domestic purposes. He argued that “since those Plantations by that King made in the *East* and *West-Indies*, and all along the Coast of *Africk*, and those great Garrisons maintained in *Milan*, *Naples*, *Sicily*,

³² Slingsby Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England* (London, 1679), 15.

³³ Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England*, 16. Here he was also partially quoted in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 73.

and the *Low-Countreys* consisting for the most part of natural *Spaniards*, they have so exhausted them of men”.³⁴ Though this criticism was directed at Spanish imperial policies towards peopling colonies and supporting garrisons around the world, the implications for his English readers were clear. He, thus, further cautioned “[a]nd whether this may not be our sad fate, if not timely prevented, it’s well becoming your great Judgement to consider.”³⁵

His warnings here echoed those of his contemporary, Roger Coke, who was also concerned about England unfortunately emulating Spain in economic and political decline. His arguments, in this regard, served to buttress an already strong case that the strength and general well-being of the kingdom was weakened by emigrations to the plantations and the re-peopling of Ireland, which inadvertently caused the loss of other trades to rivals. He highlighted the decline of Spain from the position as the greatest Christian power, noting their inability to maintain control over large, thinly populated dominions and retain European territories in revolt such as the Dutch Republic and Portugal. While much of the plundered Spanish wealth had been squandered in war or lost to piracy, in many regards he considered the position of England to be worse. Coke maintained that “[i]n the causes we find the peopling of our *American Plantations* do more exhaust *England* of men in proportion to it, than the *West-Indies* do *Spain*; and if no provision be made to relieve it, will in less time than since the *West-Indies* became subject to *Spain*, leave it less peopled.”³⁶

Coke then addressed a number of other related demographic issues, comparing the sad state of England and Spain. He continued,

[s]econdly, the Massacre in *Ireland*, wherein is said above 200000 persons were murdered, and probably not many fewer of the Popish party suffered; both which

³⁴ Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England*, 16.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 31-2.

England only hath supplied of her own number, and so necessarily left so many fewer in it; and the late great Plague wherein is said near 200000 persons died; do more than equalize the transporting the *Moors* out of *Granada*: And lastly, the Law against Naturalization is a greater barr against a future supply, than the *Inquisition* is to *Spain*.³⁷

In addition, he argued that the Spanish had a much larger population pool than England to draw upon, from their territories across Europe, and that they had acquired new subjects when they made their overseas acquisitions. Consequently, “[w]e have compared the condition of *England* with *Spain*, wherein *England’s* is at least equal to it, though it hath not so long laboured under it: you may now understand wherein it is worse.”³⁸

More broadly, Coke made the case that the ill-effects of colonization in the Americas were being visited upon all the European countries that participated. The Christian countries had been depopulated to a point of weakness, and he feared that much more of the continent of sickly kingdoms would be conquered by the Ottomans, whom he despised even more than the Catholic Spanish. “In this condition have these Plantations left Christendom” he wrote,

I need not say; *A Pox take them*, for they had the Pox before ever Christian set foot upon the *Indian* shore; and gave the *Spaniards* such a Pox, that when *Gonsalves* the Great relieved *Naples* besieged by the *French*, with an Army made up of a medly of almost all the Nations of Christendom, it from thence diffused almost all over Christendom, but especially *France*: so that for all the men which were lost from *Europe* in peopling and planting these *American* Plantations, we have returned, among other benefits, this foul Disease, (now every where disperst) whereby the very nature and constitution of innumerable persons of those left behinde, and become degenerate and impaired, not to one Age only, but to be entailed upon their Posterities for ever.³⁹

Thus, contact and territorial acquisitions in the New World came at a much higher price than may have been conceived. While Spain may have been the most ruined in the quest for

³⁷ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 32.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 35.

dominion, England clearly was on a very similar downward trajectory.

In order to further draw a parallel with Spanish decline, Bethel then made the case that England too had historically been much more populated than at the time of writing. He wrote “[a]nd I can easily believe, that 1000 years since this Nation had much a greater stock of people than now it hath;” and as his evidence he briefly examined the revenue collected from the hearth tax. He then compared the £300,000 raised annually off the 2s per hearth to the £50,000 raised from 1p on each chimney in the time of King Offa. Though he does not provide a source for the numbers, he reasoned that the revenue must have been much greater in that earlier period. Even accounting for the fact that one chimney could support many hearths, he argued that had such a tax of 2s been levied nearly a millennium earlier on only the chimneys it would have raised £1,200,000 annually, a number which roughly, and coincidentally, amounted to what the Restoration monarchs required each year to run their households; “[s]o that we may conclude, there were then more Buildings and Chimneys, and so by consequence more People.”⁴⁰ Such a claim, however, seems wildly optimistic about England’s population in the early medieval period, though exact figures are not verifiable. While such statements undermine his credibility, regarding specific demographics, it was perhaps reflective of the fact that England’s population did decline in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was a trend that he wanted to see reversed, and which better economic policies might help bring about.

To improve England’s situation the government needed to create a better environment for people to populate and promote their own trades. Furthermore, he wished to see greater development around the country, and less concentrated in one place. He also cautioned “[b]ut where a Kingdom hath a great stock of People in it, it will be test of Prudence in that State, not to suffer any City or Town in it too much to aggrandize itself, or to attain to that magnitude, thereby

⁴⁰ Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England*, 16-7.

to impoverish the other parts of the Kingdom”.⁴¹ Though he did not explicitly mention London as potentially problematic, many writers at the time were concerned about the ever-increasing numbers of people migrating to the metropolis, perhaps disproportionately. Such demographic trends proved unnerving to such commentators as it was a reflection of depopulation throughout the countryside. A wider diffusion of opportunities and wealth, among more people and within the kingdom would create a more balanced and harmonious environment, and, therefore, more stability and even revenue. He then sketched out his utopia, as an idealized England,

[c]ertainly, Sir, *England* by reason of its scituation, many safe Ports and Harbours, the richness of the Countrey in materials for Manufactures, if it were fully peopled, (and these industrious, and take their measures rightly) might exercise the greatest Merchantile Trade, and grow the richest People, in the Universe; for where the People are many, and the Arts good, there the Traffick must be great, and the Countrey rich.⁴²

Thus, his grand economic designs offered optimism for the future, one that saw England’s population rising, instead of declining, as people crowded densely into the many ports around the coasts seeking opportunities. It was just a matter of the political will to execute such plans.

Similar attitudes were voiced, and much more despairingly so, in William Petyt’s *Britannia Languens*, which was published the following year.⁴³ A lawyer and radical constitutional scholar, who later served as Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London after the Glorious Revolution, Petyt was a strong critic of the Stuart regime and a fierce opponent of empire-building. Lamenting the founding of colonies, and the subsequent trades that had developed across the Atlantic, he commented

⁴¹ Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England*, 17.

⁴² Bethel, *An Account of the French Usurpation upon the Trade of England*, 21.

⁴³ William Petyt, *Britannia Languens, or, a Discourse of Trade* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring and S. Crouch, 1680).

[c]ertainly it was very unfortunate for *England*, That when Sir *Walter Raleigh* wrote these and other his excellent Observations on Trade, our Councils were under an earnest pursuit of the *Plantation-Trade*, on which great Customs were projected; for so it hath hapned, that whilst our Neighbour Nations have been vigilant to ease and facilitate their ways of Trade, the Trade of *England* hath continued under the former disadvantage, and is incumbred with new charges and difficulties of later years; all which in Conjunction have worked us out in all the Particulars mentioned before, and in divers others; and in recompence of these losses, our *Plantation-Trade* hath robbed and prevented us of some Millions of our People; amongst which very many being, or might have been Manufacturers, the Nation hath also lost many more Millions of Pounds in the loss of their Manufactures.⁴⁴

Petyt pessimistically saw little value in the plantation colonies, considering them a drain on England's wealth, for removing productive people and money from the kingdom.

He was sceptical about the benefits of maintaining the North American and Caribbean colonies, based on the luxury commodities produced there and their infant manufacturing industries which could rival those in England. In this regard, he also viewed Ireland as problematic, for being a chief competitor with England in the production of staple goods, such as butter, cheese, and clothing, for consumption and re-export. He commented

that the loss of the *Irish Trade*, and the consequences thereof, have much assisted in the Impoverishment of the *English*, (who bear almost all the Charge of the Government) and will eat upon us more and more daily; and on the other side the *Irish*, who lately dealt so cruelly by us, and are a Conquered People, are made far richer on a suddain, and that the *Irish Lands* do much rise in Rent, whilst the *English* sink.⁴⁵

Petyt was critical of these territories as sources of competition for England, as they were drawing people out of the kingdom. The regulated nature of the Irish and colonial trades were also major

⁴⁴ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 120-1. The quotation also partially appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 73; however, at the time Petyt had not yet been identified as the author of *Britannia Languens*. Although the antiquarian George Chalmers (1742-1825) had ascribed the treatise to Petyt, his authorship was notably doubted for a considerable period. For instance, John Ramsay McCulloch was dismissive of Chalmers' attribution. See J. R. McCulloch, ed. *A Select Collection of Early English Tracts on Commerce* (London: Political Economy Club of London, 1856), x-xi.

⁴⁵ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 164-5.

problems. Despite the enactment of laws designed to provide England with economic advantages with which to exploit these lands, the efforts of legislators seemed to backfire, as English trade was languishing and the general economy was in a deep slump. Much like Coke, and other writers, Petyt noted here the decline of traditional industries, such as manufacturing and fishing, to support the precarious plantation trades. He wrote,

[n]ow that the Labours of the same People in Fishing or Manufactures at *home* did, and would have produced a greater Profit to the Nation than these *Plantation-Commodities*, I think no man, considering what hath been said before, can so much as make a question. In fact our Fishing for White Herring and Cod was deserted for this Trade, and the Continual transplanting of multitudes of our Manufacturers and other people, hath inevitably more and more *sunk* and *disabled* us in all Manufacturers and home-Employments.

Then for the supposed advantage we have in the Vent of our home-Commodities to the Plantations, 'tis plain they are but our own People; and it must be undeniable, that had the same People stayed in *England*, they would have taken off a far greater Quantity; for whereas we now furnish them with some small part of their Victuals, we should then have supplied them with All, viz. with Bread, Flesh, Fish, Roots, &c. which now we do not; and they would have taken off far more of our Butter, Cheese, Cloathing, Drink, and other home Commodities, when they had them at hand, and had been put to no other shifts.⁴⁶

Thus, the supposed gains that England was expected to have received by acquiring colonies across the Atlantic were failing to materialize on many different counts. Referring to the promised benefits of controlling lucrative trades with, and between, the colonies, he noted,

[a]nd though it be not so direct to the present question, I shall adde, That we have little reason to boast of our *Navigation* in this Trade, when it was the occasion of the loss of a more certain and beneficial Nursery of Seamen and Shipping in our Fishery, when at the same time the Strength and Business of the Nation have been so much contracted by the loss of our People, when our Planters of *New England* having gotten a Considerable Navigation of their own, do Trade from *Port to Port*

⁴⁶ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 173.

in *America*, and have in a manner beaten us out of that kind of Employment in those Parts...⁴⁷

Regarding the situation of the people back home, he further reasoned that “the ordinary Exportation of Money must make them idle and useless; whereof the further Consequence is, that the ordinary Exportation of Money must inevitably *depopulate* a Nation, if it be of any great extent of Territory; so must the Exportation of Bullion be attended with the same mischiefs”.⁴⁸ In addition, this was not a problem that he saw as self-correcting or tending towards improvement. In fact, the established structural framework appeared to make things worse over time, as “our infelicity is yet greater; for our Plantation-Trade (though at the best far less valuable to the Nation than the same People and their Labours at home) is yet grown much worse than it was 20 or 30 Years since, and must grow worse and worse Continually.”⁴⁹

Though Petyt did not always provide quantifiable evidence in making his observations, and when he did include numbers they must be treated with caution, his assertions reveal a strongly anti-imperial position. His opposition to English colonies, in this case appear very much rooted in the notion that England did not benefit economically from maintaining them. He was one, among many writers at the time, to argue that England was suffering from depopulation at the time, as a consequence of the enclosures and the existence of better opportunities elsewhere. This emigration was evidence of a kingdom in decline and was also aggravating it, further driving down rents and discouraging industry. In comparing the demographics of England with those of other European nations, he lamented the fact that many populations had grown considerably, though this was not the case in his own country. “But on the other side”, he wrote,

⁴⁷ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 175.

⁴⁸ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 39.

⁴⁹ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 173-4.

England never was so populous as it might have been, and undenyably must now be far lesse populous then ever, having so lately peopled our vast *American Plantations* and *Ireland*; the decay of our Manufactures hath much depopulated our Inland Corporations of the Villages Adjacent; the decay of our Fishing Trade our Sea-Towns; I know this want of people is hardly credible with many who see no farther then their own ease and gain; they will tell us, we have so many people already that we know not what to do with them; which is true, and so they have in *Spain*, where their Villages are in a manner forsaken, and many of their great Cities and Towns lie half empty; most of their ordinary people having no employment at home, are gone to *America*, those that remain chiefly consisting in Gentlemen, Lawyers, Officers and Shopkeepers, with their necessary men of husbandry and servants: I must not omit Priests and beggars, since to the honour and comfort of *Spain* they make about a fourth or fifth part of the whole; there is little or no support for other ranks of men: how near this we are in *England* let any man judge, or how soon we shall come to it through the decay of our Manufactures.⁵⁰

Further deploring the state of the nation at the time, he noted how the most industrious people were essentially encouraged to leave as opportunities presented themselves elsewhere and wealth flowed abroad, while the least desirable seemed to ever-increase in numbers, clustering in particular around London as an immoral sinkhole. Referring to those who gained, at times immorally, through luxury, vice, and consumption industries, he wrote,

[f]rom these and other sorts of People, both in City and Country, we have more and more *Criminals* of all the sorts and species mentioned before; our Gaols are fuller and fuller, great numbers of which are yearly executed or transported; vast numbers of others have betaken themselves to voluntary exile from this their Native Country, in hopes of a better condition, rather than to endure certain poverty or persecution for Conscience at home; besides those gone into *Ireland*, and the *Plantations*, there are many thousands of Protestants gone from us into the *Low Countries*, into *France*, into *Germany*, and into *Poland*, where being Woollen Manufacturers, they have taught, and set up this Manufacture, and thereby helped to work our ruine. These being of the most strong and able part of

⁵⁰ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 154-5. Specifically regarding Ireland, he also noted at the side, that “[t]he peopling of *Ireland* here intended he [*sic*] was to supply the losse by the Irish Massacre being computed at about 250000 persons besides what the growing plentys of *Ireland* have invited over dayly.”

our People, leave their Wives and Children, and other impotent and lazy People at home.

And thus shall a Nation be inevitably *dispeopled*, as well as impoverished by a consumptive Trade.⁵¹

He did not, however, blame people for seeking to better themselves abroad. The fault lay with those who persecuted religious dissenters, or promoted sectional interests, through the enclosures or the granting of monopolies, and burdened labourers with regulations and taxes, which hindered development. Instead, he urged that more should be done to encourage people to come to, and remain, in England, to promote the general prosperity. However, this hardly seemed possible so long as the country remained wedded to the idea of maintaining colonies;

[n]ay, these *Plantations* may be Considered as the true Grounds and Causes of all our present Mischiefs; for, had our Fishers been put on no other Employment, had those Millions of People which we have lost or been prevented of by the *Plantations* continued in *England*, the Government would long since have been under a necessity of Easing and regulating our Trade; the common Wants and Cryes of our People would infallibly have obliged it; but much of the Industry of the Nation being turned this way, and the *Plantations* affording room and hopes for Men of *necessitous and uneasie Conditions*, and our Lawes...posting them away, they have deserted the Nation Continually, and left us intricated and fettered in private Interests and destructive Constitutions of Trade. And thus, whilst we have been projecting the *Increase of Customs*, we have fed our selves with the *Shadows* of Trade, and suffered other Nations to run away with the *Substance*.⁵²

Thus, Petyt provided a strong critique of the supposed benefits of colonial acquisitions and the peopling of those same colonies. While supporters would point to territorial gains and new trade routes, he made the point that any such advantages were in fact illusory, as there were losses in other areas of the economy that more than offset those gains.

Many of these issues were also addressed by the better known Anglo-Irish natural

⁵¹ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 135.

⁵² Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 175-6.

philosopher and political economist William Petty, who sought to provide a greater level of clarity on such matters based upon more statistical analysis in his *Political Arithmetick*.⁵³ He acknowledged the many criticisms of domestic and imperial economic policies. However, he also pointed out many of the positive developments since the plague and could identify notable improvements, in agricultural land, the growth of London, and regarding the affordable price of food.⁵⁴ The result was that he reached a much more balanced view and was not nearly as negative, as many of his contemporaries, on the state of England at the time. However, regarding major imperial policies, including the establishment of colonies, the encouragement of emigration, or political and military support for the plantations, he was hardly supportive.

An Englishman with considerable estates in Ireland, where he spent a good part of his adult life, Petty recognized the island's significance for many English, though questioned its overall value. Ireland was effectively a neighbouring colony, but one that had been expensively subdued and whose land was worth much less than comparable land in England. In particular, he acknowledged the complaints of many "wise men" who "were bewailing the vast losses of the English, in preventing and suppressing Rebellions in Ireland, and considering how little profit hath returned, either to the King or Subjects of *England*, for their Five Hundred Years doing and suffering in that Country..."⁵⁵ Though he only concerned himself here with the loss of English lives and treasure, he notably questioned whether their presence in the Catholic kingdom was

⁵³ William Petty, *Political Arithmetick, or A Discourse* (London: Printed for Robert Clavel, 1690). This treatise by Petty (1623-1687) was likely written in 1676, though it was not published until 1690, three years after his death. Petty's significance in the development of early modern English economic thought has long been established in the historiography. For instance, see William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics: English Economic Thought 1660-1776* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963), 114-146. For a more recent biography and assessment of Petty's political arithmetic, see Ted McCormick, *William Petty: And the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Also, on many of Petty's unpublished works and his emergence as a respected political economist in his own period, see Adam Fox, "Sir William Petty, Ireland, and the making of a political economist, 1653-87," *Economic History Review* 62, no. 2 (2009): 388-404.

⁵⁴ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, Preface.

⁵⁵ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 66.

worthwhile. He then suggested, facetiously, that the country would benefit tremendously from depopulating Ireland and the Scottish highlands and resettling the people in England, Wales and the Scottish lowlands. Though computed primarily for amusement, he provided some interesting calculations to add an air of plausibility to this fanciful notion. He estimated that the transplantation would cost under £17 million, including compensation for lost property.⁵⁶ However, with the expected increase of land values and rents, as well as in economic output and efficiency gains, he suggested that “the advantage will probably be near four times the last mentioned summ, or about Sixty nine Millions, Three Hundred thousand Pounds.”⁵⁷

Anticipating the criticism that the empty lands could then be seized or purchased by a foreign power, and even by a rival or hostile kingdom, he noted in the margin “[t]hat those who purchase *Ireland* shall weaken themselves”.⁵⁸ He also dismissed the idea that this would pose anything more than just an existential threat to the kingdom, writing that “if any Man shall object, that it will be dangerous unto *England*, that *Ireland* should be in the Hands of any other Nation; I answer in short, that that Nation, whoever shall purchase it (being divided by means of the said purchase,) shall not be more able to annoy *England*, than now in its united condition. Nor is *Ireland* nearer *England*, than *France* and *Flanders*.”⁵⁹ While a purely conjectural notion, it was at least rooted in the serious belief “that the advantage will arise in transplanting about Eighteen Hundred thousand People,” effectively moving them from where they were poorer and less efficiently employed to where they would be better off and of greater value to the kingdom. No doubt, as a major landholder, himself, he would have enjoyed a handsome payout as well if

⁵⁶ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 70.

⁵⁷ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 71.

⁵⁸ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 72. His argument ran that “if any Prince willing to inlarge his Territories, will give any thing more than Six ½ Millions or half the present value for the said relinquished Land, which are estimated to be worth Thirteen Millions; then the while profit, will be above Seventy Five Millions, and Eight Hundred 600 l. Above four times the loss, as the same was above computed.”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

such a strategic relocation program were ever enacted.⁶⁰

He also voiced a similar criticism regarding the even more distant and more costly to administer plantation colonies, questioning their value to England. In this regard, he considered these territories even less useful than Ireland, particularly where people performed similar occupations that could have been done at home. For instance, “[i]n *New-England*, there are vast numbers of able bodyed *Englishmen*, employed chiefly in Husbandry, and in the meanest part of it, (which is breeding of Cattle) whereas *Ireland* would have contained all those persons, and at worst would have afforded them Lands on better terms, than they have them in *America*, if not some other better Trade withal, than now they can have.”⁶¹ He also questioned the motivations of settlers in the other colonies and wondered if expanding English territories, or even maintaining those they held at present, were worth the trouble. As “[t]he Inhabitants of the other Plantations, although they do indeed Plant Commodities, which will not grow so well in *England*; yet grasping at more Land, than will suffice to produce the said *Exotiics* [*sic*] in a sufficient quantity to serve the whole World, they do therein but distract, and confound, the effect of their own Indeavours.”⁶² While sceptical towards these plantations, he could at least understand English desires for exotic commodities, but “as for the People of *New-England*, I can but wish they were Transplanted into *Old England*, or *Ireland*” according to their own wishes.⁶³ Such sentiments towards these least desired territories were shared by many commentators.⁶⁴ Though such notions of resettling entire populations served to illustrate his point regarding value and did offer

⁶⁰ For a recent and comprehensive study of English plantations in Ireland from the late Elizabethan through to the Cromwellian periods, see Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). On the emergence of the seventeenth century Irish aristocracy, see Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: The Irish Aristocracy in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

⁶¹ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 90-1.

⁶² Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 91.

⁶³ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 94.

⁶⁴ The New England colonies were typically considered the least valuable by critics, something conceded even by defenders of the English/British Empire in the Atlantic. This is discussed more thoroughly in the third chapter.

a whimsical vision of utopia, Petty did in a later section re-address, more realistically, many of the associated concerns with dispersed populations and the nature of empire. These will be considered later on in the chapter.

Though concerns about depopulation in Britain seemed particularly acute in the late seventeenth century, such arguments persisted through the eighteenth century as well. David Hume, the famous Scottish philosopher, also commented on these phenomena around mid-century, among many others, issuing a warning to political and economic theorists, as well as Parliamentarians, regarding the importance of sound policies to promote a general well-being. In his political discourses he addressed the question of depopulation and the problem of draining a nation's wealth.⁶⁵ "But are there not frequent instances, you will say, of states and kingdoms, which were formerly rich and opulent, and are now poor and beggarly? Has not the money left them, with which they formerly abounded?"⁶⁶ He then proceeded to answer, "if they lose their trade, industry, and people, they cannot expect to keep their gold and silver: For these precious metals hold proportion to the former advantages."⁶⁷ He thus concluded this section of his extensive discourse, cautioning that "[i]n short, a government has great reason to preserve with care its people and its manufacturers. Its money, it may safely trust to the course of human affairs, without fear or jealousy. Or if it ever give attention to that latter circumstance, it ought only to be so far as it affects the former."⁶⁸

Another prime example of this disdain for emigration came from Josiah Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester from 1758-1799. More broadly, he would also prove to be one of the strongest

⁶⁵ For more on these issues, see Istvan Hont, "The 'rich country-poor country' debate in Scottish classical political economy," in *Wealth & Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, eds., Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 271-316.

⁶⁶ "Of the Balance of Trade" in David Hume, *Political Discourses*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: R. Fleming, 1752), 99.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hume, *Political Discourses*, 2nd ed., 100.

critics of maintaining overseas colonies and imperial networks, as then existed. Though early on in his career his views appeared conventional and supportive of Britain's plantation colonies, by the mid-1750s, he had largely changed his mind.⁶⁹ His first major critique was his 1755 *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, which was his assessment of major social and economic problems that plagued Britain, and how they could be remedied. In the first part of this work he deplored the loss of people, especially those most productive as making the kingdom ever-weaker. He argued this was a consequence of the existing "bad System of Polity, and the mistaken Notions of public Welfare, and National Commerce",⁷⁰ and which desperately needed to be reformed so as to encourage domestic population growth, and promote economic development that would make unused lands, such as the marshes, productive.

From Tucker's perspective, people were the basis of a productive, prosperous, and moral society, "[f]or Numbers of People are the Strength, as Industry is the riches of a Country".⁷¹ Conversely, he linked depopulation with social decline and degeneracy, which would occur in a vicious cycle that would intensify as it fed off of itself. For,

this very Depopulation, unless preventive Remedies are used, and a proper Polity introduced, must occasion a farther Diminution of Inhabitants; because several Persons will be obliged to seek for Work in other Countries, as not having sufficient Employment, or a proper Consumption of the Produce of the Lands, or the Labour of the Manufacturer among themselves. The Lands must lie waste,

⁶⁹ The historiography on this is briefly discussed in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 118-20. He argued that Tucker's independent streak was partially motivated by increasing disputes between the colonies and mother country. By the end of the Seven Years' War, Knorr believed that Tucker's change of heart was complete. In his assessment, he also cited the earlier scholarly work of Walter Ernest Clark, *Josiah Tucker, Economist: A Study in the History of Economics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903), 156ff; 174f; 184; and Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 13. Also, see W. George Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

⁷⁰ Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (Bristol, 1755), 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

where there are no Markets; and the Artificers cannot be employed without Customers.⁷²

More abstractly assessing the situation, he also wrote, notably,

WHERE a Country is thinly peopled, it is impossible to promote a brisk and general Circulation of Industry and Labour, by reason of the Distance and Dispersion of the People from each other, and the Consequence of that, their Want of Rivalship and Emulation: – So that the greater Part of those few Inhabitants must lead a sauntering, lazy and savage Life, thereby making near Approaches to the State of *mere Animals*, the most wretched of all others for an human Creature to be in.⁷³

He then further illustrated his case, where he revealed a particular disdain for those he considered lesser peoples, in writing,

[t]his Observation is confirmed by Experience; For in every Country, extremely thin of Inhabitants, the People are proportionably poor and miserable, and lead such Lives as are but a few Removes from the brute Savages of the Woods and Mountains. Suppose only Ten Thousand Inhabitants left in *Great Britain*, and what would be the Consequence? – These few Inhabitants would soon degenerate into *British Savages*, correspondent to the Clans of the Highlands of *Scotland*, or the *Indians of America*. Suppose the Country better peopled, and then the Evil would lessen in Proportion. It is moreover observable, That in Country Places, where there is a Scarcity of Inhabitants, one Trade will not be sufficient for a Man's Subsistence, but several distinct Occupations must be joined together in order to obtain a bare and wretched Support.⁷⁴

In his estimation, this demographic and moral decline of a society would also produce a number of other noticeable consequences. He especially noted that “WHERE a Country is thinly peopled, the Property of Lands will be the more easily ingrossed, and intailed in a few Families; by which means the Land-holders become more absolute and despotic over their Vassals. In this Case, Numbers are kept in Poverty and Wretchedness to raise the comparative Grandeur of one

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 11.

⁷⁴ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 11-2.

Family, and flatter the Pride of their petty Tyrant.”⁷⁵ In addition, “[a] Country thinly peopled, has neither the *Strength*, nor *Riches* it would have, were it better inhabited; so that it cannot make that Figure in Peace, or War, it ought to do.”⁷⁶

Thus, Britain appeared as a country of great promise, though disappointment reigned in the 1750s. This was manifested in a misperception that a troubling depopulation trend was then in place, though it was perhaps only a symptom of broader systemic problems.⁷⁷ Ultimately, his treatise blamed the nation’s decline upon a host of issues, in commenting that

[o]ur numerous Colonies, extensive and distant Navigation, perilous and unwholesome Trades, are great and continual Drains upon us. – Add to all this, That Holland, France, and Spain keep great Numbers of British Troops in their Pay. Moreover, almost all the States in Europe draw off as many as they can of the Artificers, Sailors and Manufacturers of these Kingdoms, into their own; wilt we are so far from retaliating the like upon them, that we are for discouraging those few Foreigners who would voluntarily come over.⁷⁸

In his view, clearly, the empire was hardly beneficial to Britain and the complicated nature of foreign relations and diplomatic entanglements did not help the situation either. He then offered a possible solution, writing, “[t]he way to supply these Losses, and to put a Stop to many of the Evils here complained of, is to establish such a Polity as shall give Incouragement for increasing the Numbers of People both by Matrimony, and by the Introduction of industrious Foreigners.”⁷⁹

The famous radical thinker, Richard Price, was another commentator to issue a stark warning regarding depopulation in England, while citing the colonies as potentially problematic. Price’s thinking on the matter appears to have evolved as a result of Tucker’s convincing and perhaps out of his own research. Interestingly, Price had written to Tucker in 1776, somewhat

⁷⁵ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 12.

⁷⁶ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 13.

⁷⁷ On this issue, alongside the debate over the census in the 1750s, see Glass, *Numbering the People*.

⁷⁸ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

dismissively about his claims that the colonies drained England of some of its population; but, in his 1780 *Essay on the Population of England*, he had reversed his position.⁸⁰ In this treatise on national demographics, Price noted that

since the Revolution [1688], most of the causes of depopulation have prevailed so much as to render it an evil which could not but happen. The causes I mean are – the increase of our navy and army, and the constant supply of men necessary to keep them up – a devouring capital, too large for the body that supports it – the three long and destructive continental wars in which we have been involved – the migrations to our settlements abroad, and particularly to the East and West Indies – the engrossing of farms – the high price of provisions – but above all, the increase of luxury, and of our public taxes and debts.⁸¹

This general demographic decay that he calculated was additionally something that he regarded as all “the more mortifying, because it seems, in some degree, peculiar to this nation.”⁸² His warnings were in large part a reflection of wartime stresses, which obviously intensified the pressures on the population at large, specifically regarding military service and taxation, and would greatly exacerbate the losses of life beyond death by natural causes, and in some instances encourage more emigration. His concerns regarding the ongoing urbanization were familiar and had long preoccupied commentators worried about population displacement and food supplies, though this did not technically depopulate the kingdom, but rather was more of an internal migration. He did, however, acknowledge the role of colonies as being a more constant and longer term aspect of the population drain, which often drew out some of the best labourers.

These issues were even more powerfully discussed by the agriculturist and economist James Anderson in his 1782 treatise, *The Interest of Great Britain with Respect to the American Colonies*. Written during the American Revolutionary War, the text was mainly aimed at Britons

⁸⁰ This change in Price’s thinking was briefly described in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 221.

⁸¹ Richard Price, *An Essay on the Population of England, from the Revolution to the Present Time*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1780), 29.

⁸² Price, *An Essay on the Population of England*, 30.

in order to reconcile them with the loss of the Thirteen Colonies and posited that Britain would be better off without those overseas territories. He was certainly not alone in making this case at the time, though he probably offered one of the best and most thorough critiques at the time.⁸³ However, through this analysis the broader conclusions he reached regarding the negative effects of colonization, including the unintended consequences upon imperial powers themselves, perhaps offered even more powerful and universal insights for readers.

A significant part of his assessment rested on the fact that the North American colonies had drawn so many people out of Britain for well over a century. In making this case he was certainly not alone, but he was effectively following in a long line of British intellectual tradition that was critical and sceptical of the value of overseas possessions. Regarding the health of the nation he noted that “IT is universally admitted, that the real strength of a kingdom consists in the number of its inhabitants, and that its riches will be in proportion to the industry of its people.”⁸⁴ He then extended this argument further to consider the secondary importance of geography and demography, noting,

[b]ut this proposition admits of limitation: for, it is also admitted, that of two countries which contain an equal number of inhabitants, that whose territory is least extensive, will be the most powerful. This arises not only from the greater difficulty of defending a large territory than one of smaller extent, but also from several other causes, which, though equally important, are not at first sight so obvious.⁸⁵

This argument in favour of population density, which would then promote industry and the specialization of labour, had long existed in the literature of mercantile writers, though Anderson

⁸³ This issue is addressed more thoroughly in the third chapter. Other notable critics in this regard were Josiah Tucker and Adam Smith, though they were more vocal on this issue well in advance of the Revolution and have traditionally received far more attention than James Anderson.

⁸⁴ James Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies, Considered* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1782), 24.

⁸⁵ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 24-5.

would then proceed to explain how this process was very much retarded in Britain as a consequence of maintaining vast overseas dominions.

One of the main areas he was concerned about was with the number of people who had left British shores over the course of many decades. Their departures constituted a severe loss to Britain as the process limited domestic population growth, which in turn stunted potential economic development. In addition, fewer people meant a higher tax burden for those who remained, in part to support colonial administrations and their defence, though this theme will be considered in greater detail later in the chapter. He was particularly concerned that Britain was following in the footsteps of Spain by chasing colonial acquisitions that ultimately encouraged depopulation and economic decay at home. Notably, “Spain, according to her best historians, contained at the time that Columbus set sail for America, about twenty five millions of inhabitants, and possessed numerous manufactures which were in the most flourishing state. Her population *now* scarce amounts to eight millions, and her manufactures deserve not to be named.”⁸⁶ He proceeded to sketch a brief history of Spain’s self-imposed decline, which he attributed in large part to overextension and an encouraged population exodus, writing,

[i]f a general idea prevails in any country that more money can be got by following one employment than any other, a great number of persons will naturally choose to follow that mode of life. It was this principle that effected the ruin of Spain. A general idea prevailed, that more money could be made in the colonies of America, than at home. This opinion instead of being discouraged was favoured by the court: in consequence of this, people of all ranks flocked thither in numbers. Those left behind felt themselves less comfortably situated than before, and their situation becoming less and less agreeable as their numbers decreased, others were gradually forced to leave their native country, for the sake of subsistence, ’till it became reduced to that debilitated state in which we now find it.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 47.

⁸⁷ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 56.

Thus, the lure of New World riches to be plundered fueled an insatiable greed, contributing to an egregious policy error of encouraging people to go abroad, and in what may be perceived as an ironic twist of history, the conquering country had apparently been ruined by its own colonies.

While many might have greeted the decline of a once mighty rival with amusement or satisfaction, he then turned to pose a timely question to British readers,

[h]as Britain no reason to fear that similar evils may accrue to herself, in consequence of her American colonies? It is evident the circumstances are in many respects alike. In both countries an idea has prevailed, that it is easier to live comfortably in the colonies than at home. This idea has induced many individuals to leave their native homes for ever. Both kingdoms have been thus deprived of many of their best inhabitants: in both cases the expences of government have been thus necessarily augmented. Taxes, of consequence, are heavier upon the people at home than they otherwise would have been, which must necessarily have a tendency to check the progress of manufacturers.⁸⁸

Though careful to note that the Spanish kingdom was warlike and also suffered from despotic rule, while defending Britain's constitutional settlement, he cautioned that dangerous warning signs abounded about the quest for riches and dominion within his own country. However, he did also acknowledge that there were crucial differences, writing,

[t]he same causes that enable the court of Spain to draw a considerable revenue from her colonies *at the beginning*, tempted emigrants to go thither, at that early period, in immense numbers; which at once ruined the manufactures and destroyed the industry of the parent state. But those who went to the British settlements at first, had so many difficulties to overcome and hardships to struggle with, that large sums were obliged to be raised for their support by the inhabitants of Britain, before they could be induced to go thither.⁸⁹

Yet, despite certain divergences in the histories, politics, and cultures of these rival nations, he urged Britons not to dismiss what happened to Spain as an impossible fate for Britain. For,

⁸⁸ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 56-7.

⁸⁹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 58.

[t]he first settlement of these colonies was slow and it was not 'till of late that the emigrations to them became very considerable. Time, therefore, has not yet been allowed for our feeling the full effects of these copious migrations: and as the change was effected gradually, they have not been attended with those violent consequences that sudden changes in political arrangements never fail to produce.⁹⁰

While the imperial two paths may have led off in different directions initially, the final destination may very well end up being the same place. In this regard, he clearly believed that the history should serve as a guide, lest the Spanish present become the British future.

To further make his case, Anderson presented detailed calculations regarding the number of people who had emigrated going back to the early seventeenth century. It was part of his broader assessment of the difference between Britain's actual population and what it could have been in the absence of devastating wars and mass emigration. While the numbers were crude estimates, at best, given at thirty year intervals, they are still somewhat instructive at illustrating the long-term trend that was in place which limited British population expansion. Anderson, himself, readily admitted the shortcomings with the specific numbers, and lamented the lack of a general census which would have been useful in his analysis.⁹¹ Assuming as a starting point that Britain had five million people in 1600, he estimated that the population would have been at the time of his writing around eleven and a half million, instead of just over nine million, if not for emigration to the American colonies and subsequent colonial births that would have likely occurred in Britain.⁹² Though he then wrote later, absent such cumulative declines,

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 86.

⁹² For his estimations on Britain's population see Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 88-92. Though the numbers were only his personal computations, based on a geometrical patterning and compounding, he estimated that the population would have been 6,666,666 by 1630, but subtracting losses of 360,000 from emigration and defence the total was 6,306,666. By 1660 it would have been 8,408,888, but was actually 6,998,888. By 1690 the total would have been 9,331,850, but was actually 7,901,850. By 1720 the total would have been 10,535,800, but was actually 8,275,800. By 1750 the total would have been 11,034,400, but was actually 8,724,400. Finally, by 1780 the total would have been 11,632,533, but was actually closer to 9,012,533. For

that the number of inhabitants in Britain should at this time have amounted to better than fourteen millions and a half. If so, it is evident that Britain by peopling her American colonies, has lost about five millions and a half of inhabitants, while her colonies have gained only two millions and a half. This is a miserable waste of the human species, but which by being gradual and slow, has escaped the notice of ordinary observers.⁹³

While cautioning that his numbers were only best estimates, he noted that it at least closely reflected the depopulation of Britain, which he then argued was slightly offset by natural births within the country. As well, it was a gradual draining process. Yet, while this meant that there was no major or sharp decline in population, gains were hardly being realized, meaning that Britain was not, and could never, reach its demographic and economic potentials.

Among his many conclusions and proposals regarding the different calculations of Britons forever lost to Britain, he also presented a very important associated critique of empire-building and territorial acquisitions. Here he linked the emigration problem with the seemingly ever-rising burdens of administrative and military costs which necessarily arose out of grasping expansively at new lands, some of which were sparsely populated.⁹⁴ He wrote

[t]he population of any state must undoubtedly be retarded in consequence of emigrations from thence; and the numbers of her people be diminished in proportion to the number that shall be wanted in her defence. If her territories lie compact, and are defended by natural barriers that make the attacks of her enemies extremely difficult, the waste of people in her defence will be out of all proportion smaller than if her territories are of immense extent, thinly inhabited and exposed to danger in a variety of quarters, so far distant from each other as not to admit of timely assistance from one to another in case of danger.⁹⁵

a thorough historical examination of English demography, see E. A. Wrigley and R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁹³ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 94.

⁹⁴ Some notable commentaries on the financial burdens of empire, generally, are included at the end of this chapter. More specific critiques of wasteful or unnecessary expenditures in North America are discussed in the third chapter.

⁹⁵ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 92-3.

While he clearly viewed the acquisition and maintenance of such overseas territories as problematic, he was not entirely gloomy on the prospects for Britain. The American colonies may have cost them far more than was ever anticipated, but despite the circumstances, there was good news and a potential case for optimism. His assessment continued,

[b]y the foregoing estimate, it seems that the loss to Britain arising from all these causes, does not yet quite equal the natural encrease by procreation, and that there is reason to think the population of Britain is still in a progressive state, though that progression is much slower than it would have been, but for the many emigrations that have taken place to our colonies. It is plain, however, that should the emigrations be permitted to go on encreasing a little longer, they would soon exceed the natural encrease, after which period, should the same causes continue to operate, our population would not only be retarded, it would stop, and soon after proceed to decrease almost in a geometrical progression, which would quickly bring us into a condition nearly similar to that of Spain. But it is to be hoped the good sense of the nation will ward off this threatened calamity.⁹⁶

Though Britain had not moved into a phase of terminal demographic or economic decline, such an outcome was not only plausible, but it was actually quite likely if nothing was done to remedy a very imperfect situation. For readers who may not have been particularly concerned about what Anderson was writing about, he noted that there were a number of historical precedents to consider. For instance,

Portugal for a time carried on the most brilliant commerce, by means of her numerous settlements in almost every corner of the globe. She did not in due time perceive the consequence of such extended views. At last, however she severely felt, that the waste of people necessary for conducting these vast enterprises, thinned her native country of its best inhabitants, and reduced her to that exhausted state in which we now behold her.⁹⁷

Spain, also, adopted a mode of colonization nearly similar to our own, and intoxicated with the benefits she *thought* she derived from it, enquired not into the real tendency of such measures till it was too late. Before she even suspected she

⁹⁶ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 93.

⁹⁷ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 97.

was in a declining state, her declension had advanced so far that it was no longer possible for her to recover herself.⁹⁸

Though many may have taken great pride in seeing the demise of formerly powerful European kingdoms and imperial rivals, he cautioned that these were more than mere coincidences. There was, in fact, a dangerous pattern at work and such cases were well-known and understood. Further, “[w]hat law in nature is there that tends to guard Britain from a similar fate if she shall pursue a similar conduct? And what argument can be adduced to shew that she is not now in a similar state of precarious glory?”⁹⁹ In warning about such historical recurrences, and a potential problem ahead for Britain, his logic appeared especially sound, even if it may have run up against patriotic claims of superiority or exceptionalism.

While he was able to make the case that Britain may not have been in an immediate downward spiral or demographic crisis, based upon his own estimates, he noted that it was hardly a time for complacency. Instead, this revolutionary period should have served as an important period of reflection whereby Britons resolved to reverse a negative trend then in place, before it drastically worsened. He wrote that

[t]he population of Britain, there is reason to think, has hitherto continued to advance a little. In consequence of this, and other concurring causes, many of her manufactures have yet been able to keep their ground. Her vigour is yet great but she stands upon the top of the wheel. Should it take a little turn. Should the time arrive that her population begins to decline, the ruin of her manufactures must quickly follow, in which event no human power could prevent her from sinking into a greater state of debility than has ever been experienced by any other European state.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the well-being of the British kingdom was very much at stake, though it was perhaps an ideal opportunity to right the situation. He continued,

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 97-8.

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 98.

[l]et us not then neglect the present favourable moment which affords us such a happy opportunity of repairing past errors, and of giving stability to the strength and industry as well as to the constitution of the state. The genius of Britain calls out, TIME NOW IS: may the period never arrive when she shall pronounce these awful words, AND TIME SHALL BE NO MORE.¹⁰¹

With these ominous words closing out his chapter, he delivered an important warning that readers needed to take note of the demographic problems associated with populating distant colonies. If nothing was done, the nation would likely be resigned to the same fate as many of its rivals before it, yet Britons would not be able to legitimately claim ignorance. Anderson's musings, among those of other writers, offered more than ample and fair warnings.

Another observer who was concerned with depopulation was the theologian William Paley. In his *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, written while he was the Archdeacon of Carlisle, he also made the case that "the decay of population is the greatest evil that a state can suffer; and the improvement of it the object which ought, in all countries, to be aimed at, in preference to every other political purpose whatsoever."¹⁰² Further, he wrote that "the superiority of *it* above every other national advantage, are points necessary to be inculcated, and to be well understood", though he lamented that "false estimates, or fantastic notions of national grandeur, are perpetually drawing the attention of statesmen and legislators from the care of this".¹⁰³ While he wanted to see greater emphasis on agricultural production at home, as to support more people, he did not perceive the flow of migrants from Britain to the colonies as being especially harmful. Described as a "pre-Benthamite utilitarian" by historian Klaus Knorr, Paley was hardly alone in making this case that the empire did not diminish Britain's labour force and wealth.¹⁰⁴ In fact, his well-known disagreement with Anderson on this question was but one in a much longer line of

¹⁰¹ Ibid. This, he noted, was a famous alchemists' phrase that warned of acting at just the right moment, before the opportunity passed and it was forever too late.

¹⁰² William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (London: Printed for R. Faulder, 1785), 589.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 220-2.

debates over the value of maintaining overseas colonies. In part, this longevity was because it was something that was very difficult for commentators on either side to quantify and interested parties typically benefitted or lost from either circumstance.

Though this section has focused extensively on some of the critics who regarded English depopulation to Ireland and the plantations or colonies as negative, there were many others who argued the opposite case. It was certainly not a short-lived debate, though it tended to intensify at different intervals, in large part depending on the state of the English economy at any one time. When unemployment was high, colonies were typically viewed as a useful outlet for those out of work, even among those who might not have generally supported imperial projects. Conversely, other writers were typically able to make the case for putting people to work closer to home, by for instance, clearing marshland and making it productive. At other times, when shortages of labour developed or certain industries came under competitive pressures, those same overseas territories and colonies were perceived to be undermining Britain's domestic economy.

On the Nature of the Empire Trade

One of the most appealing aspects of territorial acquisitions, and later in the development of colonial economies, was in the material value they were expected to provide the mother country. In particular, countless commercial writers throughout the early modern period championed empire-building as a way to gather raw materials that could, in turn, be transformed into finished products in Britain, for re-export abroad. If this process was done within an imperial context it would supposedly encourage shipping and trade, while contributing to an economic self-sufficiency. This has been described in many ways by different generations of

economic writers and historians as mercantilism, or the old colonial system.¹⁰⁵ This may be loosely defined as a philosophy of economics that adhered to the notion of a nation maintaining a favourable balance of trade with its neighbours, with the intention of acquiring as much bullion as possible. Through this process, the importance was placed on the building of state wealth and power, to the detriment of other, potential, rival kingdoms. However, there was no absolute program, or pure theory of mercantilism, and economic discourse was by any means static throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁶ Though the specific definition has varied over time, and remains a subject of lively academic debate, this mercantile system was essentially based upon the pillars of economic protectionism and trade monopolies.¹⁰⁷

In Britain, these concepts were embodied in the Navigation Acts as well as in the extensive customs duties and tariffs erected to promote empire-wide trade, while restricting trade with other European powers, and in the creation of numerous chartered corporations for the purposes of settling new territories and controlling critical trade routes, or strategic and valuable resources. The goal was to promote industries in Britain, particularly in shipbuilding and manufacturing, while colonial economies were to play subordinate and supportive roles. In

¹⁰⁵ Some of the best examples come from Robert Livingston Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 [1945]); Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944); and Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). More recently, the economics of early modern and modern imperialism have additionally been explored through the concept of “gentlemanly capitalism”, by historians Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins in P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850,” *The Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (1986): 501-525; and P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas II. New Imperialism, 1850-1945,” *The Economic History Review* 40, no. 1 (1987): 1-26. Subsequently, these articles served as a foundation for their broader economic-focused history of the British Empire. See P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2001). Also see Kenneth Morgan, “Mercantilism and the British empire, 1688-1815,” in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience 1688-1914*, eds., Donald Winch and Patrick K. O’Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 165-192.

¹⁰⁶ Steve Pincus, “Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2012): 3-34.

¹⁰⁷ For a contemporary assessment of mercantilism, and discussions surrounding early modern societies and economies, see Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

addition, London was an essential imperial lynchpin as the political and financial centre. In conceiving of empire in such a way, British rulers and associated theorists certainly were not alone, though on account of the nation's extensive settlements and the trade networks that developed into the eighteenth century, apologists and propagandists of imperial projects typically incorporated vast parts of the world in their appealing patriotic arguments to the general public.

However, this neat theoretical model of a closed-system, with a well-ordered and regulated trade, composed of one's own subjects only, directed from the centre, did not work in practice nearly as well as was conceptualized. In reality, trade networks tended to be far more dynamic than may have been desired politically, as merchants often exceeded the bounds of commercial regulations. This tended to be part of the major criticisms from many dissident writers, who argued that the system as envisioned was not reflective of the actual situation and as such it was, at best, futile to try and make it so, but, at worst, was actually damaging to the British, and broader international, economy.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, there were many ongoing discussions about the effectiveness of policies such as the Navigation Acts, which often ended up being enacted or enforced arbitrarily.¹⁰⁹ Oftentimes too laws were designed for the benefit of a narrow,

¹⁰⁸ For example, the many notable criticisms of mercantilism and empire-building by Roger Coke are presented throughout this dissertation. His writings, alongside those of Henry Martin, on the East India Company, in the four chapter, stand in contrast to the works of individuals such as Charles Davenant and Josiah Child who defended established institutions as well as legal and economic privilege.

¹⁰⁹ There were many critics of the Navigation Acts over the course of their approximately two hundred year existence. In particular, criticism came from merchants and political economists who questioned the wisdom of attempting to restrain or direct trade through specific channels. Additionally, many commentators were concerned that such regulations were designed for the benefit of, or were inadvertently enriching, a few select groups over others, and the nation at large. In addition to the better known criticisms from Josiah Tucker and the nuanced view of Adam Smith, as well as later classical economists, such as David Ricardo, critical commercial writers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries include Sir Dudley North, Roger Coke, Henry Martin, Nicholas Barbon, Nehemiah Grew, Isaac Gervaise, Sir Matthew Decker, and George Whatley. Specific consideration in this regard has been given to the economist Joseph Massie and the sugar islands, in the second chapter. For more on criticisms of the Navigation Acts see Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 135-48 and 217-9; Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, 24-30; Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 13, 20, 26; and Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System*, 38-79. For a historiographical assessment of the Navigation Acts and their impact on colonial development see Larry Sawers, "The Navigation Acts Revisited," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 45, no. 2 (1992): 262-284.

privileged faction at the expense of others. Yet, there was no universal agreement on how an economy should function, or be organized, and by whom. In whose interests the wheels of commerce should turn was an ongoing issue of contention, as many claimed to be operating in the true national interest, or to have best intentions for the kingdom at heart.

Alongside his earlier arguments warning of depopulation in England, William Petty also considered other economic and strategic problems of maintaining overseas dominions. In particular, he was concerned about such great distances combined with a lack of cohesion and unity in policy-making. He noted

that the *Territories* thereunto belonging, are too far asunder, and divided by the Sea into many several *Islands* and Countries; and I may say, into so many Kingdoms, and several Governments, (*viz.*) there by Three distinct Legislative Powers in *England*, *Scotland*, and *Ireland*; the which instead of uniting together, do often cross one anothers Interest; putting Bars and Impediments upon one anothers Trades, not only as if they were Foreigners to each other, but sometimes as Enemies.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, political divisions in the British Isles and abroad were making trade relations more difficult than they should have been. He continued,

England sometimes Prohibiting the Commodities of *Ireland*, and *Scotland*, as of late it did the *Cattle*, *Flesh*, and *Fish*, of *Ireland*; did not only make *Food*, and consequently *Labour*, dearer in *England*, but also hath forced the People of *Ireland*, to fetch those Commodities from *France*, *Holland* and other places, which before was sold them from *England*, to the great prejudice of both Nations.¹¹¹

Thus, restrictions designed to benefit producers at home were proving harmful to the island economies. In addition to driving up costs at home, for labour and food, commercial regulations, in terms of tariffs, were encouraging trade with England's rivals.

¹¹⁰ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 87.

¹¹¹ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 89-90.

Regarding, the levying of duties, he wrote that “[i]t occasions an unnecessary trouble, and charge, in Collecting of Customs, upon Commodities passing between the several Nations.”¹¹² Though he was not especially opposed to the government raising revenues, he was not convinced that this was the best way for them to do so. In fact, the system, as structured, was cumbersome and perhaps cost the kingdom in unseen ways. Further, he noted that “[i]t is a damage to our *Barbadoes*, and other *American* Trades, that the Goods which might pass thence immediately, to several parts of the World, and to be sold at moderate Rates, must first come into *England*, and there pay Duties, and afterwards (if at all) pass into those Countries, whither they might have gone immediately.”¹¹³ From Petty’s perspective, the empire as it was then constructed was not especially beneficial to the people in England. Further, the numerous restraints placed upon trade within the country and abroad, in an attempt to regulate commerce for political benefits as well as for producers, were in many ways inefficient burdens and counterproductive.

Such arguments against customs duties and the Navigation Acts had been made even more strongly by William Petyt in 1680. A notable critic, bemoaning economic decline at home, he challenged the basic premise of the national commercial regulations, asking whether or not they were effective at increasing English trade and bringing in revenue. Regarding the much prized colonial trades, which he believed came at the expense of others, he noted that

[a]ll the Gain *England* can or ever could receive by this Trade, must be in the Return and Result of those Commodities we import from the *Plantations*, (*viz.* Sugars, Tobaccoes, Dying Stuffs,&c.) in Exchange for so much of our Butter, Cheese, Beer, Woollen Cloaths, Hats, Shoes, Iron-work, and other home-Commodities as we Export thither.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 90.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 172-3.

The trade with the colonies, therefore, would be mutually beneficial if England received desired plantation-produced goods in exchange for sending domestic staples. However, he then wrote

[i]t may be Alledged, and must be Confessed, That this Trade hath imployed a good number of Ships, and hath brought in great Customs; but nothing of this is to the present question, being only, Whether it hath advantaged the Nation in its Annual gain of Treasure; which I conceive this Trade hath not, if balanced with the losses the Nation hath received by it.¹¹⁵

According to Petyt, the material gains that the country supposedly should have received as a result of the colonial trade regulations were failing to materialize.

He continued, claiming "...we are forced to Export unto, and furnish these our Plantations with so much less quantities of our own, and so much greater quantities of Forreign Goods than formerly and lately we did."¹¹⁶ In particular, he was critical of the fact that the Irish could undersell the English for certain staples and that the Dutch were able to access sugars and dying stuffs more cheaply than the English, even though England was the colonial power. They effectively benefitted from lower customs duties and, in the case of the Dutch, a much more open trade policy. So, the English traders were being undersold in what were supposed to be their own markets. But, as if to add insult to injury, he further noted that "[t]hen, if this Trade did originally subvert or weaken several better Trades, and besides is now less valuable than it was, instead of an Improvement, it ought to be reckoned amongst the defalcations in our present Trade."¹¹⁷ More, he pointed tragically to lost European markets, sacrificed in favour of colonial ones, and then subsequent English failures to even maintain those lesser trades. His gloomy assessment was reflective, overall, of a nation in severe decline.

A contemporary of Petty and Petyt, Roger Coke, was perhaps one of the fiercest early

¹¹⁵ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 172.

¹¹⁶ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 174.

¹¹⁷ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 175.

critics of mercantilism, in arguing against protectionism and excessive regulation in international commerce. He wrote on a number of political and economic subjects, including the nature and significance of trade, money, and the role of the state in the economy.¹¹⁸ Most notable was his objection to harmful restrictions on trade, through prohibitive tariffs and the Navigation Acts, which were at times arbitrarily enforced, and thus generally encouraged smuggling. Additionally, he despised state encouragement of, and support for, monopolies, at home and abroad. From Coke's perspective, such trade restrictions were merely additional problems that had been piled on top of a struggling nation, already long in decline. Indeed, he likened England to a once wealthy farm that should have been able to supply all neighbouring markets; but, on account of poor laws, it had been neglected by a family, so that they might cultivate wastes elsewhere.¹¹⁹ He blamed this impoverishment, and loss of revenue, upon depopulation, as well as the Navigation Acts, both having contributed to "the abatement of the value of the Lands of the Crown".¹²⁰

In particular, he was worried that the Navigation Acts, which restricted English trade to English ships with a majority of English sailors, were preventing the free flow of trade goods, thereby limiting imports and exports, which ultimately stifled economic expansion.¹²¹ The consequence was "[t]hat the Growths and Manufactures of *England* to be exported in forein Trade, are reduced to a few *English* Merchants, who may take what they please, and at what terms they please; and leave the rest upon the poor Natives hands, without any other possible means of Relief."¹²² In addition, he wrote, "[a]s this Law makes a few Merchants Masters of all the Trade of England: so it makes Mariners the Merchants Masters; for being but a few, and the

¹¹⁸ For more on the early modern British economy, see Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 36-8.

¹²⁰ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 39.

¹²¹ Coke's criticism of the Navigation Acts was briefly addressed in Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*, 119-20.

¹²² Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 49.

Merchant restrained to them, if he gives them not what wages they please, he must not Trade at all.”¹²³ So, these laws had benefitted some select parties, which might, at least partially explain their existence, but that was at the expense of the broader nation, and trade. He also noted

[n]or must any *English* man navigate any English-built ship to trade to any part of *England, Ireland*, or any of our Plantations, unless she be sailed by $\frac{3}{4}$ *English* at least, under no less penalty than loss of Ship, Goods, Guns, Ammunition, and Tackles, though it be evident the Coast of *England* be desolate and almost uninhabited; and the Country as well as Coast is so thin of people, that it is not half peopled.¹²⁴

This problematic shortage would then perpetually weaken the country, in a number of ways.

Notably, he was concerned about the loss of the once favourable timber trade with Norway, as domestic shipping shriveled, and the consequent destruction of English forests made up the difference. He wrote, “[b]efore the Rump made this Law, the Trade to *Norway* for Timber was generally driven by the *English* in barter of our Growths and Manufactures; whereas now it is driven in Dollars and the Treasure of the Nation: and those Growths and Manufactures of *England* which are exported into Norway, are rarely exported but by *Norwegians*.”¹²⁵ Thus, the English were trading less and producing fewer goods to trade with. On one hand, using England’s resources was not necessarily problematic, for “[i]t is agreed upon by all men, that the Timber of *England* is of all other the best for building of Ships;”¹²⁶ though, he continued,

but then it must be understood, that like choice may be had in *England*, as in other places; and so long as we had as good choice in our *English* Timber, as the *Dutch, Dane, and French*, we built better Men of War, and stronger and more durable Merchants Ships, than any of them: But now all the choice Timber of *England* is wasted and consumed, the *Dutch, Dane, and French* have equal choice, as before,

¹²³ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 50.

¹²⁴ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 47-8.

¹²⁵ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 43-4.

¹²⁶ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 45.

it is much to be feared that for the future we shall not long enjoy this advantage, but not be able without excessive charge to build so good Ships as any of them.¹²⁷

While domestic timber reserves had produced ample supplies in the past, extensive deforestation would inevitably limit any new construction of ships or houses, unless foreign supplies were allowed to come to English markets. Such self-imposed autarky had encouraged over-consumption of domestic resources, unnecessarily. He added appallingly “[t]o this condition, (like that of the Children of *Israel* in the *Egyptian* bondage) is the shipping of *England* reduced; our Timber for building ships is all wasted and consumed;”¹²⁸ while at the same time importation was severely restricted. Thus, he complained, the laws had encouraged environmental degradation and inadvertently put England in a very precarious political and economic position. It was, in other words, a recipe for disaster, “and what the fatal consequence hereof will be to this Nation, if no care or provision be had, I almost tremble to consider.”¹²⁹

Coke was very careful in his framing of the arguments against the Navigation Acts. He heaped praise upon the Elizabethan regime for its sound law-making and promotion of English economic interests, at home and abroad. Notably, the major problems stemmed from the Cromwellian era, when these laws restricting trade were enacted and enforced. He wrote that

in two years after the Rumps making this Law, the building of ships became one third penny dearer; and Sea-mens wages so excessive, that we have wholly lost the Trades to *Muscovy* and *Greenland* thereby: and from hence it is, that all forein Commodities imported into England (except in the *Turkey* Trade, and some trifles from *Guiney* and the *East-Indies*) are consumed in *England*; whilst thereby we give the *Dutch* and other Nations a power of driving the Trade of the World, where the Commodities are not *English*, or Subject to the Crown of *England*.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 45-6.

¹²⁸ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 46.

¹²⁹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 45.

¹³⁰ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 48.

But, assuredly, it was not the intention of any English ruler to see the once proud, sea-faring nation's trade diminish and their fleets with them. For, after all,

[t]he Title of this Act is, *An Act for encouraging and encrease of Shipping*; yet it restrains the Navigation of *England* to *English*-built ships, upon no less penalty than confiscation; whereas for above 120 years the want and decay of Timber hath been complained of in Parliament: and how then this can be a means to increase shipping, especially when we have so few builders; I shall be glad to be informed.¹³¹

While the law might have sounded positive, or have been intended to enhance the strength of the kingdom, in practice it was producing the opposite effect. Coke further noted that

we have not built one ship for the Trades of *Greenland*, *Norway*, nor *Muscovy*, since the Act of Navigation; yet if we buy any, or freight any strangers ship for any of the Trades, it is forfeit, with all her Goods, Guns, Lading, Tackle, and Ammunition. So that though we may possibly have some Trade to *Norway* for Timber, when our Prize-ships are spent, upon such terms as the *Norwegians* please, and not otherwise: yet it will be impossible to have any Trade to *Muscovy* or *Greenland*; for the *Moscovite* trades not with us, and the Whales have no shipping at all.¹³²

Therefore, it appeared that these laws, instead of being a stimulant to trade and wealth creation, were actually stunting development. Further, while the English authorities may have captured ships and seized some property, such gains were merely temporary and ultimately destructive for international trade. In addition, he warned that, instead of supporting the nation's military, they were put in potential jeopardy for lack of supplies, as a result of these laws. He wrote

the Importation of Gunpowder from forein parts, was against Law prohibited, and the making thereof within this Realm ingrossed, whereby the price of Gunpowder was excessively raised, many Powder-Mills decayed, the Kingdom very much weakned and indangered, the Merchants thereof much damnified, many Mariners and others taken Prisoners, and brought into miserable Captivity and slavery;

¹³¹ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 50.

¹³² Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 51.

many ships taken by Turkish and other Pyrates, and many other inconveniences have from thence ensued, and more are like to ensue, if they be not timely prevented.¹³³

His arguments against laws such as the Navigation Acts, which he considered “mischievous to this nation”, were thus quite extensive.¹³⁴ These trade restrictions, which were intended to regulate and promote national and imperial trade, to the detriment of rival powers, were in many ways having the opposite effect, with detrimental consequences. Surely, by the 1670s, it was time that such failed Cromwellian era laws be finally rescinded.

Years later, Nehemiah Grew, best known as a botanist and scientist, would make similar arguments, in a manuscript addressed to Queen Anne in 1706-7. This, his comprehensive treatise on economic matters was only recently published for the first time.¹³⁵ Grew was also perhaps an acquaintance of Petty, through the Royal Society.¹³⁶ Most crucial to this discussion was the third part of the letter, “Of Improvements by Sea”, in which he was critical of laws that hampered England’s foreign trade and ability to compete abroad. Though he calculated that English trade had risen over the long-term, he argued that “[w]e are outdone by most other Nations, except in the Trade we have with our own Native Commoditys.”¹³⁷ “And the Gaines of other Nations, especially of the Dutch, have been our Loss.”¹³⁸ In particular, he lamented the loss of numerous European markets, as well as the fisheries.¹³⁹ Though he praised English oak trees writing of “the Plenty we once had, and may have againe, of Ship-Timber”, he noted that, the Navigation Acts

¹³³ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 52.

¹³⁴ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 50. N.B., he noted this in the margin of the page.

¹³⁵ Julian Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development: The means of a most ample increase of the wealth and strength of England 1706-7* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹³⁶ In his treatise, Grew referred to Petty as “my late Honoured Friend” and he used Petty’s work in many of his own calculations, regarding the size, strength, and economic potential of England. See Hoppit, ed., xxi-xxii; 104. Also, see E. A. J. Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith: The Growth of British Economic Thought* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965 [1937]), 119.

¹³⁷ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 57.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 58.

“which confine our Trade to Shipping [*sic*] Built with English Timber, are very disadvantageous.”¹⁴⁰ In order to improve English competitiveness, he argued that they should emulate the Dutch, in terms of ship-building, which would help bring down costs.¹⁴¹ He was also critical of English restrictions on trade with Ireland, chiefly as related to cattle and wool.¹⁴² Such laws, he argued should be repealed, so that “England could Victuall Cheaper than any other Nation.”¹⁴³ He also advocated “[r]epealing the Article in the Act of Navigation, which obliges us to Saile, with 3 4^{ths} of our English Sea-men; who have hereupon raised their wages.”¹⁴⁴

Grew also opposed the notorious domestic and international trade monopolies, which he argued were “a prejudicial Engrossing, not only of Goods, but of Countreys to Trade with.”¹⁴⁵ In particular, he pointed out how the Eastland and East India Companies enjoyed control of vast territories, more than they could ever use, or their stock justify, for extended periods. Instead, he suggested “[t]hat every Merchant in England, should be Free to Trade, wherever any Company has not a Factory allready Settled. Or at least, after 7 years have been granted to the Company, to make proof of their Honesty, Industry, and Skill.”¹⁴⁶ However, he did not believe that the same freedom of trade should be extended to colonists, but rather that trade from the English plantations should be to England alone, as was the case in other nations’ colonies.¹⁴⁷ These notable assessments of the nation, among others, during a turbulent war, revealed Grew’s criticism of established policies related to the economics of early modern imperialism, as well as his strong personal desire for experimentation, in order to encourage greater efficiency, through improvements to existing commercial laws.

¹⁴⁰ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 61.

¹⁴¹ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 71.

¹⁴² Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 59.

¹⁴³ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 71-2.

¹⁴⁴ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 72.

¹⁴⁵ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 70.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Hoppit, ed., *Nehemiah Grew and England’s Economic Development*, 70-1.

The writings of Coke also reveal a severe distrust of the royally chartered monopoly corporations. Though these commercial organizations primarily generated their revenues through trade, they were also political in nature and as such were indelibly linked with the growth of the formal English, and later British, Empire. Regarding these institutions of economic and state policy, he particularly targeted the Royal African Company and the East India Company, in a dedicated treatise.¹⁴⁸ He began his *Reflections*, stating that “[m]onopolies are the most wicked, tyrannical and injurious Usurpations over other Men, and the greatest Violations of the Law of Nature, of any other, and are so much worse than Robbery, by how much the Quality of them is worse, and the Extent farther.”¹⁴⁹ His case, which applied deductive reasoning, was framed around the idea that monopolies relied upon the force of government, through law, in order to exist; and therefore, at their very basis, they undermined natural laws and rights. What then stemmed, perhaps inevitably, from that very initial corruption were issues of more specific and perhaps visible concern, related to individual conduct, and the costs of these monopolies to society more broadly. Notably, Coke highlighted the negative nature of many relationships that individuals involved in these companies developed abroad, and subsequently the consequences of imperial expansion.

His one target, the Royal African Company, was an amalgamation of a number of separate trading interests to the west coast of Africa.¹⁵⁰ The company was incorporated in 1672 as a partnership between the Stuart monarchy and leading merchants, based in London, and was

¹⁴⁸ Roger Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies. With Animadversions, concerning the Naturalization of Foreigners* (London, 1695).

¹⁴⁹ Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies*, 1.

¹⁵⁰ For a recently published history of the company, including an assessment of anti-monopoly criticism, see William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Also, for a comparative study of the Royal African Company and the East India Company within the context of the Glorious Revolution, see William A. Pettigrew and George W. Van Cleve, “Parting Companies: The Glorious Revolution, Company Power, and Imperial Mercantilism,” *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 3 (2014): 617-638.

led by James, then the Duke of York. The expectation was that this organization would be better able to manage threats on the high seas from the Dutch and command greater authority in dealing with African merchants. Primarily, the company would deal in the expanding slave trade as well as in ivory and gold. The company was one of two that received criticism from Coke, and though it was perhaps the less significant one, it reflected the importance of the established “Old World” African markets, alongside Asia. Though the company was granted tremendous powers to exercise at its discretion, Coke’s critique was relatively confined to the economic realm. His primary concern was that the company merely limited trade with Africa, as part of the broader Atlantic triangular trade networks. He did not make a humanitarian case, as later theorists would, especially from the 1750s onwards, against the injustices of the slave trade.¹⁵¹

In his published 1692 letter he made the case that the volume of trade to and from Africa was diminished because of this monopoly. He stated that

the *African* Company is Injurious to the Nation in the Vent of our Native Commodities; and in our Trades to the Plantations; nor is this Company less injurious to the Nation in their returns: For a Worker in Ivory assured me within three days, that the Company has raised the prizes of Elephants Teeth, threefold more than when the Trade was free; and what is this but to impose a dearness upon all Ivory Manufacturers at Home, and to Establish the Foreign Vent of them to the *Dutch, French*, and other Nations to our Loss and undoing of Thousands of people, who other ways might be employed in them.¹⁵²

His conclusion was that the establishment of this corporation acted as a restraint on trade, at least the legal trade, which negatively affected importers and exporters in England. A similar, and more pointed case was made in his 1695 *Reflections*. He first complained that “[b]efore this *African* Company was Incorporated, the Cloathiers in *Suffolk* yearly vended 25000 Cloths to

¹⁵¹ The case against slavery and the slave trade is addressed more substantially in the second chapter.

¹⁵² Roger Coke, *A reply to an answer from a friend, to the apology for the English nation, that the trade to the East-Indies and Africa should be free* (London, 1692), 67.

Africa,” but since incorporation “they were not permitted, and the Company would take off but 500, and those at scarce half the Prizes [*sic*] they were sold before.”¹⁵³ In addition, the amount of trade in gold dust, bees’ wax, and ivory was suffering. In particular, he lamented that “several of our Artificers in *Ivory*, for Years... were necessitated to go into *Holland*, and work them there, and then bring the Manufactures into *England*.”¹⁵⁴ His calculated, though dispassionate, criticism about the slave trade was also notable. He pointed out how the prices had risen 30%, in terms of English pounds, for slaves being shipped to the plantations. This would raise the prices of goods produced there to where they could easily be undersold by French or Dutch interests.¹⁵⁵

Coke was not alone in voicing his criticism, and the company would not last long as a royal monopoly. In practice, smugglers had continually defied trade restrictions and the RAC privileges. By 1698 this reality was legally acknowledged and the monopoly officially broken. Though the company remained in business until 1752, it faded rapidly from view from that moment. This was quite unlike the case of the EIC, however; against which Coke made similar arguments.¹⁵⁶ Notably, his case against the African Company constituted a critique of the existent conception of a closed-mercantile empire, but not against the slave trade, the associated colonies, or imperialism more generally. In fact, his case for greater African trade, by itself, could have even served as a justification, or a defence, of expanded commercial and imperial activity. However, based on Coke’s numerous writings, it was quite clear that he largely perceived overseas formal empire negatively, especially when it cost England money.

In addition to Coke’s publications, these emerging economic debates were also present in the heterodox writings of three less well-known individuals, Nicholas Barbon, Sir Dudley North,

¹⁵³ Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies*, 10.

¹⁵⁴ Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Coke’s arguments against the EIC are presented in the fourth chapter, alongside those of many other theorists.

and Henry Martin.¹⁵⁷ There were notable areas of disagreement between them, though in the more numerous areas where they agreed, they were perhaps out of step with mainstream or politically accepted Restoration period views. Information regarding these individuals is fragmentary in nature, and even less is known about those with whom they associated or shared private conversations on these topics. This is in sharp contrast with more prominent figures, such as Josiah Child, who bequeathed large personal libraries and extensive memoirs or correspondences. Yet, it is still possible to glean a sense of understanding about the world around them and reflect upon the significance, and likely implications, of the policy prescriptions they were advising, within a broader historical context. In considering their different vocations in life, and perhaps despite imperfections or inconsistencies in their works, these men made important contributions in broadening the discussion of mercantile policies in their own day and in so doing helped to pioneer the development of political economy as a distinct field of inquiry.

Barbon acquired the reputation as an unscrupulous businessman and builder by trade, who ran up debts which he never paid back during his lifetime. His *Discourse of Trade*, published in 1690, was one of his two best known works, the other being about the coinage. Though he did not practise for very long, his early training was actually in medicine, which he had studied in Holland.¹⁵⁸ Instead, he engaged himself in many business endeavours, particularly in construction and insurance in the aftermath of the Great Fire. He has generally received negative treatment by historians, such as William Letwin, for his relatively unscientific approach to studying trade and economics.¹⁵⁹ However, in seeking to revise this view, James Ullmer

¹⁵⁷ They produced, the following works, respectively, Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Tho. Milbourn, 1690); Sir Dudley North, *Discourses Upon Trade; Principally Directed to the Cases of the Interest, Coinage, Clipping, Increase of Money* (London: Printed for Tho. Basset, 1691); and Henry Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade* (London: Printed for A. and J. Churchill, 1701).

¹⁵⁸ James H. Ullmer, "The Macroeconomic Thought of Nicholas Barbon," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 29, no. 1 (2007): 102.

¹⁵⁹ For his assessment of Barbon, see Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics*, 48-75.

emphasized the significance of his medical background and how much of his analysis was done holistically, in the same way as a pathologist would study a body.¹⁶⁰ Barbon's intention to provide a conceptual overview of economy was clearly stated in his preface, where he was critical of commercial writers employed by self-interested parties, which drove the divisive nature of economic debates. He identified this as the reason why it was very difficult to examine the concept of trade in its entirety, or in any objective way.

Barbon sat briefly in Parliament for Bramber, a rotten borough in Sussex, from 1690-1698, though his record there was scant and there has been some historiographical confusion as to whether he was a Whig or Tory. Elgin Williams pointed out that both E. J. Johnson and Jacob Viner had labelled him a Tory; this could be traced back to W. J. Ashley, who categorized him as such because of his associations with Child, Davenant, and North.¹⁶¹ However, he was listed as a Whig in the Parliamentary Register.¹⁶² In many ways, though, his official association, or party affiliation, was not especially important, since he never played a significant role in Parliamentary debates. Additionally, he was operating within the broader context of Court and Country distinctions, and the ever-shifting factions and private loyalties have to be considered alongside any political or ideological divisions.¹⁶³ He forged some personal relationships in the House, but really only worked on particular issues that interested him or through which he could derive some personal benefit. In fact, his main motivation for entering Parliamentary politics altogether

¹⁶⁰ Ullmer, "The Macroeconomic Thought of Nicholas Barbon," 101-2.

¹⁶¹ Elgin Williams, "Nicholas Barbon: An Early Economic Realist," *Southern Economic Journal* 11, no. 1 (1944): 53. Jacob Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960 [1955]), 117-8. He also cited William James Ashley, "The Tory Origin of Free Trade Policy," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 11 (1897): 335-371, in which Barbon featured heavily.

¹⁶² Ullmer, "The Macroeconomic Thought of Nicholas Barbon," 103; also, see Hayton, D. W., Eveline Cruikshanks, and Stuart Handley, eds., *The House of Commons, 1690-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3:132.

¹⁶³ For more on the history of the Glorious Revolution period and aristocratic politics see Julian Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty?: England 1689-1727* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

may have simply been to avoid creditors.¹⁶⁴

Sir Dudley North was a lifelong merchant who made his fortune with the Turkey Company.¹⁶⁵ Much of what we know of him came from his younger brother Roger, who kept his notes and letters, wrote a biography of him, and was the driving force behind the publication of the *Discourses Upon Trade*.¹⁶⁶ Letwin, one of the foremost scholars on his life and significance, has pointed out that Dudley has perhaps received too much credit as a great intellect and advocate of free trade. He instead credited Roger with being the author of the preface and postscript where the core ideas were most clearly spelled out and from where Dudley has chiefly received his historical reputation as a great seventeenth century economist.¹⁶⁷ Letwin's examination of the historiography revealed considerable myth-making with respect to Dudley, though it did not remove the ideas contained in the tract nor diminish their overall significance. He merely argued that Roger should probably enjoy the historical reputation as having had a great mind. Letwin did, however, point out that the work did not have much of an impact when published. It may have even been deliberately suppressed, since it may not have been widely circulated at the time, and perhaps was not even known until the early nineteenth century.¹⁶⁸

Each of these writers provided a general perspective on trade, and all of them made the claims that they wanted to explain the concept in its entirety and with impartiality. A process of deductive reasoning was evident, as each sought to move from general principles into specific lines of inquiry. For the most part they were in clear agreement on the issue that trade was a

¹⁶⁴ Hayton et al., eds., *The House of Commons, 1690-1715*, 3:131-3.

¹⁶⁵ A biographical study of Sir Dudley North comes from Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics*, 182-204. For a more recent assessment of him, see Richard Grassby, *The English Gentleman in Trade: The Life and Works of Sir Dudley North, 1641-1691* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

¹⁶⁶ For an autobiographical view of Roger North and his Tory perspective of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Roger North, *Notes of Me: The Autobiography of Roger North*, ed. Peter Millard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

¹⁶⁷ William Letwin, "The Authorship of Sir Dudley North's Discourses on Trade," *Economica*, New Series 18, no. 69 (1951): 43-50.

¹⁶⁸ Letwin, "The Authorship of Sir Dudley North's Discourses on Trade," 38-42.

natural process that could be hindered by state involvement, or allowed to flourish. Barbon stated that “[t]rade is the Making, and Selling of one sort of Goods for another,”¹⁶⁹ that “[t]he Use of Trade is to make, and provide things Necessary,”¹⁷⁰ and “[t]he chief End or Business of Trade, is to make a profitable Bargain”.¹⁷¹ North wrote “[t]rade is nothing else but a Commutation of Superfluities; for instance: I give of mine, what I can spare, for somewhat of yours, which I want, and you can spare.”¹⁷² With respect to its growth and benefits he added, “[c]ommerce and Trade, as hath been said, first springs from the Labour of Man, but as Stock increases, it dilates more and more.”¹⁷³ The essayist Henry Martin sought to explore these issues further, through a specific discussion of the East India trade, which he argued should have been opened up to all English merchants, so that England might benefit even more than it already did.¹⁷⁴

Understanding what drove the exchange of goods between individuals and kingdoms, from one location to another, and why so, was a crucial starting point. A proponent of the notion of subjective value, Barbon stated that “[t]he Value of all Wares arise from their Use; Things of no Use, have no Value”.¹⁷⁵ Further, “[t]he Use of Things are to supply the Wants and Necessities of Man... the Wants of the Body, and the Wants of the Mind”.¹⁷⁶ The first related to the necessities of life, namely food, clothes, and lodging, each of which was crucial, even for individuals living at the most subsistence level. Yet, he was more concerned with the mind, or the “Appetite of the Soul,” in which wants and desires were unlimited.¹⁷⁷ He later listed in great

¹⁶⁹ Nicholas Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Tho. Milbourn, 1690), 1.

¹⁷⁰ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 34.

¹⁷¹ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 2.

¹⁷² Sir Dudley North, *Discourses Upon Trade; Principally Directed to the Cases of the Interest, Coynage, Clipping, Increase of Money* (London: Printed for Tho. Basset, 1691), 2.

¹⁷³ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Henry Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade* (London: Printed for A. and J. Churchill, 1701). Martin and his radical treatise on the East India Company are explored more specifically in the fourth chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 13-4.

¹⁷⁷ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 14-5.

detail many potential trades people could be involved in, to satisfy these needs and wants, writing, therefore, that “those Trades that are employ’d to express the Pomp of Life, are Infinite”.¹⁷⁸ From this he was able to draw the conclusion “[t]hus Busie Man is employed, and it is for his own Benefit; For by Trade, the Natural Stock of the Country is improved.”¹⁷⁹ On this issue Barbon, was in agreement with North, who wrote, similarly, “[t]he main spur to Trade, or rather to Industry and Ingenuity, is the exorbitant Appetites of Men, which they will take pains to gratifie, and so be disposed to work, when nothing else will incline them to it; for did Men content themselves with bare Necessaries, we should have a poor World.”¹⁸⁰

For the most part they agreed on the nature of trade, though there were some slight differences on what drove an economy, as well as the importance of supply and demand. Here they each took a slightly different track. While both North and Barbon recognized the importance of domestic economic activity as the basis of foreign trade, Barbon explicitly advocated greater consumption to spur economic development. North instead wrote that “[i]n the process of time, if the People apply themselves industriously, they will not only be supplied, but advance to a great overplus of Forreign Goods, which improv’d, will enlarge their Trade....”¹⁸¹ Here he argued the importance of producing more than consuming and pointed out that England should be able to sell the cloth, tin, and lead they produced, as well as re-sell the sugar, pepper, and calicoes that they imported. “So that an active prudent Nation groweth rich, and the sluggish Drones grow poor; and there cannot be any Policy other than this, which being introduc’d and practis’d, shall avail to increase Trade and Riches.”¹⁸² Barbon agreed that “[t]he Native Staple of Each Country, is the Foundation of it’s Forreign *Trade*: And no Nation have any Forreign

¹⁷⁸ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 35.

¹⁷⁹ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 35-6.

¹⁸⁰ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 14.

¹⁸¹ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 13.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Commodities, but what are at first brought in by the Exchange of the Native.”¹⁸³

He later expanded upon this view, writing that “[t]he Chief Causes that Promote *Trade*, (not to mention Good Government, Peace, and Scituation, with other Advantages) are Industry in the Poor, and Liberality in the rich”.¹⁸⁴ His further discussion related to the great benefits of prodigality to a trader, while explaining about “a Conspiracy of the Rich Men to be Covetous” which he claimed “would be as dangerous to a Trading State, as a Forreign War; for though they themselves get nothing by their Covetousness, nor grow the Richer, yet they would make the Nation poor, and the Government great Losers in the Customs and Excises that ariseth from Expence.”¹⁸⁵ With respect to industry specific recommendations, he wrote: “[t]hose Expences that most Promote *Trade*, are the Cloaths and Lodging”,¹⁸⁶ which he dealt with in turn. His reasoning was that “[f]ashion or the alteration of Dress, is a great Promoter of *Trade*, because it occasions the Expence of Cloaths, before the Old ones are worn out: It is the Spirit and Life of *Trade*; It makes a Circulation, and gives a Value by Turns, to all sorts of Commodities; keeps the great Body of *Trade* in Motion”.¹⁸⁷ Of his own profession, he wrote “[b]uilding is the chiefest Promoter of *Trade*; it Implies a greater Number of Trades and People, than Feeding or Cloathing”.¹⁸⁸ Here he advocated greater government spending to encourage building and improve urban infrastructure, in emulation of what was being done in Holland. So, he was effectively making what is now known as the demand-side argument, or promoting spending to stimulate demand. His notion of a body of trade also bore an important similarity to more contemporary conceptions of a circular flow in economic activity. This aspect of his article has

¹⁸³ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 6-7.

¹⁸⁴ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 62.

¹⁸⁵ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 63.

¹⁸⁶ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 64.

¹⁸⁷ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 65.

¹⁸⁸ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 68.

made him especially popular with Keynesian economists and like-minded historians.¹⁸⁹

Though North and Barbon took a different approach on the issue of spending, as opposed to saving or investing, and the effect interest rates would have on the economy, as well as the nature of money itself, common agreement was found on the notion that places that did not trade, or where it was restricted, would grow poor. Neither at home, nor in the broader world, were markets static in nature. Engaging with others was essential, and this meant that trade flows would occur in multiple directions. North also defended the importance of domestic commerce against more dismissive major traders, such as Josiah Child, writing,

[i]t will be objected, That the Home Trade signifies nothing to the enriching a Nation, and that the increase of Wealth comes out of Forreign Trade. I answer, That what is commonly understood by Wealth, viz. Plenty, Bravery, Gallantry, &c. cannot be maintained without Forreign Trade. Nor in truth, can Forreign Trade subsist without the Home Trade, both being connected together.¹⁹⁰

A more traditional mercantilist, or a politically popular protectionist, position may have considered the benefits of restricting imports, to prevent specie from following out of the kingdom, to outweigh the importation of commodities or manufactured goods from abroad. However, from North's perspective, it flowed that foreign, or international, trade was merely an extension of domestic commercial activity and should not be treated as a separate economic or political issue. He made the analogy that "[a] Nation in the World, as to Trade, is in all respects like a City in a Kingdom, or Family in a City."¹⁹¹ Thus, the same philosophy to encourage engagement in business should be applied in both cases. He stated

[t]hat Laws to hamper Trade, whether Forreign, or Domestick, relating to Money, or other Merchandizes, are not Ingredients to make a People Rich, and abounding in Money, and Stock. But if Peace be procured, easie Justice maintained, the

¹⁸⁹ Ullmer, "The Macroeconomic Thought of Nicholas Barbon," 101; 111.

¹⁹⁰ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 15-6.

¹⁹¹ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 14.

Navigation not clogg'd, the Industrious encouraged...the Stock of the Nation will increase, and consequently Gold and Silver abound, Interest be easie, and Money cannot be wanting.¹⁹²

Generally, there was no fear of foreign imports by these individuals on the grounds that something had to be given in exchange, and since merchants would only engage in mutually beneficial arrangements there should be no cause for concern. Barbon wrote “[t]he Prohibition of *Trade*, is the Cause of its Decay; for all Forreign Wares are brought in by the Exchange of the Native” and any “[p]rofit that was gained by such Trades, and laid out amongst other Traders, is Lost.”¹⁹³ Further, “[t]he particular *Trades* that expect an Advantage by such Prohibition, are often mistaken”,¹⁹⁴ since it would not necessarily increase demand for domestic goods. He went on to explain how all individuals had wants, regardless of nationality and that many wanted English goods, just as they desired goods from abroad. He also noted that if they prohibited trade items, they would merely provoke retaliation from European rivals, diminishing commerce. Instead, he fell back on the idea that a high duty would be preferable, to favour domestic goods, though he did not consider the possibilities of retaliatory duties or smuggling. On this point, economic historian Douglas Irwin has referred to him as a relatively conventional thinker.¹⁹⁵

In certain regards, North's sentiments were similar, in “[t]hat there can be no Trade unprofitable to the Publick; for if any prove so, men leave it off; and wherever the Traders thrive, the Publick, of which they are a part, thrives also.”¹⁹⁶ Specifically referring to foreign business, he noted “[t]hat Money Exported in Trade is an increase to the Wealth of the Nation; but spent in War, and Payments abroad, is so much Impoverishment. In short, That all favour to one Trade or

¹⁹² North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, 22-3.

¹⁹³ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 71.

¹⁹⁴ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 74.

¹⁹⁵ Douglas A. Irwin, *Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 52. Regarding the significance of trade for the survival and success of early modern states, historian Istvan Hont noted the influence of Barbon's discourse upon David Hume in Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 8-9.

¹⁹⁶ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, viii, in the preface.

Interest against another, is an Abuse, and cuts so much of Profit from the Publick.”¹⁹⁷

Most notable was also this common association of trade with peace, and of the civilizing process that Barbon worked to demonstrate. Beyond satisfying human needs and wants “[a]nother benefit of *Trade*, is, That, it doth not only bring Plenty, but hath occasioned Peace.”¹⁹⁸ He then provided a lengthy example of a warring civilization, which may be assumed to be the Vikings, that was pacified as they settled down to cultivate land and engage in trade. He continued to describe this change in priorities and the subsequent benefits; “[b]esides *Trade* Allows better Price for Labourers, than is paid for Fighting: So it is become more in the Interest of Mankind to live at home in Peace, than to seek their fortunes abroad by Wars.”¹⁹⁹ He claimed that this would even provide more revenues for the government, and where necessary allow them to procure weapons in times of war, or in preparation for one.

His notions of a peaceful and prosperous state of being were then extended beyond any particular boundaries, in an illustration of a growing kingdom, enlarging its dominions. Here, Barbon’s discussion of two competing variants of empire was particularly insightful, where he condemned traditional imperialism and defended commercial expansion at sea as an alternative. He wrote “*Trade* may be assistant to the enlarging of Empire; and if an Universal Empire, or Dominion of very Large Extent, can again be raised in the World, It seems more probable to be done by the Help of *Trade*; By the Increase of Ships at Sea, than by Arms at Land”.²⁰⁰ He then discussed at length the nature of the Roman Empire, and a tyranny juxtaposed against a free society. In specific reference to the Turkish and English governments, respectively, he wrote “[t]he one is best fitted to raise Dominion by Armies... The other is Best for *Trade*; for men are

¹⁹⁷ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, ix, in the preface.

¹⁹⁸ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 37.

¹⁹⁹ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 38-9.

²⁰⁰ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 40-1.

most industrious, where they are most free, and secure to enjoy the Effects of their Labours.”²⁰¹

He claimed that a new Rome could not emerge in his day for “[i]t is as difficult to keep a Country in Subjection, as to Conquer it. The People are too Numerous to be kept in Obedience”.²⁰² Furthermore, conquering others by force of arms was vicious, destructive, and would provide no advantage, since

[t]o destroy the greatest Part, were too Bloody, and Inhuman; To Burn the Towns, and Villages, and so force the People to remove, Is to lose the greatest share in Conquest; for the People are the Riches and the Strength of the Country, And it is not much more Advantage to a Prince, to have a Title to Lands, in *Terra Incognita*, As to Countries without People.²⁰³

He also made the somewhat spurious claim that “[t]o Conquer, and leave them Free, only paying Tribute and Homage, Is the same as not to Conquer them”,²⁰⁴ though he did then note that the Romans did not follow this policy for long. This was the problem of a land-based empire, that it would expand and become tyrannical, but “[t]hese are the difficulties of enlarging Dominion at Land, but are not Impediments to its Rise at Sea: For those Things that Obstruct the Growth of Empire at Land, do rather Promote its Growth at Sea.”²⁰⁵ This strong distinction he wished to create was further demonstrated in that

[b]y the one, the Cities, Towns and Villages are burnt, to thin the People, that they may be the easier Governed, and kept into Subjection; by the other, the Cities must be enlarged, and New ones built: Instead of Banishing the People, they must be continued, in their Possession, or invited to the Seat of Empire; by the one, the Inhabitants are enslaved, by the other, they are made Free...²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 51.

²⁰² Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 55.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 56.

²⁰⁵ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 57.

²⁰⁶ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 58.

His argument was that a peaceable kingdom would naturally draw people into it, and so expand its dominion in the world. His vision here resembled something of a thalassocracy, akin to the ancient Delian League. Though framed in different terms, this conclusion was also in a similar vein to an earlier generation of authors, including James Harrington, who wrote on the concept of establishing utopia in his *The Commonwealth of Oceana*.²⁰⁷ Such a harmonious place would be lightly and benevolently ruled, while enjoying commercial supremacy. These ideas had previously also been discussed at length by Roger Coke, in his masterful treatise, where he explained the two options, as follows:

[t]he encrease of the strength and power of Princes and States happens but two wayes; either by Conquest, from whence misery, slaughter, devastation, poverty, hatred, and unwilling and forceable subjection ensue; or by receiving the voluntary subjection of such, who seek Protection from those Princes and States where their interest may be more improved, and they more securely protected in their lives and fortunes. How much then is this way of acquiring Dominion, by security, Riches, Peace and Love, to be preferred before the other, which never comes to pass but by misery, Poverty and force? Add hereunto the dangers which attend Princes and States in acquiring Dominion by Conquest; whereas no Prince or State incur any danger by acquiring Dominion over such Persons who seek to improve the interest, as well as power of such Princes and States who receive and entertain them.²⁰⁸

Thus, Coke advocated for peaceable interactions and just rule as ways of extending English influence, as people would willingly come to the country or seek political incorporation. Barbon likewise claimed that England could be such a utopia, as it was an island, and therefore without the need for standing armies. “Besides,” he wrote, “Merchants and Souldiers never thrive in the

²⁰⁷ James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (London: Printed for D. Pakeman, 1658). This treatise, along with Harrington’s other famous work *A System of Politics*, which was written in 1661, but not published until 1700, was notably assessed in J. G. A. Pocock, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). In this work, Pocock contrasted Harrington’s notions of utopia with those of earlier theorists Thomas More and Francis Bacon.

²⁰⁸ Coke, *A Treatise Wherein is demonstrated*, 11.

same Place.”²⁰⁹ This was what historian Arthur Williamson has described as notions of establishing a new empire to end empire. On the surface, such designs appear counter-intuitive, though they would later serve as a basis for English justifications of their empire.²¹⁰ Of course, it is crucial to distinguish between philosophical ideals and real world activities, especially when there was a wide gulf between them. In this regard, these writers were clearly opposed to military conquests, though much of Britain’s empire was not peacefully acquired or maintained.

Few in this period would dispute the overall importance of trade, in the abstract, though personal interests and rivalries typically dominated the discussions. For example, domestic wool manufacturers sought protection from foreign competition, while linen drapers argued for these same cheaper imports. East India Company officials penned arguments espousing the great benefits of foreign trade, but far from arguing for free trade, Josiah Child and others were only interested in their own freedom to trade, without competition. According to Viner, Barbon appeared to be in this camp, though Williams has argued that it would not be in the spirit or tenor of his *Discourse*.²¹¹ Barbon’s anti-monopoly sentiments were revealed in his argument on one body attempting to corner a market, whether in a foreign trade or domestic industry. He wrote “[t]hat Forreign Staples are uncertain Wealth”,²¹² since the sole possession of something would not last forever, amid an ever-present competition.

North did not explicitly come out against the East India Company monopoly in his *Discourses*. But, his enmity for it was well known, given his background with the Levant Company and the fact that the privileges the EIC enjoyed were certainly incompatible with his

²⁰⁹ Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 60.

²¹⁰ Arthur H. Williamson, “An Empire to End Empire: The Dynamic of Early Modern British Expansion,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68, no. 1-2 (2005): 227-256.

²¹¹ Williams, “Nicholas Barbon: An Early Economic Realist,” 53.

²¹² Barbon, *A Discourse of Trade*, 7.

principled arguments, notably in the preface. For instance, there was a strong criticism of those who sought to use the force of law for their own benefit in commerce. He wrote

[f]or whenever Men consult for the Publick Good, as for the advancement of Trade, wherein all are concerned, they usually esteem the immediate Interest of their own to be the common Measure of Good and Evil. And there are many, who to gain a little in their own Trades, care not how much others suffer; and each Man strives, that all others may be forc'd, in their dealings, to act subserviently for his Profit, but under the covert of the Publick.²¹³

While the criticism from individuals such as North may be discounted as being parochial, or purely motivated out of self-interest, his publication does provide some insight into a broader discussion about the nature of monopolies, in general, and the EIC in particular. His writings, among others, revealed a severe distrust of these institutions and the nature of the relationships that individuals involved within these companies developed abroad, and subsequently the consequences of imperial expansion. The East India Company, in particular, would increasingly dominate discussions in Parliament, and in the press throughout the eighteenth century.²¹⁴

Somewhat varied arguments would be made against the Hudson's Bay Company in North America in the 1740s and 1750s, by those who charged the Company was limiting geographic discoveries and operating as a restraint on empire-building and economic expansion.²¹⁵ Usually criticisms were leveled on a specific case by case basis, though a broader and more general discussion about the nature and existence of monopolies and their connections with early modern empire-building emerged most profoundly at the end of the seventeenth century.

Individuals such as Roger Coke, Nicholas Barbon, Sir Dudley North, and Henry Martin

²¹³ North, *Discourses Upon Trade*, vii, in the preface.

²¹⁴ Criticisms of the East India Company are specifically addressed in the fourth chapter. For more on the EIC, see Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993); and H. V. Bowen, *Revenue & Reform: The Indian problem in British politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²¹⁵ Two of the strongest critics of the HBC were Arthur Dobbs and Josiah Tucker. This is addressed in the third chapter. Also, see Glyndwr Williams, "The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Critics in the Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 20 (1970): 149-171.

all made significant contributions in the intellectual development and understanding of political economy. Though some of their conclusions with respect to trade, money, and the role of the state in the economy were different, they shared similar objections to monopolies and the harmful nature of tariffs and other prohibitions. Their works, though perhaps little appreciated in their own time, or which may have even only reflected a short-term and self-interested perspective, still constitute part of a much broader and ongoing debate over mercantilism and imperial policy in early modern Britain and reflect an evolution of understanding and heightened sophistication of argumentation in economic philosophy.

For many students of history the writings of Adam Smith and the emergence of classical economics mark a significant turning point in western intellectual discourse. His 1776 *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* had a tremendous impact and has served as a scathing rebuke of mercantile policies which hindered economic and material progress, as well as the creation or accumulation of wealth.²¹⁶ Smith's inquiry was, of course, rooted in the philosophical, dealing initially with questions of morality and moving from first principles into his analysis of commerce, as a real-world manifestation of human endeavours with the purpose of economic gain and self-improvement. His critique of political interventions, which he saw as interfering with natural economic forces, considering their often haphazard and destructive natures, has earned him the reputation as an advocate of *laissez-faire* economics and a critic of early modern imperialism.²¹⁷ Certainly, such praise is not without warrant; his work was a

²¹⁶ Donald Winch paid special attention to Smith and the mercantile system in Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, 6-24. Winch has more recently considered Smith alongside Edmund Burke and Thomas Malthus in Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Also, see Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 177-87.

²¹⁷ Indeed, Smith's writings have often served as a starting point for later historians and theorists interested in examining anti-imperial sentiments and discourses, particularly for the nineteenth century and beyond. For instance see, Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, 2nd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in*

significant achievement, and notably built upon his 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. However, he was not alone in his advocacy of changing the relationship between the state and economics, primarily by reducing the role of the government. For instance, in arguing his case against monopolies, or in favour of free trade between individuals, as well as nations, he was not alone, nor was his work especially original.²¹⁸ In fact, many of his conclusions could better be described as an effective synthesis and elucidation of the work of earlier cited theorists, such as William Petty and Roger Coke. The main difference would come in the real impact his work made within intellectual circles and would later have in the halls of Parliament.

Smith's major economic treatise provides an exceptional history of European colonization and examines the consequences of the acquisition of overseas territories. Regarding imperialism from a theoretical standpoint, he was rather neutral on whether or not empires were positive or negative forces in the world, indicating that it really depended on the circumstance.²¹⁹ More specifically, with respect to European colonization, and especially in the case of Britain, he provided an assessment of the nature of trade relations and commercial regulations. In terms of nations monopolizing trade with their colonies, he argued that

[t]his advantage, however, will, perhaps, be found to be rather what may be called a relative than an absolute advantage; and to give a superiority to the country which enjoys it, rather by depressing the industry and produce of other countries, than by raising those of that particular country above what they would naturally rise to in the case of a free trade.²²⁰

Late-Victorian Britain (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011). Within the broader European context see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²¹⁸ Andrea Maneschi, "The Tercentenary of Henry Martyn's Considerations Upon the East-India Trade," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 24, Issue 2 (2002): 238.

²¹⁹ Smith's more specific critiques of the different aspects of Britain's eighteenth century empire, regarding the nature of the sugar colonies, based upon slave labour; trade patterns and governance challenges with the American colonies; as well as his criticism of the East India Company and tyranny in India, are respectively addressed in the second, third, and fourth chapters.

²²⁰ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:195.

Gaining such a commercial advantage over rivals, therefore, was clearly an objective of empire-building, but,

[i]n order, however, to obtain this relative advantage in the colony trade, in order to execute the invidious and malignant project of excluding as much as possible other nations from any share in it, England, there are very probable reasons for believing, has not only sacrificed a part of the absolute advantage which she, as well as every other nation, might have derived from that trade, but has subjected herself both to an absolute and to a relative disadvantage in almost every other branch of trade.²²¹

So, in gaining this particular advantage there was a cost, which was not always considered by advocates of colonial trade, but was heavily emphasized by its long-standing critics.

Smith continued his assessment, noting that “this monopoly has been continually drawing capital from all other trades to be employed in that of the colonies,”²²² and making the case that there were clearly winners and losers from this arrangement. While the colonies were clear beneficiaries, it was less certain that Britain, itself, was as well. He wrote critically that,

Great Britain having engrossed to herself almost the whole of what may be called the foreign trade of the colonies, and her capital not having increased in the same proportion as the extent of that trade, she could not carry it on without continually withdrawing from other branches of trade some part of the capital which had before been employed in them, as well as with-holding from them a great deal more which would otherwise have gone to them.²²³

Thus, colonial trade could not be carried on successfully while fully maintaining pre-existing European trade links. In effect, it drew in resources from where they might otherwise have been used, with possibly greater results. He then commented on the reasons for this, writing,

[s]ince the establishment of the act of navigation, accordingly, the colony trade has been continually increasing, while many other branches of foreign trade,

²²¹ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:196-7.

²²² Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:198.

²²³ Ibid.

particularly of that to other parts of Europe, have been continually decaying. Our manufactures for foreign sale, instead of being suited, as before the act of navigation, to the neighbouring market of Europe, or to the more distant one of the countries which lie round the Mediterranean sea, have, the greater part of them, been accommodated to the still more distant one of the colonies, to the market in which they have the monopoly, rather than to that in which they have many competitors.²²⁴

So, Smith's conclusion was that the Navigation Acts had distorted English trade, without necessarily improving, or expanding, it. However, he noted that the colony trade, being generally smaller and less competitive, with higher rates of return, offered great incentives for those who could take advantage. Further, his assessment did not make him an advocate for repeal as he also defended those laws on the basis of national defence. In particular, he wrote that "[t]he act of navigation is not favourable to foreign commerce, or to the growth of that opulence which can arise from it."²²⁵ He was certainly aware of the restrictive effects of the laws on trade and industry, as he famously noted "[b]y diminishing the number of sellers, therefore, we necessarily diminish that of buyers, and are thus likely not only to buy foreign goods dearer, but to sell our own cheaper, than if there was a more perfect freedom of trade. As defence, however, is of much more importance than opulence, the act of navigation is, perhaps, the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England."²²⁶ In this regard, he did note that overall international trade volumes might have been reduced, and rivalries may have been aggravated by such restrictions, but that those were predictable and justifiable consequences.

In addition to laws that prohibited, or restricted, foreign trade, Smith also commented upon the nature of commercial monopolies and how they had long persisted throughout

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:45.

²²⁶ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:46.

Europe.²²⁷ Such bodies effectively distorted the marketplace, though this was neither always immediately evident nor was it a concern for many involved parties. He noted that

THE superiority which the industry of the towns has every where in Europe over that of the country, is not altogether owing to corporations and corporation laws. It is supported by many other regulations. The high duties upon foreign manufactures and upon all goods imported by alien merchants, all tend to the same purpose. Corporation laws enable the inhabitants of towns to raise their prices, without fearing to be under-sold by the free competition of their own countrymen. Those other regulations secure them equally against that of foreigners. The enhancement of price occasioned by both is every where finally paid by the landlords, farmers, and labourers of the country, who have seldom opposed the establishment of such monopolies. They have commonly neither inclination nor fitness to enter into combinations; and the clamour and sophistry of merchants and manufacturers easily persuade them that the private interest of a part, and of a subordinate part of the society, is the general interest of the whole.²²⁸

Smith's eloquent criticism of sectional interests influencing, or wholly determining policy-making, was perhaps one of the best. Still, many earlier authors, including Roger Coke and Henry Martin, had previously argued much the same case, one that effectively charged that special, concentrated and lucrative benefits would accrue to a few, while the unsuspecting or unaware public would consequently pay higher prices. Further, it was highly improbable that the nationwide body of consumers would ever be able to organize to counter the concerted power of producers in key industries and trades who could peddle their influences with governments.

Many of Smith's contemporaries made similar arguments about persistent economic problems regarding colonial monopolies, trade, and imperialism. For instance, during the Seven Years' War, at that time one of the largest conflicts Europeans had ever engaged in, David Hume noted with concern the parochial nature of commercial policies which tended to encourage and

²²⁷ For a recent assessment of Smith and monopolies, see Neri Salvadori and Rodolfo Signorino, "Adam Smith on Monopoly Theory. Making Good A Lacuna," *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 61, no. 2 (2014): 178-195.

²²⁸ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1:158-9.

inflame national rivalries. What he termed “the jealousy of trade” revealed the problem of petty, beggar-thy-neighbour attitudes, so common in Europe, and the driving envy that had led so often to empire-building and conflict. At the same time, he clearly displayed his own sense of common humanity and a cosmopolitan spirit, at least regarding Europeans. In particular, he wrote that

[w]ere our narrow and malignant politics to meet with success, we should reduce all our neighbouring nations to the same state of sloth and ignorance that prevails in Morocco and the coast of Barbary. But what would be the consequence? They could send us no commodities: They could take none from us: Our domestic commerce itself would languish for want of emulation, example, and instruction: And we ourselves should soon fall into the same abject condition to which we had reduced them. I shall therefore venture to acknowledge, that not only as a man, but as a British subject, I pray for the flourishing commerce of Germany, Spain, Italy, and even France itself. I am at least certain, that Great Britain, and all these nations, would flourish more, did their sovereigns and ministers adopt such enlarged and benevolent sentiments towards each other.²²⁹

Hume notably rejected systems of exclusion, including commercial monopolies or restrictions on trade in specific commodities or parts of the world. It was perhaps a minority point of view, and a difficult case to make during a conflict when Anglo-French tensions were extremely high. Yet, his argument for promoting international commerce, peace, and shared prosperity was a notable rejection of the early modern imperial ‘to the victor go the spoils’ model.

Arthur Young likewise voiced his criticism of this mercantile system, questioning its benefits and implying that it was more sinister in nature than anything else, for “[t]he monopoly of navigation is valuable no farther than as it implies the manufacture of ship-building and fitting out; the possession of many, as instruments of future wars, ought to be esteemed in the same light as great Russian or Prussian armies; that is to say, as the pests of human societies; as the

²²⁹ David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1760), 2:110. This quotation also partially appeared, as part of a larger discussion of Hume’s writings on the “jealousy of trade”, in Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 36-7. Hume, as a crucial Enlightenment figure, was also considered in John Robertson, *The Case for The Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 256-324.

tools of ambition; and as the instruments of wide-extended misery”.²³⁰ Laws that restricted the free movements of goods or peoples were neither conducive to economic well-being nor for international peace. Instead, he argued that in order to achieve greater prosperity, governments needed “do no more to encourage manufactures and commerce, than by letting them alone, a policy exclusive of monopoly”.²³¹ However, he further made the comment that “I am much inclined to believe, that no sort of monopoly ever was, or ever can be injurious, without the assistance of government; and that government never tends in the least to favour a monopoly without doing infinite mischief.”²³² As this research focused primarily on France, he was no doubt being immediately critical of the French regime, though by extension he was harshly implying that governments, more generally, had historically been the problem in this regard.

With the outpouring of Enlightenment tracts on issues of politics, economics, and imperialism, among many other topics, an ideological mould may, in a sense, have been broken by the late eighteenth century. Yet, critical precedents had been in place for some time. Indeed, with respect to commercial policy, mercantilism was hardly one coherent set of economic doctrines to be shattered by one major work, no matter how well inspired. The circumstances were far more complex and considering the often conflicting, or at least competing, economic interests, mercantile policy was scarcely defensible in its entirety by any one individual or certainly an entire organization. Although notable criticisms of many seemingly misguided commercial policies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries may seem sound today, the

²³⁰ Arthur Young, *Travels During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789. Undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources, and national prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (Bury St. Edmund's: J. Rackham, 1792), 493. He further remarked in his footnotes that “[p]rejudices of the deepest root are to be eradicated in England before men will be brought to admit this obvious truth. Those prejudices took their rise from a dastardly fear of being conquered by France, which government has taken every art to propagate ever since the revolution, the better to promote its own plans of expence, prosusion, and public debts. Portugal, Sardinia, the little Italian and German States, Sweden, and Denmark, &c. have been able, deficient as they are in government and in people, to defend themselves; but the British Isles, with fifteen millions of people, are to be conquered!!”

²³¹ Young, *Travels*, 511.

²³² Young, *Travels*, 480-1. N.B., this comment was made in his footnotes.

special relationships that existed between the state and its monopolies were retained throughout the period. Still, an examination of these writings helps to illustrate the debates over empire that were taking place in Britain even before Adam Smith first penned his scathing critiques of early modern economic policies.²³³ Furthermore, these inquiries and intellectual struggles over the nature of political economy, in the domestic sphere, as well as on the international stage, have been, and continue to be part of a much larger and ongoing process that help to inform broader discussions about fiscal-military states and empires, even beyond eighteenth century contexts.²³⁴

Financial Burdens of Empire and the Fiscal-Military State

Many commentators concerned with the political economy of empire reached the conclusion that England, and later Britain, did not on the whole, benefit from maintaining vast and expansive territories around the world. Supporters of imperialism continually made the case that, domestically, people enjoyed exotic commodities and that outlets existed for emigration within the English-speaking world as a result of empire. Further, an expansion of Britain's empire was preferable, for Britons, to the growth of those other European imperial powers. However, critics charged that the costs were not worth the benefits and that many of the supposed gains borne of empire-building could be enjoyed without such expenses, or the expansion of a formal or traditional political empire.

In the absence of verifiable statistics, or quantifiable data, in many instances, it was difficult for such opponents to prove their points and they also had to tread very carefully in framing their arguments as to not appear treasonous. This was certainly the case in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, but by the later eighteenth century critics had much

²³³ For contemporary discussions about mercantilism and early modern economies see Philip J. Stern and Carl Wennerlind, eds. *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²³⁴ For a broad assessment of political economy see John Dunn, ed., *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

more substantive material upon which to base their calculations, alongside the existence of much more widespread dissatisfaction regarding the recognizable inefficiencies and inadequacies of early modern imperialism. In particular, commentators increasingly concerned themselves with the ever-rising financial burdens of empire and the diminishing returns for the people of Britain. Indeed, the escalating costs of warfare and administration for the maintenance of distant colonies, and other outposts of questionable value, forced many to re-consider empire and seek practical cost-effective, or even idyllic, alternatives.

One of the earliest and most notable criticisms of the burdens placed upon English taxpayers for the purposes of supporting distant colonies came from William Petty. Though he did not explicitly reject the notion or language of empire, he argued that England would be better off without any overseas dependencies. In fact, he considered “[t]he colonies belonging to *England* a diminution to the Empire”,²³⁵ suggesting that it was really only the peculiar nature of their empire that was the problem. He wrote about the challenges of governance, defence, and tax collection, as well as social differences. In particular, he stated that “[t]he Government of *New-England* (both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*) doth so differ from that of His Majesties other Dominions, that ’tis hard to say what may be the consequence of it.”²³⁶ Additionally, “the Government of the other Plantations, doth also differ very much from any of the rest; although there be not naturally substantial reasons from the Situation, Trade, and Condition of the People, why there should be such differences.”²³⁷ As another example, even closer to home, he noted that “[t]he Islands of *Jersey* and *Gernsey*, are protected at the charge of *England*, nevertheless the Labour, and Industry, of that People (which is very great) redounds most to the profit of the

²³⁵ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 87. N.B., he noted this in the margin.

²³⁶ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 88.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

French.²³⁸ In these instances he urged readers to seriously consider the benefits of colonies and to whom they actually accrued. Thus, “[f]rom all which it comes to pass, that small divided remote Governments, being seldom able to defend themselves, the Burthen of protecting of them all, must lye upon the chief Kingdom *England*; and so all the smaller Kingdoms and Dominions, instead of being Additions, are really Diminutions [*sic*].”²³⁹

For Petty, these territories did not provide value to the kingdom, but were merely “[i]mpediments of England’s greatness”. Instead, he offered the plausible solution of selling off the lands.²⁴⁰ He suggested that “[a]s these Impediments are contingent, so they are also removeable; for may not the Land of superfluous Territories be sold, and the People with their moveables brought away? May not the *English* in the *America* Plantations (who Plant *Tobacco*, *Sugar*, &c.) compute what Land will serve their turn, and then contract their Habitations to that proportion, both for quantity and quality?”²⁴¹ Despite the pride that other commentators may have felt for control over vast dominions, he argued that instead “[a] *small Territory, and even a few People, may by Situation, Trade, and Policy, be made equivalent to a greater...*”²⁴² As a justification for this comment, he further argued that “[t]here is no doubt that the same People, far and wide dispersed, must spend more upon their Government, and Protection, than the same living compactly, and when they have no occasion to depend upon the Wind, Weather, and all the Accidents of the Sea.”²⁴³ He urged Britons to consider the benefits of small densely populated regions, and the risks of maintaining too many distant territories, for “it is most manifest, that the afore-mentioned distances, and differencies, of Kingdoms, and Jurisdictions,

²³⁸ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 90.

²³⁹ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 88.

²⁴⁰ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 87.

²⁴¹ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 94.

²⁴² Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 34.

²⁴³ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 91.

are great impediments to all the said several sorts of Wealth,” warning crucially that “in case of War with Foreign Nations, *England* commonly beareth the whole burthen, and charge, whereby many in *England* are utterly undone.”²⁴⁴ He was certainly not alone in this. Many writers that followed also abhorred aggressive land grabbing and the associated costs of their maintenance.

Many notable commentators, such as Petty, complained about the numerous customs duties and other taxes that were levied on Britons throughout the period. They reluctantly acknowledged the necessity of taxation, authorized by Parliament, for the purposes of providing for the common defence and the justice system, as well as the support of the monarchy. Yet, there were increasing concerns about the raising of money beyond these basic functions and questions about where the excesses were flowing. As the central government actually spent relatively little within the peacetime domestic economy, critics were primarily concerned about expenditures related to the rise of the fiscal-military state and empire overseas.²⁴⁵ This included the great expansion of the military, notably the Royal Navy and contracted mercenary armies, subsidies to political allies, as well as the costs of colonial administrations and fortifications. Such expenditures were chiefly financed through a general rise in taxation and borrowing, increasing a debt that in turn needed to be serviced, with interest, by further increasing tax burdens. Additionally, this corresponded with the organization of customs officials into a permanent bureaucracy dedicated to tax collection and law enforcement.

The National Debt was perhaps one of the most important economic tools that the government had at its disposal, as it gave successive administrations a vehicle through which it

²⁴⁴ Petty, *Political Arithmetick*, 89.

²⁴⁵ The seminal work on the development of the English/British fiscal-military state from the Glorious Revolution through the American Revolution is John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). For more on the decades that followed see Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, “From ‘Fiscal-Military’ State to Laissez-Faire State, 1760-1850,” *Journal of British Studies* 32, no. 1 (1993): 44-70. This article examines the rising criticism of “Old Corruption” alongside the strains of warfare and government taxation, and then traces this resistance into an era of reform and significant fiscal retrenchment.

could finance warfare expenditures, while guaranteeing that its obligations would be honoured.²⁴⁶ However, this was a double-edged sword, for even though this provided some obvious political benefits, the population at large was expected to bear the ever-greater financial burden as the debt rose. Economic historian Patrick K. O'Brien has estimated that, in real terms, this tax burden increased, though unevenly, by about eighteen times from the Restoration to Waterloo.²⁴⁷ Indeed, what started out as something very small, less than £2 million in the 1680s, ballooned with each conflict of the era, and while interwar periods offered brief interludes of modest retrenchment, the debt reached a peak of £834 million by the 1820s, just after the close of the Napoleonic Wars.²⁴⁸ This rise in debt, though unevenly accumulated, amounted to an astonishing 41,600% increase over approximately one hundred and forty years. It was within this context, particularly after the Seven Years' War, and as the financial burdens on the population rose sharply, that the voices of discontent grew increasingly vociferous.

As an example, one anonymous author, self-titled an "*untainted ENGLISHMAN*", wrote to Charles Townshend, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1767, concerned about the nation's credit and well-being, as well as the ever-rising burden of taxation to support "the monstrous

²⁴⁶ This was an important part of the "financial revolution", which gave rise to modern central banking in England (1694) and extensive credit and debt creation, in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. In addition, these financial innovations allowed for the creation of a market for government debts (bonds) as well as for joint-stock securities (stocks). These developments helped enable large-scale commercial and imperial projects. The foundational text on this subject is P. G. M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967). For an assessment of the development of a fiscal state in early modern England/Britain, from the Tudor period through to the end of the Napoleonic Wars see Patrick K. O'Brien and Philip A. Hunt, "The Rise of a Fiscal State in England, 1485-1815," *Historical Research* 66 (1993): 129-176.

²⁴⁷ Patrick K. O'Brien, "The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815," *The Economic History Review* 41, no. 1 (1988): 1.

²⁴⁸ Hamish Scott, "The Fiscal-Military State and International Rivalry during the Long Eighteenth Century," in *The Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe. Essays in honour of P.G.M. Dickson*, ed. Christopher Storrs (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2009), 43. The outcry reached somewhat of a fever pitch at this time, after many decades of commentators noting with concern the unsustainability of increasing debt levels, which were becoming harder to service. The National Debt was subsequently addressed in a serious way only after the Napoleonic Wars, which is outside the scope of this study. Though, notably, it was brought down by nearly half, over the course of the nineteenth century until the next major expansion during WWI and with the rise of the modern welfare state. Between 1815 and 1914 only the Crimean and Boer Wars really caused any temporary increases and these were relatively minor.

debt contracted by the government.”²⁴⁹ He was worried that “as it is so very considerable, it must naturally have a very bad effect upon our political conduct both at home and abroad.”²⁵⁰ In particular, he acknowledged the precarious, and increasingly weak, position of Britain as servicing a mounting debt had diminished resources in other, more productive, areas. He was troubled that domestic and foreign observers, alike, “know full well that money is the sinew of war, and that our actions of state must necessarily be retarded, and our schemes frustrated, in proportion to our want of it.”²⁵¹ Potentially, this could provide an ample opportunity for rival nations to strike. He additionally observed that as a consequence of indebtedness “the jealous and envious eyes of all other nations; who would be glad of an opportunity to crush her with the weight of her NATIONAL DEBT: which, in the last twenty years has increased upon us in a most surprizing, and, we may truly say, in an unaccountable manner.”²⁵²

The author also noted how “some individuals of the public will become immensely rich and powerful, while the bulk of the nation is distressed in its trade, and groans under the unsupportable burthen of taxes, to pay the interest of the vast debt”²⁵³ Thus, it was not as simple an equation as people getting poorer; for, even though many were worse off, on the other side, many owners of such debt actually did quite well in turn. In this regard, he was implying that a great deal of corruption lay behind this system of debt accumulation and wartime profiteering. At least in part, he blamed favoured entities such as the East India Company, whose abolishment he advocated, in order to pay off the national debt.²⁵⁴ If a Parliamentary enquiry, “[w]ere that to happen, we should soon discover the great WOLVES who have made so great an havock, and

²⁴⁹ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt, By Abolishing the East-India Company of Merchants* (London: Printed for S. Bladon, 1767), 22.

²⁵⁰ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 23.

²⁵¹ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 23.

²⁵² *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 24.

²⁵³ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 23.

²⁵⁴ This part of the pamphlet is addressed in greater detail in the fourth chapter.

grown fat out of measure, by preying upon the vitals of this nation. We should then know for what reasons we have from five millions, the former supplies in time of war, ascended to the generosity of twenty millions.”²⁵⁵ This author notably questioned the value and necessity of acquiring such debts, and who in fact benefitted from such political and economic arrangements.

Adam Smith also voiced his concern about government expenditures to support the colonies, and questioned whether they were worth maintaining from a financial point of view. In 1776 he considered the economic situation problematic, though manageable. He advocated an absolute retrenchment in spending, as well as increasing revenue from the colonies, combined with an improvement in tax collection, to manage the national debts. As to where reductions needed to be made, he argued that little could be done at home, for “Great Britain seems to be at least as oeconomical as any of her neighbours”,²⁵⁶ as domestic expenditures on the military were moderate, especially compared to other European states.

The real burden he identified was related to the defence of the colonies, especially in times of war, but even in peacetime as well. He continued his assessment, writing that

[t]he expence of the peace establishment of the colonies was, before the commencement of the present disturbances, very considerable, and is an expence which may, and if no revenue can be drawn from them, ought certainly to be saved altogether. This constant expence in time of peace, though very great, is insignificant in comparison with what the defence of the colonies has cost us in time of war. The last war, which was undertaken altogether on account of the colonies, cost Great Britain, it has already been observed, upwards of ninety millions. The Spanish war of 1739 was principally undertaken on their account; in which, and in the French war that was the consequence of it, Great Britain spent upwards of forty millions, a great part of which ought justly to be charged to the colonies. In those two wars the colonies cost Great Britain much more than double the sum which the national debt amounted to before the commencement of the first of them. Had it not been for those wars that debt might, and probably

²⁵⁵ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 24.

²⁵⁶ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:586.

would by this time have been compleatly paid; and had it not been for the colonies, the former of those wars might not, and the latter certainly would not have been undertaken. It was because the colonies were supposed to be provinces of the British empire, that this expence was laid out upon them.²⁵⁷

Thus, Britain had spent immense sums of money in the defence of the overseas empire, and with the expectation that the financial burdens would be shared more broadly. Instead, Britons at home were alone struggling with ever-higher taxes to support the national debt. It was a situation illustrating the illusory nature of the economic gains of imperialism, at least for people in the mother country. Further, Smith noted

[b]ut countries which contribute neither revenue nor military force towards the support of the empire, cannot be considered as provinces. They may perhaps be considered as appendages, as a sort of splendid and showy equipage of the empire. But if the empire can no longer support the expence of keeping up this equipage, it ought certainly to lay it down; and if it cannot raise its revenue in proportion to its expence, it ought, at least, to accommodate its expence to its revenue. If the colonies, notwithstanding their refusal to submit to British taxes, are still to be considered as provinces of the British empire, their defence in some future war may cost Great Britain as great an expence as it ever has done in any former war.²⁵⁸

His concern was that the debts accumulated by Britain had risen significantly over the course of many decades, and particularly sharply with each major conflict, and that the colonies were largely the source. The British government spent heavily to defend these territories and maintain the colonial trade networks, for the benefit of a great many, yet at a tremendous cost to a multitude more. Further, the unwillingness of these same colonies to contribute militarily or financially to their own, or a common, defence seriously begged the question as to who was in charge and as to whose interests were really being served with the maintenance of this empire.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:586-7. This quotation, as part of the conclusion of his treatise, partially appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 194-5, who subsequently addressed the notion of empire as an “appendage”.

In his multi-volume and legendary *History of England*, published through the 1750s and 1760s, and which have subsequently been revised and reprinted countless times, David Hume noted with alarm the rising debt levels in Britain.²⁵⁹ Though not present in the original publication, in the 1776 revisions, and present in most subsequent copies, he made a remark in a footnote regarding the extremely high levels of spending since the Elizabethan era. He commented on the Seven Years' War, writing of "[t]he extreme frivolous object of the late war," and further noted how "our late delusions have much exceeded any thing known in history, not even excepting those of the crusades."²⁶⁰ He then continued,

[f]or I suppose there is no mathematical, still less an arithmetical demonstration, that the road to the Holy Land was not the road to Paradise, as there is, that the endless increase of national debts is the direct road to national ruin. But having now completely reached that goal, it is needless at present to reflect on the past. It will be found in the present year, 1776, that all the revenues of this island north of Trent and west of Reading, are mortgaged or anticipated for ever. Could the small remainder be in a worse condition, were those provinces seized by Austria and Prussia?²⁶¹

His position reflected a strong critique of the expansion of empire, paid for with the credit and blood of the country. Much of the north and west of Britain had essentially been used as collateral for new territorial acquisitions, effectively guaranteeing future taxation and that the entire productive capacities of these regions were already spoken for, in perpetuity.

By providing such a geographical representation of what such a large financial burden meant for the island nation, itself, he illustrated how especially grim situation was. Though he then noted that

²⁵⁹ Hume's perspectives on this issue were considered in 'The Rhapsody of Public Debt,' in Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 325-353.

²⁶⁰ David Hume, *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Cæsar to the Revolution in 1688*, 2nd ed. (London: J. McCreery, 1807), Appendix III, 5:475.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

[t]here is only this difference, that some event might happen in Europe which would oblige these great monarchs to disgorge their acquisitions. But no imagination can figure a situation which will induce our creditors to relinquish their claims, or the public to seize their revenues. So egregious indeed has been our folly, that we have even lost all title to compassion in the numberless calamities that are awaiting us.²⁶²

Thus, the nation was in a dangerous financial situation, and would have little maneuverability if future crises were to arrive. It was an ominous warning, of a dying man, in a fateful year.²⁶³

This most famous statement from David Hume was also notably quoted multiple times by Richard Price, in his own warnings about the state of the nation, a short number of years later, in which he warned that the situation had only further deteriorated.²⁶⁴ He remarked that

[a]t present we are sinking under new incumbrances and difficulties. The most valuable of our dependencies are lost. Another foreign war is begun. Trade is declining; our strength is wasting; and at the same time, that load of debts which has pressed so heavily on our population, is increasing faster than ever. – Never, certainly, were the resources of a state so anticipated and mortgaged – Never before did imprudence and extravagance bring a great kingdom into such peril.²⁶⁵

These warnings from many prominent authors reflected serious concerns about the long-term sustainability of the British fiscal-military state and the expansion of empire in the period. Of course, the financial situation was actually poised to get much worse before it ever improved.

John Dalrymple, the 5th Earl of Stair, issued many notably warnings about excessive

²⁶² Hume, *The History of England*, Appendix III, 5:476.

²⁶³ The radical Richard Price remarked in the introduction of his own work that this was a stern “dying warning” from a man “to this kingdom”. See Richard Price, *Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, the War with America, and the Debts and Finances of the Kingdom*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1778), xiii. Hume’s perspectives on debt and the American Revolution, “The dying thoughts of a North Briton”, were explored in chapter seven of J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 125-141. The remarks were also briefly discussed in Istvan Hont, “The rhapsody of public debt: David Hume and voluntary state bankruptcy,” in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 345-7.

²⁶⁴ Price, *An Essay on the Population of England*, 33. In the footnotes of this 2nd edition text from 1780, he remarked how “[t]he national debt is now considerably greater than it was in 1776,” and further noted that the government was having trouble selling its debt, except at notable discounts and providing buyers with relatively high interest payments.

²⁶⁵ Price, *An Essay on the Population of England*, 32.

expenditure in government in this period as well. Described as both an “honest Scot” and yet, the “Cassandra of the State”, he was largely concerned with the growth of the national debt as a result of warfare spending and with the maintenance of Britain’s American empire.²⁶⁶ His extensive calculations regarding alarming levels of government borrowing, in 1776, pointed to the fact that little had been done to moderate spending and pay down debt levels since the previous war, while another one seemed imminently at hand. He warned that the government was proceeding dangerously in preparing for war with the American colonies, as they were not credit worthy enough to reliably secure £10 million in loans, based upon current revenue and possible taxation in Britain.²⁶⁷ His findings, he argued, “are of the greatest and of the very first Importance to be thoroughly understood by every Man of Property in these Kingdoms.”²⁶⁸ Further, not only the wealthy should be concerned, for, “[i]t is likewise meant, to awaken the Public from the fatal Lethargy, and fatal Luxury, that an unreal Mockery of Paper Wealth has plunged them into; whilst Distress and Public Bankruptcy dogg them at the Heels.”²⁶⁹

A staunch opponent of conflict with the colonies, Stair was especially worried about the deteriorating finances of the nation, and that in pressing for the submission of the American colonists, Britain might be rendered bankrupt, in what would then be either a pyrrhic victory or a total defeat. By 1782, the financial situation had so deteriorated, that he warned “[a]t this Period, we apprehend, the noble Lord must, whether he will or not, quit all Pride, Pomp, and Circumstance of glorious War: for Money, the Sinews of War, will no longer be to be found.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ His more specific critiques about British expenditures and the American Revolution, as well as regarding Parliamentary oversight of the East India Company, are addressed, respectively, in the third and fourth chapters.

²⁶⁷ John Dalrymple, *The State of the National Debt, the National Income, and the National Expenditure*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Almon, 1776).

²⁶⁸ Dalrymple, *The State of the National Debt*, 2nd ed., 10.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ John Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences, Submitted to the Consideration of the Public at Large; But More Particularly to that of the Finance Minister, and of those who are or Mean to Become Creditors to the State*, 4th ed. (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1782), 5.

So, his publications by this point were no longer even warning about the debt itself, but merely how the government would manage to just to pay the interest charges. While the general public would continue to be squeezed with new taxes, he remarked that creditors should also take note, for “the Interest and annual Burthens brought, or to be brought upon the State, are all we shall or need attend to: what, or how enormous the Principal may be, it is Loss of Time to calculate; for no Man is wild enough to expect ever to see a Shilling of it paid.”²⁷¹ Though what might perhaps have seemed an extreme position on the surface, the numbers he provided were extensive and amply proved his case. He calculated that at a minimum, and provided there was peace, the government needed to raise £15 million annually just to function, “without discharging one Farthing of the Principal of the National Debt”.²⁷² To be sure, that in itself was “an alarming Sum”, and one which he wondered how it would ever “be drawn from the People with fallen Rents, and a diminished, languishing Trade”²⁷³

On the revenue side, he noted that the government never raised nearly enough to meet its obligations, especially in wartime. Referring to the period between the two wars, he wrote that “the Revenue brought clear into the Exchequer, never amounted to Eleven Millions in One Year, the Average of the Ten Years was considerably less.”²⁷⁴ Thus, the difference of £4 million, before even taking into account the new debts, or other unforeseen circumstances, rendered the state technically insolvent. Though this guaranteed the government would be raising taxes, he noted

[i]t may, I know, be said, that many new Taxes are imposed, many more are intended, and many of the old Impositions are greatly augmented; but, alas! this is no Answer: in Matter of Taxation, if the Ability to pay is wanting, what signify

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 13.

²⁷³ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 15.

²⁷⁴ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 20.

the Sums the Commodity is taxed at, or the Number of Taxes: The Rich are of little Consequence, the Middling Class are something; but by the lower and lowest Orders of the People, the great Weight and Proportion of the Taxes are paid. From their well being, full Employment, and comfortable Situation, even to a little Superfluity, the Riches of a Nation and consequently, its Revenues arise: These being self-evident Truths, can the Noble Lord expect to wring from the Dregs of Adversity, what the sprightly Runnings of Prosperity could not give. What can he force from the Wretchedness which the war has made? Misery mocks at Taxation; he cannot tax the Bread and Water of the Poor, nor Death, their sad last Refuge from Despair.²⁷⁵

Ultimately, the government would be able to raise taxes only so much, and as the strain on the lower orders, especially through consumption taxes, was already particularly great, it was doubtful that the population would be willing or able to withstand much more.

Instead, Stair suggested that “[i]f this System is to continue, the public Creditors must give down a considerable Part of their Demands on the Public: it is their Interest so to do; for if the System cannot go on, it is hard to say whether they will get any Thing.”²⁷⁶ The situation had reached a breaking point, for, “I do solemnly declare my Opinion, that the State is burthened to its utmost Solvency”; additionally, he advised, “Sixteen Millions Four Hundred Thousand Pounds already contracted of unfunded Debt are in Danger, and as to any new Contractions, *caveat Emptor*.”²⁷⁷ So, his was really a warning to all parties willing to listen, including creditors. Of course, he readily admitted that such numbers were always in flux and imperfect, and as a result, he may well have made some mistakes in his calculations. However, he further noted that “so ruinous is our Situation, that a few Millions of Error on either Side, make no material Difference,” and if there was an error, “it is on the side favourable to the Public.”²⁷⁸

Another critique of government expenditures, chiefly as related to war, empire, debt, and

²⁷⁵ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 20-1.

²⁷⁶ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 24.

²⁷⁷ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 23.

²⁷⁸ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 15.

interest, came from Sir John Sinclair, a Scottish agriculturalist, economic writer, and Parliamentarian. He notably compiled one of the grandest histories regarding public revenues for the period, and his findings revealed many cases of waste and extravagance, which contributed to a heavy tax burden. Sinclair was staunchly opposed to the acquisition and retention of such imperial outposts, which he calculated to be of great cost to the nation, yet of questionable value. He recognized, though, that this was hardly something new, but rather part of a long tradition of territorial acquisitions for the purposes of aggrandizing England's state power, while undermining or threatening nearby rivals. He noted how

[t]he English nation have long indulged a passionate desire of retaining fortresses or strong holds in the dominions of their neighbours. When Scotland was an independent kingdom, *Berwick upon Tweed* was considered as a place which it was essential for England to possess. It is well known with what earnestness Edward the Third persevered in his resolution of conquering *Calais*, and how much the loss of that inlet into France was bewailed in this country. The aspiring Cromwell, not satisfied with having obtained the possession of *Dunkirk*, had also planned the acquisition of *Elsinore* and the castle of *Kronberg*, in hopes of enjoying a complete command of the trade in the Baltic. In the reign of Charles II it was thought necessary to keep and garrison *Tangiers* for some years, with a view to the increase of our commerce in the Mediterranean, and as a check upon the corsairs of Barbary.”²⁷⁹

With the historical precedent established, he then continued, that in more recent times,

Minorca was twice acquired; first, by arms from the Spaniards; and next, by treaty with the French, in exchange for Belle-isle, which had been conquered from that nation. And, though that island has since been lost, yet *Gibraltar* is still retained, as if it were an invaluable acquisition, which, on no consideration whatsoever, ought to be relinquished. To crown the whole, we have recently entered into a new war for the possession of the barren rock of *Malta*.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed. (London: A. Strahan, 1804), 3:219-20.

²⁸⁰ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 3:220.

In fact, it was probably Gibraltar, the tiny peninsular outpost in southern Iberia that jutted into the Mediterranean near the confluence of the Atlantic, for which he reserved the most scorn. He saw little to no value in maintaining this rocky outcrop, as it was retained at great expense and served as a persistent irritant in British relations with Spain.

Regarding more specific calculations, he estimated that “it is a possession which costs us about two hundred thousand pounds in time of peace, and at least five hundred thousand pounds in time of war”.²⁸¹ Further,

the retaining of that barren rock keeps up a rancorous spirit in the court of Spain, which might otherwise have become a sure and valuable ally; and perhaps renders us the general object of the jealousy of Europe; and that by giving it up to its natural proprietors, we might not only secure a faithful friend, and save considerable charges at present unnecessarily wasted, but might also acquire a sum of money, which, if expended in beneficial public purposes, in augmenting the sinking fund, or in encouraging the commerce and industry of the nation, might be productive of the happiest consequences.²⁸²

This was a strong argument against maintaining what was perhaps his least favourite British territory, which he described as little more than a trophy piece in his dedicated treatise on the territory, writing “[o]n the whole, therefore, Gibraltar can only be accounted a feather in our cap, more splendid than useful; whose advantages, even in time of war, are compensated by the inconveniences with which it is accompanied.”²⁸³ However, he also expanded this same critique of empire-building more broadly, applying to it other territories, writing, “[b]y extending the same principles to Canada, New Brunswick, and other colonies in America, not excepting the new settlement at Botany Bay, a saving might be made of considerable importance; and if the money thereby obtained were expended at home, it might be attended with perhaps greater

²⁸¹ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 3:220.

²⁸² Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 3:220-1.

²⁸³ Sir John Sinclair, *The Propriety of Retaining Gibraltar Impartially Considered* (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1783), 18.

national benefit, or at least with advantages of a more lasting and permanent nature.”²⁸⁴

He was certainly not alone in making such observations. Adam Smith, who was a much better known critic, and who shared many conversations with Sinclair on such matters, also had no such affinity towards the maintenance of this outpost. Towards the end of his life, Sinclair published a copy of a letter Smith had sent to him on this topic. In it, Smith remarked,

[t]he real futility of all distant dominions, of which the defence is necessarily most expensive, and which contribute nothing, either by revenue or military force, to the general defence of the empire, and very little even to their own particular defence, is, I think, the subject upon which the public prejudices of Europe require most to be set right. In order to defend the barren rock of Gibraltar, (to the possession of which we owe the union of France and Spain, contrary to the natural interests and inveterate prejudices of both countries, the important enmity of Spain, and the futile and expensive friendship of Portugal,) we have now left our own coasts defenceless, and sent out a great fleet, to which any considerable disaster may prove fatal to our domestic security; and which, in order to effectuate its purpose, must probably engage a fleet of superior force.²⁸⁵

In Sinclair’s own commentary, he noted, in reference to the above passage, that “[n]othing can be more just than his observations on the absurdity of retaining so invidious a possession as the barren and useless rock of Gibraltar. But humbled as the nation was by the misfortunes of the American war, it would not submit to relinquish that unfortunate acquisition.”²⁸⁶ In contrast, he was critical of Charles James Fox, who had claimed that the outpost helped divide the territories

²⁸⁴ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 3:221.

²⁸⁵ Smith’s letter to Sinclair, dated October 4, 1782, was published in Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart: With Reminiscences of the Most Distinguished Characters who Have Appeared in Great Britain, and in Foreign Countries, During the Last Fifty Years* (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831), 1:390. This quotation also partially appeared in a footnote in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 195; and in Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, 20. Sir John Sinclair’s correspondences with Adam Smith display a fascinating discussion of the European empires in the late 1700s. Though Sinclair lamented having lost a number of the letters from Smith, and therefore omitted them from his published volumes, what is available still reveals a strong disdain for the maintenance of distant colonies and small outposts that tended to stoke the flames of hostility between rival powers.

²⁸⁶ Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, 1:390.

of their Spanish and French rivals, remarking that it actually helped unite them against Britain.²⁸⁷

In addition to criticism of some retained North American colonies, he also notably included Botany Bay in his observations. It was one of the newest colonies and one whose value was widely questioned on account of its great distance as well as the heavy costs and great risks incurred to ship convicts to the other side of the world. Sinclair noted, in particular, that

[t]he expence of convicts, both at home and in the new colony of South Wales, is an object, in every point of view, well entitled to the most serious attention of the British legislature. An inquiry ought immediately to be instituted regarding that important subject, more especially into the propriety of maintaining any longer the colony in South Wales, or at least whether it is adviseable to transport any additional convicts there, at an expense so enormous.²⁸⁸

He then cited the writings of Jeremy Bentham on this question, in his famous critique of the transportation system and in which he instead advocated the establishment of an institutionalized prison system, his panopticon.²⁸⁹ Sinclair was supportive of creating such “penitentiary houses”,²⁹⁰ though also suggested that prisoners be put to use, in asking

[b]ut why might not some of these unfortunate persons be employed in works of public utility, in making new harbours, in opening new communications, and rendering the most impervious districts in the kingdom accessible to industry and improvement. The same sums which have been wasted in the settlement at Botany Bay, would have rendered the northern districts of Scotland one of the most valuable possessions belonging to the British crown.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, 1:390.

²⁸⁸ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed. (London: A. Strahan, 1803), 2:191.

²⁸⁹ Ibid. In particular, Sinclair was referring to Bentham’s letters to Lord Pelham, and his 1802-3 writings, on the matter, which were published in Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon versus New South Wales; or, The Panopticon Penitentiary System, and the Penal Colonization System, Compared* (London: Sold by R. Baldwin, 1812). Jeremy Bentham’s many notable and complex criticisms of empire-building in this, his first, “anti-imperial” period, have been best explored by historian Donald Winch, in a dedicated chapter that grew out of Winch’s own doctoral dissertation. See Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, 25-38. He subsequently addressed criticisms of this work in his article, Donald Winch, “Bentham on Colonies and Empire,” *Utilitas* 9 (1997): 147-154. Additionally, Bentham is discussed in comparison with James Mill and David Ricardo in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 251-268. Bentham is included more substantially in the third chapter.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:192.

Though Sinclair may not be considered an opponent of imperialism in a universal sense, he was relatively pragmatic and certainly abhorred the great expenses of empire-building and warfare. In the aftermath of the American Revolutionary War, he noted that Britain's quest for empire was costing the nation dearly. "True it is," he wrote,

that we retain some provinces in North America, some colonies in the West Indies, some settlements on the coast of Africa, the fortress of Gibraltar, and extensive possessions in the East. But these acquisitions, however great or valuable, can never compensate for the waste of treasure and of blood, which has taken place, in consequence of that system of political conduct, which, since the Revolution, has been pursued.²⁹²

He then explained that this policy-making, particularly regarding rival powers and foreign dominions, had two main components, "[f]irst, to check the power of the House of Bourbon, which seemed to threaten Europe in general with subjection. Next, to acquire, to establish, or to preserve, colonial settlements for the purposes of commerce."²⁹³ However, he continued,

[a]s that system has not proved very beneficial, it may be worth consideration, whether by altering it either in whole or in part, by abandoning all jealousy of France, and commencing a friendly intercourse and connection with that country; or by emancipating our American and West Indian colonies, we might not prevent such enormous expences for the future, and be enabled, honourably to discharge the incumbrances we have already incurred.²⁹⁴

Based upon his extensive calculations, which actually predated the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, he identified a clear deterioration in the finances of the nation, which brought into question the desirability and sustainability of the imperial system. He also suggested that European powers, more broadly, needed to seriously reconsider their foreign policies that tended towards jealousy and conflict, as it was becoming increasingly apparent that, across the board,

²⁹² Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed. (London: A. Strahan, 1803), 2:115-6.

²⁹³ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:116.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

the benefits were being far outweighed by the heavy costs involved.²⁹⁵

These very important aspects of early modern anti-imperialism formed the basis of debates over empire within more traditional histories of the eighteenth century. The rich historiography in this regard reveals that the attitudes presented here notably inspired reformers in the nineteenth century to refashion the empire, mainly as a way for the British government to cut expenditures, and in the twentieth century for political elites to develop Commonwealth networks, more as voluntary associations.²⁹⁶ While this is undoubtedly part of the story, it also speaks to a selective reading of the sources on the part of later theorists, by only championing favourable ideas that would allow those in power to reform institutions or imperial networks, so that they may survive politically. Many writers presented here would have likely applauded the fall of the Navigation Acts and collapse of monopoly corporations had they lived to see those changes. Indeed, the informal empire that developed was largely rooted in the eighteenth century critiques of empire. Yet, many aspects of the empire that these critics so despised lingered on and they would most likely have abhorred the ongoing costs of militarism and the aggression with which their economic proposals, specifically related to free trade, were imposed on those so-called informal participants, within the context of a reformed nineteenth century imperialism.

²⁹⁵ Sinclair proposed many different possible political and economic arrangements, favouring international co-operation, as well as a general colonial emancipation, which have been addressed in the third chapter.

²⁹⁶ Most notable in the history of British anti-imperialism is the pioneering scholarship of Robert Livingston Schuyler. He wrote extensively on Josiah Tucker, who, along with Adam Smith, inspired nineteenth century reformers, such as the Philosophical Radicals, in their arguments against British imperialism. In particular, see Robert Livingston Schuyler, "The Climax of Anti-Imperialism in England," *Political Science Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1921): 537-560; Robert Livingston Schuyler, "The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire," *The American Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1920): 18-36; Robert Livingston Schuyler, "The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England," *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1922): 440-471. These articles then formed the basis for his later book, Robert Livingston Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 [1945]). Though his work focused more extensively on the period after the Napoleonic Wars than before, his many writings on this subject were important starting points for this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGING BIG SUGAR AND THE SLAVE TRADE

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
For how could we do without sugar and rum?
Especially sugar, so needful we see?
What, give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

William Cowper, *Pity for Poor Africans* (1788)¹

Two of the most significant businesses in the eighteenth century were sugar and slavery. These industries were an inextricably intertwined part of the Atlantic economy and provided livelihoods for a great many Britons involved in commercial and imperial enterprise. Sugar was clearly the most important agricultural commodity imported into Europe from the tropics at the time.² It had long been a luxury for the wealthy, but increasingly was being enjoyed by the broader public as well. This is borne out in the trade data, where from the 1750s until the 1820s it was Britain's largest import.³ Yet, the fortunes made in this most lucrative of industries were built on the backs of African slaves. It is perhaps one of the most horrific of historical ironies that the sweetest of commodities to be enjoyed by European palates was also the product of the most brutal of businesses, one shaped by blood, sweat, misery, and death.

This chapter will address a number of important challenges to both the sugar industry and slavery, which emerged most prominently in the second half of the century. There were two main and distinct economic and humanitarian criticisms that existed, somewhat independently at

¹ William Cowper, *The Negro's Complaint: A Poem. To which is added, Pity for Poor Africans* (London, 1826 [1788]), 17.

² Richard B. Sheridan, "The Formation of Caribbean Plantation Society, 1689-1748," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, P. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 399.

³ J. R. Ward, "The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, P. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 421.

first, but by the turn of the nineteenth century were much used in conjunction to simultaneously attack the sugar plantation complex and slave trade systems. A range of economic arguments targeted the high costs of maintaining tropical island colonies, the artificially high price of sugar in Britain, and the inefficient nature of the business of sugar production. This was an important part of the broader challenge towards government attempts to regulate, and at times actively participate in, trans-Atlantic commerce. Many theorists contended that the favouritism shown by government towards planters did serious damage in a number of ways. Laws that limited or prohibited foreign imports of sugar to Britain unavoidably hurt Britons at home by forcing them to pay higher than market prices, while they, as taxpayers, were also expected to pay to defend British interests in the islands. At the same time, such monopolistic policies would, in the long run, undermine the industry itself by limiting competition and discouraging innovation.

This purely economic critique posited that the members of the broader British public were the true victims in this system of regulation and manipulation. While such an argument clearly seems insensitive to the real suffering that was taking place, as a result of human trafficking and enslavement, it was a crucial component of the attack on the sugar industry at the time from writers such as Joseph Massie and Arthur Young. It would also form part of the arguments of moral philosophers, such as Adam Smith and Josiah Tucker, and other reformers in making the case that slavery was an abhorrent institution and that slave labour was inefficient.

The humanitarian case against the slave trade was made most notably by individuals such as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and William Wilberforce.⁴ They were evangelical

⁴ Many substantial histories have been written about these individuals, among other evangelical humanitarians, Quakers, freed former slaves, and social reformers, who campaigned against slavery and the slave trade. Some notable examples are Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, eds., *Quakers & Abolition* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Saving Souls: The Struggle to End the Transatlantic Trade in Africans* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007); David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and

reformers less concerned about the sugar industry than about the suffering of African slaves in the British Caribbean and American colonies. However, in many respects their work presented a much more thorough and effective attack on the plantation interests, since their arguments targeting the immorality of slavery and its trade ultimately inspired Britons far more than any evidence that they were paying too much for their sugar. These changing sensibilities towards human suffering in the late eighteenth century are perhaps best reflected in the campaign to abolish the slave trade, which also served to illustrate a forceful rejection by many of a repugnant and inhumane aspect of their eighteenth century empire.

Joseph Massie Confronts the Sugar Plantation Complex

A significant portion of this study focuses on a number of treatises from the late 1750s and early 1760s, by economist Joseph Massie, illustrating his objection to the favouritism shown by government towards the Caribbean sugar colonies. Though he was, and remains, not particularly well known, he posed a very important intellectual challenge to mercantile policy in mid-eighteenth century Britain. Massie was a very active writer, statistician, and collector of economic documents in his time, but he has received considerably less attention by historians of political economy than many of his contemporaries, such as Adam Smith, Josiah Tucker, or James Steuart. Though scholarship on him is relatively limited, his discourses have been noted selectively by a number of authors. Some of his works were listed in J. R. McCulloch's 1845 catalogue of works related to taxation and finance.⁵ As well, early twentieth century American historian George Louis Beer credited him as being the best informed commercial publicist on the

J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilization of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807*, 2nd ed. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998).

⁵ J. R. McCulloch, *The Literature of Political Economy: A Classified Catalogue* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), 251; 330-1.

West Indies during the Seven Years' War period.⁶ He was also mentioned briefly in Jacob Viner's classic work on international trade;⁷ and, more recently, received notable praise from Nancy Koehn, who identified him as a major economic thinker of the mid-eighteenth century.⁸ Indeed, this was certainly warranted, since he published extensively on a range of economic subjects during his lifetime and his work is reflective of a much broader critique of the nature of empire in the eighteenth century and mercantilism.

Massie is best known to British historians for his work in demographics, and particularly as the creator of England's social table, and as an obsessive collector. This is in large part thanks to the work of Peter Mathias, who argued that his work should be considered alongside that of Gregory King and Patrick Colquhoun, serving as a sort of historical bridge between the two.⁹ Massie, himself, estimated that he had gathered 1,500 titles on economics and trade during his life, though the British Library has 2,418 entries catalogued; they range in date from 1557-1763, with 90% of them from between 1660 and 1760.¹⁰ His extensive collections of commercial literature provided him a strong foundation on which to launch his attacks on economic inefficiencies inherent to the early modern economic regulatory framework. Throughout the 1750s and 1760s he primarily dedicated his efforts towards calculating British demography and

⁶ George Louis Beer, *British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1907]), 202.

⁷ Jacob Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960 [1955]), 64; 89; 106.

⁸ Nancy Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 68.

⁹ Peter Mathias, "The Social Structure in the Eighteenth Century: A Calculation by Joseph Massie," *The Economic History Review* 10, no. 1 (1957): 30-45. His work was also discussed in a pair of articles from Peter Lindert and Jeffrey Williamson who questioned the accuracy of some of his numbers in his social table, on account of generous estimations and rounding, and which served as an indictment of the colonial sugar interests. See Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Revising England's Social Tables 1688-1812," *Explorations in Economic History* 19 (1982): 385-408 and Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Reinterpreting Britain's Social Tables, 1688-1913," *Explorations in Economic History* 20 (1983): 94-109. Massie's calculations regarding families and yearly income for the "middling sort" were also briefly discussed in Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 62-5.

¹⁰ Julian Hoppit, "The Contexts and Contours of British Economic Literature, 1660-1760," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 1 (2006): 84-5.

related statistics with the laudable, though perhaps impossible, goal at the time of establishing economics as a quantifiable, objective, and respectable science. In particular, his hopes to create a public mercantile library in London were not realized, as he was unable to receive enough patronage. He was an underappreciated writer in this period, and this is reflected in the historiography, though this is, in part, because eighteenth century economic and statistical works generally have been overshadowed by those from the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.¹¹

However, his extensive studies on a range of commercial and taxation matters led him to become a leading critic of the Caribbean plantation colonies, challenging some of the most powerful economic interests of his day. This has, to date, been shown most prominently in Richard Sheridan's seminal work on the economic history of the British West Indies.¹² In a series of pamphlets, which will be considered here, published during the Seven Years' War, Massie sought to expose the sinister nature of the slave-based plantation economies and how the elites in these societies, especially in Barbados and Jamaica, were unjustly "fleecing" the British people. His economic computations, though difficult to always verify, were extensive and well-researched, and form the basis of his criticism: that the mercantilist system of prohibitive tariffs allowed planters to gouge people in Britain. Additionally, he made an emotional and humanitarian plea striking at the tyranny and cruelty exhibited by these island "plantocracies". Therefore, he presents a particularly remarkable two-fold argument: that the system was both uneconomical and morally abhorrent. Yet, at the same time, his lack of prominence in the historical record suggests he was never more than only a very minor nuisance to planters.

The sugar plantations of the Caribbean were some of the most lucrative areas within the

¹¹ Julian Hoppit, "Political Arithmetic in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Economic History Review* 49, no. 3 (1996): 516.

¹² Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Lodge Hill, Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974), 73.

expanding European imperial spheres in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The British began colonizing the islands in the early 1600s, and Barbados was settled from 1627-1635.¹³ Richard Dunn has estimated that during the decade that followed between two and three hundred individuals essentially took control of the island and the sugar industry, forming a distinct colonial aristocracy.¹⁴ By 1655 the increasingly confident and aggressive English planters encouraged the seizure of Jamaica from Spain.¹⁵ Writing just over a century later, Samuel Johnson asserted that, at that time, the island was “probably of little value to the *Spaniards*,” but was then transformed “and continues to this day a place of great wealth and dreadful wickedness, a den of tyrants, and a dungeon of slaves.”¹⁶ Those who were able to consolidate territories on these islands, such as the Beckford, Price, or Lascelles families, were able to build truly dynastic wealth, while those on the Leeward Islands typically featured smaller estates.¹⁷ Indeed, the scale of many of the vast tropical estates, built in a relatively short time span, rivalled those back in Britain. These sugar islands became a trading nexus of imperial economic activity, fueled by

¹³ Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 229-32.

¹⁴ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000 [1972]), 48.

¹⁵ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 20-1.

¹⁶ Samuel Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” in *The Literary Magazine: Or, Universal Review: For the Year MDCCLVI* (London: Printed for J. Richardson, 1756), 1:4. Johnson’s anti-imperialism is addressed more substantially in the third chapter. He was also later quoted by James Callender, who, writing in the 1790s, was one of the fiercest critics of the British government and empire. See James Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain; or an Impartial History of Abuses in the Government of the British Empire, in Europe, Asia, and America*, 3rd ed. (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1795), 94.

¹⁷ For instance, William Beckford, a Jamaican planter who served as Lord Mayor of London in 1762-3 and 1769-70, was one of the wealthiest men in Britain at the time. For a recent biography, see Perry Gauci, *William Beckford: First Prime Minister of the London Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). Many created huge commercial empires. For a case study of the Lascelles family see S. D. Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For a history of British settlement and planter societies in the Leeward Islands see Natalie A. Zacek, *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands, 1670-1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

capital from Europe, slaves from Africa, and raw materials from North America.¹⁸

According to historian Elizabeth Halcrow, the main sugar islands went through a number of distinct phases of economic development and demographic transformation in this period. Colonization in places such as Barbados was initially characterized by the settlement of white planter families with relatively small land holdings, in the early-to-mid seventeenth century. This was followed by a period of consolidation of estates and a corresponding surge in slave imports to the point that they greatly outnumbered whites and largely replaced indentured labour, by the turn of the century. Or, in the words of Massie, “a few of those SHARKS *would devour the FREEHOLDS* of the greater Part of the *English* Families settled there, and drive them out of that Island to make room for *Negroes-Slaves*, to till the Lands which those *Englishmen* had planted and settled.”¹⁹ Then, by the mid-eighteenth century, sugar production was reaching a high plateau, as were the number of slave imports.²⁰ This last period, from approximately the late 1730s until 1775 constituted a period of maximum profitability for the planters, especially from the end of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 until 1775, just before the American Revolution, in what historian Richard Pares has called the “silver age of sugar”.²¹

The transformation of these islands over a relatively short period of time has been described as the “sugar revolution”.²² This refers to the shift from small scale settlement and agricultural production towards an intensive monoculture, where sugar was the only crop

¹⁸ One recent history that details the significance of the sugar islands in British imperial history and discusses some of the wealthiest planters, and their families, is Matthew Parker, *The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire, and War in the West Indies* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).

¹⁹ Joseph Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 2nd ed. (London, 1761), 11.

²⁰ Elizabeth M. Halcrow, *Canes and Chains: A Study of Sugar and Slavery* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1982), 8.

²¹ Richard Pares, *Merchants and Planters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 40. During these years prices remained about 50% higher than they had been in the 1730s. Pares was also quoted in David Richardson, “The Slave Trade, Sugar, and British Economic Growth, 1748-1776,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 4 (1987): 748.

²² Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*, 73-85.

produced in any significant amount. The best example of this was on Barbados, from 1640-1660.²³ Though it made the island an extremely wealthy place, for those able to participate, it also made them uniquely dependent on the success of one crop and on outsiders for imports of slaves and food. The result was severe environmental degradation, as rapid development and overproduction quickly exhausted the soil on the islands. Though tobacco was perhaps worse on the soil, the large sugar estates where little else was grown, and where proper rotation was not practiced, saw the largest declines in output.²⁴ According to Massie, the islands “were worn out of Heart by incessant Culture,”²⁵ and “considering the bad Husbandry of many *British* Planters, in not giving their *Lands* Time to recover their Fertility”²⁶ they required ever-further territorial expansion and the importation of greater numbers of slaves; the system seemed unsustainable.

The sugar and slave industry was thus highly intensive, in terms of capital and labour, and additionally with respect to its effect on the land; so much was at stake and the islands were perennially at risk of supply shocks. But, despite the massive wealth generated and their profitability, many of the estate holders were actually highly inefficient with their use of labour, in having slaves perform menial tasks in the off season. Just to create work, they would often have to till the land by hoe instead of ploughing. In his *Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith commented on this extensive use of human labour and lack of innovation, writing “the culture of the sugar cane, as it is managed at present, is all hand labour, though, in the opinion of many, the drill plough might be introduced into it with great advantage.”²⁷ That such a system persisted was a reflection of overpopulation and poor management, but it was enabled and could be

²³ Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex*, 82-3. For a recent study of early Barbados see Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

²⁴ Patrick Richardson, ed. *Empire & Slavery* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1968), 5-6; 13.

²⁵ Joseph Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade* (London: printed for T. Payne, 1759), 34.

²⁶ Joseph Massie, *Calculations and Observations relating to an Additional Duty upon Sugar* (London, 1759), 1.

²⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1776), 2:185.

supported so long as the cost of materials, food, and of slaves, or labour, were low enough.²⁸

Many planters also ran up huge debts in Britain in order to sustain operations. Indeed, Sheridan has estimated that planters typically owed British creditors large sums; for instance, around £720,000 was owed in St. Kitts, more than £2,000,000 was owed in Granada, and possibly as much as £3,000,000 was owed in Jamaica.²⁹ This was revealed as a particularly acute problem during the 1763 and 1772 financial crises, when speculative booms went bust and bankruptcies ensued. Massie would also make the case that many planters, who began to live extravagant lifestyles, could be found frequenting London's gambling houses, for "[w]hen *Colony-Farmers* live like BRITISH NOBLEMEN, it cannot be a Wonder that such of them as do so, should contract vast Debts."³⁰ Indeed, many planters by the mid-eighteenth century lived as absentees in Britain, at least those who had made their fortunes and then allowed attorneys or overseers to manage their island affairs.³¹

Though commodity prices and profitability tended to fluctuate, Massie figured that on average 100 pounds of *muscovado* sugar³² could be produced for 4s, including taxes. Considering it sold for about 8s, that amounted to a 100% profit margin. For him, a profit of 1s was reasonable and necessary for them to maintain their families, but the additional 3s of pure profit, was excessive.³³ He questioned the production numbers given by planters in estimating that 2000 pounds could be produced per acre and that each shilling of profit made per 100 pounds of sugar equaled an annual profit of 3s 9p per acre of land. As the estates typically

²⁸ Halcrow, *Canes and Chains*, 80-1. Richard Pares calculated that the prices of slaves roughly tripled from 1660 to 1790; see Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, 38.

²⁹ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 463-6.

³⁰ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 82.

³¹ Richardson, ed. *Empire & Slavery*, 6-7. Also, see 'Debtors and Creditors' in Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, 38-50.

³² *Muscovado* is a dark brown and coarse variety of sugar with a high molasses content that was typical of Barbados, and considered to be of low quality. It was produced from the juices of the sugarcane and was often shipped unrefined from the Caribbean to Britain, where it would be refined for use in rum production and for consumption.

³³ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 43.

ranged in size from 300-900 acres and held up to 300 slaves, the scale was truly enormous. Such large sugar estates were valued at £30,000 – £40,000.³⁴ Though in the 1690s the planters earned twice what landholders in England did,³⁵ at the time of writing, he calculated that they could earn about four times as much on their land as the English landholders earned on theirs.³⁶ This seemed to him a severe disconnection in a world of finite wealth, and his writings were supposed to serve as a wakeup call for the English landed elite.

The societies that developed on the tropical Caribbean islands were anything but virtuous; it was an area that seemingly brought out, particularly in the planters and overseers, some of the worst aspects of human behaviour. This was in many ways unsurprising to Massie, who referenced Josiah Child's characterization of the "*loose vagrant People, vicious and destitute*" who originally populated British plantation colonies, such as Virginia and Barbados.³⁷ The island "plantocracies" were effectively tyrannical garrison states, quasi-feudal in nature, where a narrow white minority ruled over a much larger enslaved black majority. Yet, their white militias, which functioned as para-military police forces that suppressed slave revolts and defended against any foreign incursions, were relatively small in numbers, especially as the colonies aged and the white populations fell.³⁸ As such, they typically were only sufficient to maintain order on the islands, and provided little to no assistance to Britain during any major conflicts, but would often needed additional protection.

In many ways these islands reflected the obverse of the British conception of virtue in a supposedly enlightened age. The islands were essentially lawless, governed not by the rule of

³⁴ Halcrow, *Canes and Chains*, 67.

³⁵ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 46-7.

³⁶ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 81.

³⁷ Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 10.

³⁸ Bruce P. Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688-1783* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 147.

law or any constitutional settlement, but by the whims of men who maintained their power through campaigns of violence and terror. Additionally, it was unlikely that the system would ever improve itself, without some outside force acting upon it, considering that “the Principles of TYRANNY and CRUELTY... descend from *Father* to *Son* along with their *Sugar-Plantations*.”³⁹ Preserving order above all was crucial and such fear was justified as a guiding means towards the end goal of social order, which would offer stability and continued profitability. Planters would defend the institution of slavery in terms of property rights, as an appropriate justification in terms of the law or pre-eighteenth century custom, which often masqueraded as universal morality. Yet, Massie warned, “[b]e not deceived, Gentlemen, by the prostitute Harangues which those Miscreants and their Abettors make in Praise of *Liberty* and a *Militia*, for their Actions have shewn them to be *Wolves* in *Sheep’s Cloathing*.”⁴⁰

In his many lengthy treatises that were published in the press, directed towards freeholders and parliamentarians, Massie endeavoured to make the case that the British public did not, on the whole, benefit from the sugar colonies. The basis of his argument was that Britain ran a persistent trade deficit with the Caribbean islands, which drained the kingdom of its wealth. He calculated this large wealth transfer between the years 1727 to 1756 to prove his case. On a simple comparison, he concluded that the sugar islands exported £22,500 worth of goods more than they annually imported. However, recognizing the great many variables involved in multidirectional networks and the re-export trade, he ultimately estimated the trade loss for the period to Britain at £6,150,000. Of particular concern was the planters’ preference for East India

³⁹ Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 10. For more on the high mortality rates in the sugar colonies and through the slave trade, including an assessment of the *Zong* massacre, particularly as news filtered back to Britain, see Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 157-200.

⁴⁰ Joseph Massie, *The Rotten and Tottering State of the Popular Part of the British Constitution demonstrated* (London, 1761), 4.

and French manufactures over those produced in Britain which he figured “makes at least Twenty Thousand *Paupers* in this Kingdom, whose Maintenance costs the People of *England* about *One Hundred Thousand Pounds* a Year, and is ultimately paid by the Landholders.”⁴¹ In addition, he figured a further £3 million had been wasted “in maintaining *Ships of War, Land Forces, &c.* for the Protection and Defence of the *British Sugar-Colonies*, within Thirty Years past, as those Charges are so much real Loss to the Persons who have paid the Money.”⁴²

Though his numbers would be subject to ongoing modifications, his case against the planter was only strengthened as time went on, especially considering the significant rise in sugar prices that had taken place from the end of the 1730s into the 1750s. By the time of Massie’s writing, into the American Revolution, prices averaged an elevated level 40% higher than they had been in the earlier part of the century, despite the doubling of the quantity imported into Britain.⁴³

This argument of the sugar colonies being a fiscal liability was later echoed by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, where he argued against the colonial system, but that trans-Atlantic trade was positive overall. His criticism was that

the stock which has improved and cultivated the sugar colonies of England has, a great part of it, been sent out from England, and has by no means been altogether the produce of the soil and industry of the colonists. The prosperity of the English sugar colonies has been, in a great measure, owing to the great riches of England, of which a part has overflowed, if one may say so, upon those colonies.⁴⁴

The problem lay in the nature of island development, as it constituted an unfair, political, transfer of wealth from the Old World to the New. Writers who followed in this line of thinking have been described as neo-Smithian by the historian Richard Sheridan, who positions them opposite

⁴¹ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 14.

⁴² Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 54.

⁴³ Calculations come from Richardson, “The Slave Trade, Sugar, and British Economic Growth, 1748-1776,” 747-8. For a complete list of sugar prices for the period see Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 496-7.

⁴⁴ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:187.

Burke and his intellectual disciples, neo-Burkeans, as defenders of the Atlantic empire and of the sugar islands as a benefit to Britain.⁴⁵ However, the critics of this empire presented a number of crucial arguments, in which they contended that the colonies were a drain on Britain since they cost enormous sums to defend; they diverted British capital and population; and their products were expensive.⁴⁶ However, it must be noted that the debate was ongoing at the time and defenders, such as the planter-historian Edward Long would make the case that Britain, or at least the government, gained more revenue by the colonies than were spent to maintain them.⁴⁷

Writing in the early 1790s of his European travels, Arthur Young also made an extensive case that possession of sugar colonies did not benefit the European kingdoms. His studies primarily focused on the French experience of how these islands effectively drained the metropole of badly needed resources that should have been put to productive use at home. He especially argued that the most pernicious negative consequence was the lack of domestic agricultural production, and periodic starvation. He further pointed out that “[t]he result of the French sugar trade, resembles nearly that which England carries on with her sugar colonies, namely, an immense balance against her.”⁴⁸ In particular, he noted that

[t]he possession of sugar islands, so rich and prosperous as those of France and England, dazzles the understandings of mankind, who are apt to look only on one side, where they see navigation, re-export, commercial profit, and a great circulation: they do not reverse the medal, and see, in the mischievous deviation of capitals from home, agriculture languishing, canals standing still, and roads impassable.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 5-11.

⁴⁶ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 7.

⁴⁷ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 473.

⁴⁸ Arthur Young, *Travels During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789. Undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources, and national prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (Bury St. Edmund's: J. Rackham, 1792), 492.

⁴⁹ Young, *Travels*, 494.

Thus, he made the case that while there were obviously beneficiaries in the islands, there had to be a corresponding number of losses on the other side.

While many observers may have wanted to focus solely on the benefits of the lucrative sugar trade and its re-export, he argued that “[t]he benefit of such a trade is nothing more than the *profit* on the exchange and transport. But in the employment of capital, the loss is great.”⁵⁰ He was determined to make the point that chronic underdevelopment of the domestic economy, particularly in terms of infrastructure and agriculture, was often the overlooked other side of the ledger. As well, it did not take into account defence costs, where he used the example of St. Domingo, explaining, “France pays a marine of two millions, but St. Domingo does not pay one shilling to defend France, or even to defend itself. In common sense, the possession of such a province ought to be deemed a principle of poverty and weakness, rather than of riches and of strength.”⁵¹ This supposed ignorance remained at the nation’s own peril as well, for,

[i]f you purchase the riches that flow from America by the poverty and wretchedness of whole provinces, are you blind enough to think the account a beneficial one? I have used no arguments against the French sugar islands that are not applicable likewise to the English: I hold them to be equal obstacles to the prosperity of both kingdoms.⁵²

Ultimately these writers viewed the possession of such colonies as sources of weakness, rather than strength. Though some parties, primarily planters and merchants, clearly benefited from the arrangement, policy makers and observers also needed to focus on that which was unseen in order to more accurately judge the value of these possessions and corresponding trade networks.

In addition to the case that the islands were very much a financial drain on the British nation, and adding insult to injury, was Massie’s argument that in Britain people were paying far

⁵⁰ Young, *Travels*, 494.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Young, *Travels*, 495.

too much for their sugar and rum. He argued that this was the consequence of an artificial environment, directly created by closing off British markets to foreign sugar and the malicious planter who would eagerly overcharge a helpless public. In Britain, at the time, there was effectively a prohibition on the importation of foreign sugar as the duties had been gradually ratcheted up, from 200% in 1661, to 268% in 1698, to 342% in 1705.⁵³ The effect was that British planters had the advantage of selling in a relatively closed market and enjoyed great leeway in setting the price. Further, as consumer demand for sugar also grew significantly in the period, alongside that of tea, prices rose some 5 to 20% between 1716 and 1770.⁵⁴

His computations, showed that at the prevailing price of £2 4s, per 112 pounds of *muscovado* sugar, £1 2s 6p was the “exorbitant part” built into the cost for British consumers. In order to arrive at this figure he stripped out production costs, freight charges and other expenses, valued at 16s 6p; what he felt was a suitable profit margin, 3s 9p; and a further 1s 3p in case of bad weather, harvest, or a tough market. The remainder, being £1 1s 6p, is what he calculated as the fair price for that amount of sugar; thus, making the case that the British were paying over double, or more approximately 207%, the market price. Clearly, he wrote, “our Sugar-Planters have most ungratefully abused the Protection granted to them by the Legislature, and by their Exorbitance have amassed vast Fortunes at the Expence of their Fellow-Subjects.”⁵⁵ From his perspective the public was clearly being gouged, though many may not generally have been aware of the situation. Others got around it by purchasing cheaper smuggled goods, in a phenomenon that impoverished the state by the loss of revenue, and undermined the law.⁵⁶

The unintended consequences of closing off the British market were thus that British

⁵³ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 53.

⁵⁴ Richardson, “The Slave Trade, Sugar, and British Economic Growth, 1748-1776,” 749.

⁵⁵ Massie, *Calculations and Observations relating to an Additional Duty upon Sugar*, 2.

⁵⁶ This is discussed most notably in John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 51-4.

consumers paid more than market prices for their imported goods from their sugar islands and that those very colonies grew uncompetitive in many ways, and dependent on state support to keep foreign competition out of the British market. They achieved legislative success with the 1733 Molasses Act, which gave them direct access to the Irish market, and at least theoretically closed off Irish and North American ports to all foreign sugars, molasses, and rum with prohibitive duties. Additionally, the re-export duty, from Britain, of 4.5% was dropped and the bounty for refined sugar settled at 6s per hundredweight (cwt). Later, with the Direct Export Act of 1739 British planters were allowed to ship directly to European markets, south of Cape Finisterre.⁵⁷ Yet, despite planter claims that they would be more competitive if allowed to do so, and thus lower prices for British consumers to support domestic industry, they were unable to regain the former trade from the French. Massie complained

[b]ut what our Sugar-Planters have since done, most plainly shews, that their former Professions were only *Paper-Patriotism*; though even this hath its USE, as well as *Paper-Money*, when issued in proper *Seasons* and *Quantities*; and the *Sugar-Planters* seem to have been as adroit in giving *Currency* to the Former, as the *Rhode Islanders* were in *circulating* the Latter.⁵⁸

He had little sympathy for the defences of planters or their apologists. He dismissed frequently heard arguments for high sugar prices that in some years their “*Sugar-Canes were blighted*,” or that fields “*were burnt up for want of Rain*,” or that damage was brought about by a “*great Hurricane*”. Such were ephemeral phenomena; the real cause was protectionism, from which stemmed inefficiency and the avoidable loss of the European sugar trade, as

it hath been occasioned by not permitting *foreign Sugar* to be imported into this Kingdom, upon the Payment of *only moderate Duties*; for the Want of such a Permission put it in the Power of the *British Sugar-Planters*, to make a Monopoly

⁵⁷ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 68-9.

⁵⁸ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 73.

of *Sugar* here; and the monopolizing of that Commodity at Home being *Five Times* as profitable to them, as selling *Sugar* Abroad, *they have taken* CONSTANT CARE to do the ONE, *but have left the FRENCH to do the* OTHER.⁵⁹

This focus on the lucrative British trade, which meant the loss of foreign sugar markets, was a very serious concern. This development was also an important indication of the supposed superiority of the French sugar islands, which concerned many observers.

In one significant assessment, comparing the developments of British and French sugar colonies, Adam Smith commented that “[t]he progress of the Sugar colonies of France has been at least equal, perhaps superior, to that of the greater part of those of England”.⁶⁰ His two explanations for this were that, despite better English governance, “the sugar colonies of France are not discouraged, like those of England, from refining their own sugar; and, what is of still greater importance, the genius of their government naturally introduces a better management of their negro slaves.”⁶¹ He impressed upon readers that government attempts to micro-manage the trade and production of goods were detrimental. On the other hand, a lack of regulation regarding the treatment of slaves was bad since better-kept slaves would be more productive, and in this area French arbitrary laws and practices seemed superior to the liberties British colonists enjoyed. The growing disparity in terms of productivity and output would have long-lasting consequences in terms of the ability of planters to sell their goods outside of the empire. But the problem was much larger than just a loss of market share, for as Massie explained,

this Kingdom hath not only lost the foreign *European* Sugar-Trade and Employment for 100 *Ships* and 1000 *British Seamen*, but many *Millions* of *Wealth* also; and as the said *Wealth* and *Naval Advantages* have been chiefly

⁵⁹ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 27-8.

⁶⁰ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:185.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

gained by our inveterate Enemies the *French*, those Losses have been thereby doubled to *England*.⁶²

British support for these colonies clearly came at a much higher price than paying more than market value to enjoy sweetened tea.

As well as the excessive price of colonial sugar, there remained also the persistent issue of commercial and political rivalries. British planter jealousy over Spanish wealth and French commercial ascendancy in the region, especially over their respective and lucrative colonies of Cuba and Saint-Domingue, fomented a tension and hostility which boiled over into war a number of times. The most notable example was the War of Jenkins' Ear, with Spain, which began in 1739 and then became a part of the larger War of Austrian Succession, and accelerated the downfall of Robert Walpole.⁶³ Maintaining commercial networks, amid local tensions, and keeping order in the plantations remained the utmost concerns for planters in the region; yet, for statesmen in London it was but one of the many important parts of the world in which broader imperial conflicts were manifested. While later conflicts such as the Seven Years' War, as well as the American and French Revolutionary wars did not originate in the Caribbean, it was most clearly a crucial theatre in which the planters' and governments' interests were aggressively defended by the Royal Navy and armed forces.⁶⁴

⁶² Massie, *Calculations and Observations relating to an Additional Duty upon Sugar*, 2.

⁶³ For a history of the broader conflict see Reed Browning, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993). For a history of the Jenkins' Ear episode, the Spanish conflict, and the Walpole ministry see Philip Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1998). Also, see Jeremy Black, *Debating Foreign Policy in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 99-126.

⁶⁴ For an assessment of the Navy during this period see N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1986). Also, Christian Buchet, *The British Navy, Economy and Society in the Seven Years War* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2013), which was originally published in French in 1999. British mobilization for the defence of their Caribbean and North American territories, as well as EIC holdings in India, during the Seven Years' War and American Revolution were discussed in P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For more on the contrasts and competition between Britain and Spain, over their respective New World empires see John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). The significance of Saint-Domingue, and the emergence of Haiti during the period of the French

Massie's most prolific period was during the Seven Years' War, in which the British successfully captured all the Windward Islands and annexed the supposedly four neutral islands of St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Lucia, and Tobago, which were of questionable value.⁶⁵ Up until that point, this conflict was one of the largest of the eighteenth century, and the financial strains on the British treasury were enormous. The national debt ballooned from £74,600,000 to £132,600,000 over the course of the war, an increase of over 77%.⁶⁶ By extension, this meant that the public would face an economic squeeze. As such there was no shortage of discussion on how Britain would maintain its armies in the field and its fleets at sea, and continue to meet its obligations after the war. By the end of the war the Grenville administration planned to permanently station 2,500 soldiers in the islands, of which there were reportedly 1,909 by 1775; though the local governments covered some of the associated costs.⁶⁷ Considering that the Caribbean was such an important theatre during this conflict, and the government was determined to maintain the islands, this provided an opportunity for writers such as Massie to posit a wide range of options on how the planters should contribute their share.

He determined that the best course of action would be to target the sugar planters to help fund the war costs. His proposal was that the "exorbitant part," of profits, or the £1 2s 6p per 112

Revolutionary/Napoleonic Wars and slave emancipation, were thoroughly described in Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The final decades of the eighteenth century marked a period of intense imperial competition, particularly between Britain, France, and Spain, and subsequently gave rise to new national identities and the rejection of distant rulers in many New World colonies. See Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 2 (2008): 319-340. Also, on the topic of revolutions, even more broadly and into the nineteenth century, see David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁶⁵ Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688-1783*, 148.

⁶⁶ Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 29-30. There are many substantive histories about the Seven Years' War. For instance, there is Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (New York: Longman, 2011). Also, a recent thematic overview, that engages the historiography in many areas, comes from Matt Schumann and Karl W. Schweizer, *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History* (New York: Routledge, 2008). For an assessment of the war and its significance towards changing empires, identities, and cultures, at the time, see Frans De Bruyn and Shaun Regan, eds., *The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

⁶⁷ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 472.

pounds of *muscovado* sugar, should form the basis of a new duty on sugar. As this was the equivalent of £810,000 per year in income, or 60,000 hogsheads of sugar, the annual consumption in Britain, it would easily raise the £800,000 he suggested for the war effort.⁶⁸ This tax proposal would supposedly have had no effect on consumers and was to be borne solely by the planters. The way he envisioned it would be to open up the British market to foreign sugars when the price went above £2 4s, which was where it sat at the time of his writing. In this way, the tax would be paid like a regular customs duty, and competitive pressures would not allow British planters to simply pass on the cost of the additional tax to importers or consumers.

This proposal, though it appears sensible and carefully considered, does not seem to have gained any public or Parliamentary support. Massie suggested this would be a much fairer and more effective way of raising the needed revenue than what was actually being done. Instead, the government increased taxes on malt and beer, while considering additional duties on tobacco. For Massie, this was peculiar since it targeted areas where taxes were already much more substantial and where it would more adversely affect the common people. Why levy such “oppressive and otherwise destructive Taxes, when it was notorious that the public Wants might have been supplied without oppressing the industrious Poor, or injuring any Branch of our Manufacturies or Trade,”⁶⁹ he asked. According to his calculations “the intended *Tax upon Malt* would cause to be taken from each *laboring Family...Ten Shillings* yearly... upon a general Average.”⁷⁰ Before acting, he cautioned further “that wealthy Men, *who are Strangers to TOIL and HARD FARE*, may not pass over these Matters *without duly considering them*; for the several Classes of People which are therein mentioned, do constitute the very NERVES and

⁶⁸ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 87.

⁶⁹ Massie, *The Rotten and Tottering State of the Popular Part of the British Constitution demonstrated*, 4.

⁷⁰ Joseph Massie, *A supplement to the Reasons Already offered, by J. Massie, against laying any farther Tax upon Malt or Beer* (London, 1760), 1.

SINEWS of this NATION.”⁷¹

Massie recognized that revenue had to be raised somehow, but he questioned the judgment of Parliamentarians, for

[h]ow will our brave *Seamen, Soldiers* and *Militia*, stand agast at their Return home, when they find their Loss of *Blood, Health* and *Comfort*, rewarded by a *Tax* that will make each of them *Ten Shillings* a Year poorer than they were before, though their *Courage* and *Sufferings* have made those Men *richer*, who before were *rich*, and brought home *Prosperity* and *Honour* to others, while they themselves will be to pine in *Misery*; and all this, while *rapacious* Sugar-Planters and *Slavish* Negro-Drivers, have been exorbitantly raising, by *Sugar, Melassas* and *Rum*, three Times as much Money yearly, upon the People of *Great-Britain*, as that pinch-Belly *Tax* would bring in.⁷²

He calculated that the malt and beer taxes would bring in far less revenue than his proposed sugar duty, yet it would cost the average labourer one week of work each year. This was on top of the two extra days of work families already had to put in to pay for above-market priced sugar.⁷³ But alas, as Massie exclaimed, “instead of garnishing *Tyburn*, our present Sugar-Planters fleece ye at the Rate of ONE MILLION OF POUNDS a Year, by which ye may see to your Sorrow and Shame, what it is *to save THIEVES from the GALLOWS*, and *PEOPLE your Colonies with FELONS*.”⁷⁴ The scope of the injustice was huge, and something akin to running a criminal enterprise.

The First Carib War

The island of St. Vincent was one of many territories to be passed back and forth between the British and French over much of the eighteenth century. Having gained the island from the

⁷¹ Massie, *A supplement to the Reasons Already offered, by J. Massie, against laying any farther Tax upon Malt or Beer*, 1.

⁷² Massie, *A supplement to the Reasons Already offered, by J. Massie, against laying any farther Tax upon Malt or Beer*, 2.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 10.

French in 1763, it was shortly thereafter slated to be carved up and parceled out to establish new plantations by the Board of Trade. It was not long before tensions with the local Caribs flared up, for whom the island was really the last major independent population centre.⁷⁵ The subsequent intermittent war over control of the island between 1769 and 1773 provides an instructive case study over the nature of the support the British government offered planters when they desired to expand their territories. In particular, the major military campaign of 1772 was a blatant act of aggression for the purposes of colonial expansion which was justified in terms of expanding economic opportunities on the best parts of the island and by stoking fears of Carib partnership with the French, but where many supporters were put on the defensive. While land commissioners, such as William Young, actively promoted British colonization on the islands and the subordination of the Caribs, a number of individuals, including Granville Sharp and Samuel Estwick, as well as a handful of anonymous writers and opponents of the North administration, opposed such blatant acts of injustice and inhumanity. In his recently published masterful study on eighteenth century British evaluations and critiques of their empire, Jack Greene has extensively examined the consternation with which many Britons viewed this episode and the actions of their government, in support of settler interests.⁷⁶ The assessment that follows builds upon his analysis and bridges some other existing historiography.

In late 1771 Major General William Dalrymple was sent to force the Caribs into submission, or to remove them entirely from the island, in order to facilitate further settlement on the windward side of the island. The two regiments of over one thousand men, and supported by the Royal Navy, made little progress against the fewer than five hundred Carib guerrilla fighters.

⁷⁵ Bernard Marshall, "The Black Caribs – Native Resistance to British Penetration Into the Windward Side of St. Vincent," *Caribbean Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1973): 4.

⁷⁶ See Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1-19 and 156-99.

As news of the expedition's setbacks filtered back to Britain, critics began to speak out against this action.⁷⁷ Writing about the misdeeds of Britons in the colonies and warning of God's potential retribution, Granville Sharp asked "[w]hat '*bloody crime*'... was more notorious, and more wickedly premediated, than the late *Invasion* and *Conquest* of the poor innocent CARRIBEES at ST. VINCENT's?"⁷⁸ Likewise Estwick, writing to Lord Mansfield, questioned the justice "in the island, where *English troops, trampling on the laws of God and man, are slaughtering even to extirpation a guiltless race of Caribs, the aborigines of the country*".⁷⁹

Another rendering of the events came from the anonymous author, Probus,⁸⁰ in *The Scots Magazine*, in an open letter dated from November 30th, directed to William Legge, Lord Dartmouth, then recently appointed as Secretary of State for the Colonies. The author announced "[w]ere I longer to defer laying before the public an uncommon scene of cruelty carrying on in the island of St Vincent, against the innocent, natural inhabitants, I might justly be suspected of having deserted the cause of civil liberty..."⁸¹ She implored: "[i]t is to you, my Lord, these unfortunate islanders must look for instant relief, if it be not too late, to put a stop to the murderous commission sent out by your predecessor to extirpate them."⁸²

She recognized that by force of treaty, the French had only controlled part of the island, having been granted permission to settle there by the Caribs, and the border was clearly

⁷⁷ Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 6.

⁷⁸ Granville Sharp, *The Law of Retribution; or, a serious warning to Great Britain and her colonies, founded on unquestionable examples of God's temporal vengeance against tyrants, slave-holders, and oppressors* (London: W. Richardson, 1776), 35.

⁷⁹ Samuel Estwick, *Considerations on the negroe cause commonly so called, addressed to the Right Honourable Lord Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench, &c.*, 2nd ed. (London: printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall, 1773), 51-2.

⁸⁰ It is possible that this was one of Charlotte Forman's articles. She published under the pseudonym of Probus on many diplomatic and political economy topics in *The Gazetteer* and other London newspapers at the time. She was identified as such by John Almon in 1805, after her death. Her biographical information comes from the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, in an entry written by Susan Staves.

⁸¹ Probus, "To Lord Dartmouth," in *The Scots Magazine* (Edinburgh), 34 (1772): 588.

⁸² *Ibid.*

delineated by a mountain chain. She further explained that the British should have respected the established boundaries, but

the disgraceful truth shall be told. – Lord Hillsborough listened to a petition, framed with the most selfish views by some merchants here, who had purchased or lent money on lands at St Vincent, and backed by the first commissioner for the sale of lands there. On a pretence that their estates are not secure while the free black inhabitants possess their ancient settlements behind the chain of mountains, (a part of the island to which the French never laid any claim), a commission was issued, which costs this nation 12,000 l. per ann. to extirpate all the black native free inhabitants, who refuse to quit their possessions, and to suffer themselves to be transported to the barren island of St Matthew.

Resistance might be well expected, and now intelligence is received, that British troops are employed to put these people to the sword, under the specious pretext of destroying insurgents. Thus is the British government reviving the Spanish cruelties at the conquest of Mexico, to gratify avaricious merchants, landholders, and venal commissioners.

A word to the humane, to the just, to the wise, is sufficient: let me therefore intreat you to dispatch a sloop without loss of time from Plymouth in suspend this bloody commission, that it may not become a subject of parliamentary inquiry.⁸³

She lays the blame squarely at the feet of the British authorities, exposing the violence they had unleashed on the native inhabitants, likening their behaviour to that of the Spanish conquistadors. On the other hand, it was only natural for the Caribs to resist territorial encroachment.

A similar argument, though one appealing somewhat more to the legality of the St. Vincent expedition, appeared in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* by the anonymous author *Homo Sum*. He made the case that

according to the laws of NATURAL *justice*, the *first occupants* of an *insular* territory acquire the *dominion* of it. Therefore as the present measure is soley calculated to *dis-seize* and *banish* the Caribbs from this island, it evidently cannot be founded in *natural* justice, much less is it founded on good *faith*. For before we conquered that island, the Caribbs were a FREE people, and acknowledged as

⁸³ Ibid.

such by the French King, during the whole time he enjoyed the imperial sovereignty of that island.⁸⁴

He rejected the notion that making war on the Caribs, with the purpose of pacifying or expelling them from the island, was good or sound public policy. He likened it to something a despotic ruler, such as a Russian czarina, would do, but that it could not be justified by any British ruler. As such, boundaries needed to be respected since

the Caribbs, who *within* the narrow limits of *their* territorial acquisitions in the island of St. Vincent govern themselves by *their own laws and customs*; and although they do neither receive nor send Ambassadors to other Courts, no more than the lesser Sovereign Counts in Germany, or the little sovereign state of St. Remo, yet are they a people *sui juris*, and consequently *sovereigns* within their own little territory...⁸⁵

Further, as self-acknowledged subjects of the British Crown they were also entitled to the same rights as all other subjects, and as such their displacement or banishment would be “a violation not only of the law of nations, but of the *constitutional* laws of this *realm*.”⁸⁶

These short missives from published sources form an important part of the public outcry in this instance where the legality and morality of those involved were notably brought into question. There was also an impressive Parliamentary debate over the matter in December 1772, where members of the opposition exploited the failings of British forces. They also highlighted the injustice of the mission, and brought into question this project of conquest in support of the planters’ interests, in order to embarrass Lord North’s government.⁸⁷ Based on the inquiry that was made “it was finally resolved, that the measure was founded in injustice, and reflected

⁸⁴ Essay by “Homo Sum” in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London), February 20, 1773.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ A record of the debates was published, along with important papers and correspondence related to the expedition against the Caribs in *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T. C. Hansard, Peterborough-Court, Fleet-Street, 1813), XVII:568-638; also, the debates were assessed in Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 6-11; 13-4.

dishonor on the National Character, a violation of the natural rights of mankind, and totally subversive of that liberty it gloried to defend.”⁸⁸ As a result, Dalrymple was ordered to end hostilities and a peace treaty made on February 27, 1773.⁸⁹

The most thorough and powerful assessment, though, came from Thomas Parker, a lawyer at Lincoln’s Inn, and about whom little else is known, other than that he produced one of the most substantial critiques of British overseas conduct in this period.⁹⁰ His brief history of this conflict best summarizes the events and makes very clear that the British were entirely in the wrong. He argued that the British never should have gotten involved here, and interfered with the lives of the peaceful native farmers, but instead they followed “the example of those of our nation, who had before disregarded the natural rights of men, and the feelings of humanity, in possessing themselves of many parts of the provinces of America; by destroying the ancient inhabitants...”⁹¹ This truly national injustice also went unpunished “by letting all that had been done against these poor Caribbes pass without a single censure either on those that proposed the cruel treatment of them, or on those without whose authority it could not have been carried into execution, and by leaving them at the mercy of their oppressors.” He continued “[a]fter the whole transaction was enquired into, it amounted to little less than a public declaration, that all the obligations of natural justice and humanity must give place to the present interest of our own people, in any part of the world, where they had themselves, or we could give them the superiority.”⁹² He closed his history of the event by challenging readers to consider

⁸⁸ Charles Shephard, *An Historical Account of the Island of Saint Vincent* (London: W. Nicol, Cleveland Row, St. James’s, 1831), 30.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Both Christopher Brown and Jack Greene have examined Parker’s work. See Brown, *Moral Capital*, 204-5; and the ‘Epilogue’ of Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 341-62.

⁹¹ Thomas Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies, with An Enquiry into the General Conduct of Great Britain to Other Countries from the Peace of Paris, in 1763* (London: Printed for Charles Dilly, 1782), 17.

⁹² *Ibid.*

what we should think of the character of that nation, whose public sentence declared, that there was nothing wrong in all that had been done – that the men who had designed and authorised all this, had done it because it was their interest and their pleasure; and that the interest of native subjects and the pleasures of men in public stations, were worthy of much more consideration, than the rights and lives of a few hundred people, of whom we knew nothing more than that they were of foreign extraction. But when the reader has seen this part of our public conduct in its just degree of enormity, he has certainly only seen a very minute representation of what has been done, and approved of by the people of this country, to the natives of Asia, of Africa, and of America.⁹³

His evaluation offered an extremely moving indictment of those involved on the island, and also of Britons more broadly, for accepting this inhumanity and injustice as normal.

These writers clearly viewed the British as the oppressors in this case, blaming specifically land speculators, planters, and the British forces that supported them, but in this case failed in their attempt to enable territorial expansion. From the British perspective, this was only a very brief and relatively minor frontier war, yet the episode revealed a sense of unease and concern on the part of a number of individuals over native dispossession and the blatant inhumanity and oppressive nature of colonizing forces. While there were numerous supporters of the British cause as well, this brief analysis only focused on those who rejected the claims of those in power to be spreading justice while in fact doing quite the opposite.

Warnings on Empire (Coming Home)

Writing extensively for the newspapers in the 1750s and 1760s, Massie's target audience was primarily the estate holders in Britain, and particularly those who held seats in Parliament. His extensive study of the sugar industry and the many concerns he had with plantation societies, including the wealth unjustly accumulated by such a small few, was to serve as a stern warning for an older, established elite. Indeed, just as the nabobs who returned to Britain from eastern

⁹³ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 18.

misadventures would be vilified as upstart, *nouveaux-riches* of questionable, and newfound oriental character, so too were there an increasing number returning from the sugar plantations having acquired far more wealth than ever could have been made back home.⁹⁴ Questioning their methods of acquiring, and subsequently their imprudently flaunting, of new wealth, Massie bitterly commented that

[c]ertainly this is the most superlative Instance of *Folly*, and the greatest Burlesque upon *Husbandry*, that any Age or Country hath yet produced. – And so marvellously have such *Coaches* thriven in Number, of late Years, that *Forty* or *Fifty* of them are said to have paraded at *Noon-Day* in the Face of the PEOPLE.

But I have shewn how many *Millions of Wealth* it hath cost the People of *Great Britain*, to feed the Folly, Extravagance, and Exorbitance of those *Sugar-Planters*, within Thirty Years past; and as the said PEOPLE have gained their WEALTH and POWER by INDUSTRY and FRUGALITY, I am persuaded it will not be thought Right, that their *Privileges, Property, and Power*, should be devoured by *Presumption, Exorbitance, and Luxury*.⁹⁵

His warning was two-fold. On one hand, he was making an economic case that since so much wealth had flowed into the hands of such a tiny minority they would have the ability to buy up estates, or potentially other assets, right out from under the existing landed aristocracy in Britain. Though this trend was already in motion by the time of the Seven Years' War, he feared it would happen with greater frequency and would therefore upset, or entirely overturn, an historic balance of power throughout the country. What was already a highly inegalitarian structure would become even more so, though perhaps in an unjustifiably excessive way, since

⁹⁴ According to Richard Pares, "[t]he absentee sugar planters were, with the East India Nabobs, the most conspicuous rich men of their time." Planters of coffee, indigo, tobacco, and rice never compared financially. See Pares, *Merchants and Planters*, 38. Questions about 'oriental despotism' and the corrupting influence of nabobs in Britain are addressed more thoroughly in the fourth chapter. Also, see Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our Execrable Banditti': Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain," *Albion* 16, no. 3 (1984): 225-241; Christina Smylitopoulos, "Rewritten and Reused: Imaging the Nabob through 'Upstart Iconography'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32, Issue 2 (2008): 39-59; and Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁹⁵ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 66-7.

the concentration of wealth that the planters enjoyed was the consequence of a policy design that directly transferred to them part of the purchasing power of all Britons who operated within the bounds of the law in their sugar, molasses, and rum purchases.

The other part of his case questioned the character of the planter and the implications for British society. Though they may have technically been British, in many ways they were not, since they did not reflect the post-1688 identity of freeborn Britons. Their hybrid identities were the consequences of their slaving enterprises and living abroad in unhealthy tropical climes, making them culturally inferior, as exotic and degenerated Britons.⁹⁶ Here, Massie questioned the moral judgment of planters, related specifically to child-rearing:

[t]hough it is said, that the Sugar-Planters are so frugal of *Regard for their Children*, as to have them suckled by *Negroe-Women*; and if...Children suck in the good or bad Qualities of their Nurses, savage *African Women* reduced to Slavery, cannot be proper Nurses for the Children of *British Subjects*.⁹⁷

Furthermore, he also posed important questions related to ongoing concerns over standing armies and the protection of the constitutional settlement of 1688. Since they were generally quick to support militias and dictatorial rule in the islands, why would they not do the same if given the chance in Britain? Thus, they represented a direct threat to the liberties that free-born Britons enjoyed, as they could not be trusted to uphold those same values that supposedly made Britain so exceptional. Such individuals who only knew and understood rule by terror and the sword

⁹⁶ These sensitive cultural and identity issues have been addressed by many noted scholars. For instance, see Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Also, Kevin Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British Atlantic World, 1770-1850* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 33-112. The first four chapters of Hutchings, considering Atlantic colonies and slavery, are particularly useful here. From the 1730s on slavery was considered incompatible with metropolitan conceptions of 'Britishness'. See Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the Wider World 1600-1850* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 64-5. Also, fears about miscegenation were an underlying theme of the period, even influencing abolitionists. See Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), 56-8. For a broader history of European and indigenous contact and identities in the Caribbean, see Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (New York: Methuen, 1986).

⁹⁷ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 72.

could not then be expected to protect the property and freedoms of Britons or be able to consider the good of the realm in their decision-making. This made them, at least potentially, a liability for the nation, not an asset. For,

[t]he Sugar Planters are so accustomed from their Infancy to exercise TYRANNY and *lawless CRUELTY* over miserable *Negroe-Slaves*, that it is surprising any among ye should be so inattentive to the *Preservation of LIBERTY* as to think of them for your Representatives; because ye all know the Proverb says, *What is bred in the BONE will never out of the FLESH*; and that ye may know what hath been bred in the *Bones of Sugar Planters*.⁹⁸

Clearly this sort of barbaric behaviour was something unfitting of the qualities of a proper English gentleman, who was supposed to watch over the island kingdom and preserve the constitution. The many dangers from abroad would come home to roost, as for example,

the *British Sugar Colonies*, instead of continuing in a State of *Freedom and Equality* according to the happy CONSTITUTION of *their MOTHER COUNTRY*, have been most horribly depopulated of *free Inhabitants*, and reduced to a State of *petty Tyranny* and *miserable Slavery*; which in less Degree, is also the Condition of most of the *British North American Colonies*; insomuch, that of late Years *Negroe-Population* hath got footing in the cold Climate of NEW ENGLAND; which shews that it is not naturally impossible for OLD ENGLAND to be depopulated of the greater Part of the *free Inhabitants*, and repeopled with *Negroe-Slaves*, in the same Manner, and by such Sort of Men, as have long since so depopulated and repeopled *Barbadoes, Jamaica, &c.*⁹⁹

His description of the slave-based colonies display a clear disdain he held for the savagery of the planters. He also highlighted their inability to readjust to life in Britain, let alone to serve as functioning members of a landed ruling class with access to the king. Individuals who spent a good part of their lives away from the islands whose air made men free were unworthy of enjoying the same rights they so readily would deny others, and as such were unfit to rule.

⁹⁸ Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 10.

⁹⁹ Massie, *Brief Observations concerning the Management of the War, and the Means to prevent the Ruin of Great Britain*, 11.

This commentary also is akin to Edmund Burke's warning later on in the century about the tendency of returning imperial soldiers and administrators towards autocracy, having grown accustomed to life in the 'Asiatic despotisms'.¹⁰⁰ Such attitudes clearly reflected a certain fear and distrust towards the outside world and its ability to tarnish the character of any Briton who stayed abroad for any length of time.¹⁰¹ With regards to planter influence, Massie thought this was the product of a deliberate arrangement between Britain and the sugar colonies which was not mutually beneficial. It might have been, initially, and should have remained so,

but of late Years, the *Sugar-Colony Interest* hath branched out into all Sorts of Irregularities, and hath thereby acquired so unnatural and mis-shaped an Appearance, that without the Aid of a great deal of pruning, I do not see how any Man can readily distinguish, *what Sort of INTEREST it is*.¹⁰²

Here he painted a picture of the islands as abnormalities that were growing and thriving, in a parasitical manner, feeding off the life blood of the British nation. This was a direct attack on the individuals who made their fortunes overseas, and rose above the stations in life that they would have occupied had they remained in Britain. They were problematic since they threatened an established, and theoretically unchanging, socio-economic hierarchy, and could potentially disrupt the political establishment. Massie urged his readers to consider that

[f]rom the immense Wealth so vilely acquired by those Enslavers of Mankind, and from the lately increasing Numbers of them in the Island, there is all imaginable Reason to fear, that the rotten Borough Towns, which now deprive ye

¹⁰⁰ Burke's perspectives towards Asian societies and the fear of autocratic tendencies among rulers are addressed more substantially in the fourth chapter. Also, see Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997).

¹⁰¹ One notable example was that of Thomas Picton, the military governor of Trinidad from 1797-1803, who received notoriety for his brutal, authoritarian rule and was put on trial in 1806 for the torture of Louisa Calderon, a free mulatto woman. The case exposed the inconsistencies between British ideals and colonial realities. James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic During the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁰² Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 49.

of Three Parts in Four of your natural and just Share in making Laws, laying Taxes &c. will elect a Majority of those Men for Representatives.¹⁰³

Here he voiced a serious concern about the lack of just or proportional representation in Parliament and the increasing corruptibility of the institution at the hands of groups such as the West India interest. He further wrote

I cannot however help saying, that if *Colony-Interest* should be suffered to blend with the great and general Interest of these Kingdoms, the proper Landholders of *England* may, in Process of Time, be bought out of their Freeholds with *English* Money, and be out-numbered upon their own Ground.¹⁰⁴

Considering the relatively few numbers of individuals who actually returned to Britain from Barbados, Jamaica, or India these fears may have been somewhat unjustified. However, these wealthy few who returned to Britain were generally influential in political circles, beyond their numbers, and this remained a persistent theme of the period. “But surely,” Massie exclaimed, “the *English Oak* will maintain its DIGNITY, and not dishonourably bend to that paltry Reed a *Sugar-Cane*.”¹⁰⁵ This flattering reference to the established gentry, as the longstanding and resilient backbone of the nation, would later be echoed in the personal correspondence of Edmund Burke, who, in an undated draft letter addressed to the Duke of Richmond, wrote “[y]ou if you are what you ought to be are the great Oaks that shade a Country and perpetuate your benefits from Generation to Generation.”¹⁰⁶ In the former case, Massie’s

¹⁰³ Massie, *The Rotten and Tottering State of the Popular Part of the British Constitution demonstrated*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 67.

¹⁰⁶ See Edmund Burke, *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke*, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 184; and Edmund Burke, *On Empire, Liberty, and Reform: Speeches and Letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 466. Mansfield dated the draft letter to 1772, and Bromwich to 1771. This reference was also briefly mentioned as one example of a late eighteenth century defence of aristocratic authority in P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2001), 66-7. For more on Burke, see Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); and specifically on some of Burke’s early political thought, see Bourke’s earlier article, Richard Bourke, “Party, Parliament, and Conquest in Newly Ascribed Burke Manuscripts,” *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 619-652.

patriotic call to arms reflected a hope that enough individuals would seek to reform the colonial relationship, according to his program, before the parasite killed the host.

The West India Interest and Massie's Reform Program

Many eighteenth century critics of the sugar planters, including Massie, tended to disparage them with the same brush and it remains somewhat easy to generalize about the planters as being of one mind, or of operating as one body with one particular set of interests. While on a certain level the interests of planters in those island colonies were similar, more so than say colonists in North America, with whom there were many commercial disagreements, there were certainly rivalries and individual interests that existed as well. There were, of course, a number of families who stood out above the rest and as wealthy absentees in Britain grew increasingly influential, while conversely earning the scorn of many metropolitan critics. Sheridan has identified some of the most famous being the Barclays, Baylys, Beckfords, Bourkes, Briscoes, Campbells, Chambers, Dawkins, Fullers, Grants, Grays, Hibberts, Jacksons, Longs, Pennants, and Vaughans.¹⁰⁷ Within these families a great number of individuals rose to prominence as public figures and commercial writers. Most famous was probably Edward Long, the planter-historian of Jamaica. During the 1730s, among these family and social networks of absentees, the Planters Club was created.¹⁰⁸ This loose association was dedicated towards promoting their interests in Britain. Subsequently, acquiring seats in Parliament became an important part of the strategy, as many critics began to warn about.

In 1776, Adam Smith wrote that, "our tobacco colonies send us home no such wealthy

¹⁰⁷ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 299. Many individuals from these families also feature prominently in House of Commons histories. See Lewis Bernstein Namier and John Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964). For the period immediately preceding see Romney Sedgwick, *The House of Commons, 1715-1754* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

¹⁰⁸ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 65-6.

planters as we see frequently arrive from our sugar islands.”¹⁰⁹ His comment was perhaps a casual observation, with respect to assessing newfound imperial influences, but the creation of many new powerful dynasties in such a short time span was clearly a disturbing trend for the established landed aristocracy, especially considering the ability of this new money to influence imperial policy. One worrying assessment came from Lady Sarah Byng Osborn, a prominent figure in the Bedfordshire nobility, who had written in a letter dated November 25, 1767, “[t]he landed interest is beat out, and merchants, nabobs, and those who have gathered riches from the East and West Indies stand the best chance of governing this country”.¹¹⁰ A similar sentiment was echoed a decade later by Lord Shelburne when he famously remarked that “there were scarcely ten miles together throughout the country where the house and estate of a rich West Indian was not to be seen.”¹¹¹ This concern appeared widespread, among a number of other commentators, and was directed towards individuals returning from the East and West Indies who had amassed large fortunes and threatened to disrupt the political order.¹¹²

It is difficult to assess the exact size or power of the West India interest, considering the various agents and merchants associated with the absentees, as well as the internal group dynamics. Further, there were actually very few MPs. Sheridan concluded that between 1730 and 1775 there were probably thirty West Indians in Parliament and another thirty two who would

¹⁰⁹ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 1:197; he was also quoted in Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 473.

¹¹⁰ Sarah Byng Osborn, *Letters of Sarah Byng Osborn, 1721-1773*, ed. Margery Bailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1930), 138; also quoted in Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 66. Such negative sentiments towards moneyed interests, including stockjobbers and speculators, were also discussed in H. V. Bowen, “‘The Pests of Human Society’: Stockbrokers, Jobbers and Speculators in Mid-eighteenth-century Britain,” *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 78 (February, 1993): 38-53.

¹¹¹ Lord Shelburne quoted in *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T. C. Hansard, Peterborough-Court, Fleet-Street, 1814), XIX:1316; also quoted in Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 473.

¹¹² Aristocratic attitudes towards the rise of new wealth, which threatened established orders, were discussed in Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 529-57.

have been allied in some way.¹¹³ This was higher than the forty votes determined by Sir Lewis Namier, who also claimed there were never more than a dozen in the House at the same time.¹¹⁴ Even at the high end of seventy, this was clearly not an overwhelming number, considering there were 558 seats in the House of Commons and over 200 Lords. Moreover, it is even problematic to merely consider the lobby as one unanimous group, as this does not necessarily do proper justice towards addressing any individual relationships or divisions that may have existed. The historian Andrew O'Shaughnessy has pointed out that there was often friction between planters and merchants, within old and new colonies, and between rivals in London and other ports. In addition, there was little formal organization prior to the 1760s.¹¹⁵ He emphasized the fact that while they were perhaps able to exercise a disproportionate amount of influence, given their small numbers, it was typically on issues where they were on the same side as the government of the day.¹¹⁶ Such was the case with their support of the Navigation Acts, before the American Revolution, when it suited them. Afterwards, they were clearly put on the defensive.

Still, it is fair to say that MPs and their associates outside of Parliament, whose family fortunes had been made in the West Indies and India were able to form important lobby groups on colonial or economic issues that were of importance to them.¹¹⁷ Further, the West India lobby was fairly infamous for the ability of members to raise money and campaign on behalf of the planters in defence of their trade privileges within the empire and on the issue of maintaining the

¹¹³ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 60.

¹¹⁴ Namier and Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 157. Namier is also cited in Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, "The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 40, no. 1 (1997): 73.

¹¹⁵ O'Shaughnessy, "The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution," 74.

¹¹⁶ O'Shaughnessy, "The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution," 93.

¹¹⁷ Perry Gauci has addressed the historiography and significance of the lobby on economic regulations from 1714-1760 in "Learning the Ropes of Sand," within his edited work on the British economy. See Perry Gauci, ed., *Regulating the British Economy, 1660-1850* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 107-122.

slave trade as a source of cheap, expendable labour. Typically, planters were able to generate enough support for their causes in Parliament. At the same time, concerns about them taking over the country, by buying up vast tracks of land and other assets in Britain and then seizing the reins of government, were probably exaggerated. In reality, they were always a small minority, and they never had the numbers to dictate terms or determine public policy on their own. For instance, though they enjoyed a number of important legislative victories in 1733 and 1739, as previously mentioned, they lost battles over duties in 1747 and 1759.¹¹⁸ Notwithstanding, critics would continue to bemoan the undue influence of this seemingly foreign force.

Though perspectives from the planters and the West India lobby fluctuated over time, they generally were effective at influencing policies related to the sugar and slave trades. Unsurprisingly, they used the power of state to promote their own private interests, which fluctuated over time and tended towards haphazard and often incoherent, or unenforceable public policies.¹¹⁹ While disrupting the trade of competitors and obtaining more lands to cultivate were sometimes the stated objectives, at other times planters actually argued against territorial acquisitions or more development to promote greater sugar output, as to restrict supply and maintain higher prices.¹²⁰ It is important to note that these shifting perspectives did not address the long-term viability or competitiveness of the industry. While the system of prohibitive trade and their encouragement of the destruction of French settlements and sugar production may have been self-defeating or have a depressing effect for the industry, as a whole, it served effectively to benefit a narrow and select few. Of course, restricting trade and supply artificially drove up

¹¹⁸ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 67.

¹¹⁹ In this regard, the West Indians were not alone, though they gained particular notoriety. Many different corporate bodies, or commercial associations with a particular economic interest or branch of trade, petitioned Parliament, advocating special treatment, including the enactment or repeal of industry-specific laws. See Alison Gilbert Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). On special interests in the broader Atlantic empire see Michael Kammen, *Empire and Interest: The American Colonies and the Politics of Mercantilism* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970).

¹²⁰ Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688-1783*, 147.

sugar and related prices for the end consumers in Britain. Such was the corrupting nature of entangled interests and the struggle for control of political institutions.¹²¹

This opens up serious questions as to whose interests were really served by the existence of empire. Why was it that commercial interests in one area could dictate terms that would negatively impact another? Further, why should a colonial interest operate in such a way as to undermine the general metropolitan well-being? These were questions that a number of commentators would address, along with lingering concerns about the unwarranted and unwanted forces from overseas buying up British lands, and subsequently acquiring the power to influence public policies. While perhaps critics, such as Massie, overstated or oversimplified their arguments, the many examples of such perspectives, shows they cannot be readily dismissed without due consideration, within a broader anti-imperial context.

Having given extensive warnings to those who would listen to his pleas, Massie also developed a systematic seventeen part program for reforming the relationship Britain had with the sugar colonies. “By these or some such Means,” he argued, “the *British Sugar-Colonies*, and the Trade thereof, may be brought into such a Course of *Subordination and Regularity*, as comport with the DIGNITY of the *BRITISH CROWN*, and the PUBLIC WEAL of this KINGDOM.”¹²² In this fanciful design he did not advocate the wholesale abandonment of the sugar islands, nor did he promote a thoroughly humanitarian or anti-imperial agenda. He did not reject the value of the sugar or slave industries to the British economy either, at least in the abstract. He did, however, suggest that if the British wanted to find true value in these colonies they could only do so if his proposals, or similar ones, were enacted. For if such changes were “effected, it will be easy to find a sound Reason for the People of *Great Britain* being at the

¹²¹ This issue of imperial corruption has been addressed in P. J. Marshall, “*A Free Though Conquering People*”: *Eighteenth-Century Britain and Its Empire* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

¹²² Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 96.

Charge of protecting and defending the *British* Sugar-Colonies; but as the Case now stands, I do not believe that *Solon, Lycurgus, Demosthenes, and Cicero*, if they were living and here, would be able to find out such a Reason.”¹²³ In appealing to the British affinity for the ancients and the wisdom of the ages, as was typical rhetorical style at the time, he likely hoped to stimulate a powerful desire among the readers to rectify a grand historical injustice.¹²⁴

His objections, however, appear more parochial in nature, given to a particular time and place, considering that he was targeting the economic manipulations he saw with the sugar industry as it was then constituted, which then bred further political and social problems. This program, therefore, at most represents a specific challenge to the nature of the eighteenth century sugar plantation complex. As such it was merely a pragmatic solution to a series of problems whose origins actually ran much deeper than the abuse of power by a few bad characters. It did not attack the immorality of the slave trade and did not seek to entirely overhaul the system of commercial controls which lent themselves to corruption and abuse while enforcement typically proved futile, especially outside of Britain.

The main crux of the approach was to rein in the power of the large planters by reorganizing land ownership in the islands and to encourage smaller holders, while improving agricultural output, with greater Parliamentary oversight and industry regulation. The program

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ The interest of British writers at the time in classical literature and the Roman Empire was a persistent theme, and one that would continue well beyond the eighteenth century. Apologists of empire at the time favourably likened Britain to the Rome of their day, while concerned individuals worried about parallels in societal degeneracy as well as political and economic decline. One of the best examples of this came from Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols., (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776-1789). Gibbon has been most thoroughly analyzed in J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 5 vols., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999-2010). These issues have also been broadly addressed by many scholars. For instance, see Mark Bradley, ed., *Classics & Imperialism in the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Christopher Hagerman, *Britain's Imperial Muse: The Classics, Imperialism, and the Indian Empire, 1784-1914* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Sarah J. Butler, *Britain and Its Empire in the Shadow of Rome: The Reception of Rome in Socio-Political Debate from the 1850s to the 1920s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012). Most commonly the association between eighteenth century British and Roman classical imperialism was made within the context of debates over India, chiefly regarding civic virtues, as well as issues of corruption, constitutionalism, and authoritarianism. See Phiroze Vasunia, *The Classics and Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

ran loosely as follows. Firstly, Massie wanted to have all uncultivated lands that had been granted by the Crown to be re-assumed.¹²⁵ This would be to encourage development and allow for the rest of his redistributive program. Beyond that, these lands were to be redistributed to new subjects, though not less than twenty or more than two hundred acres per person. Additional regulations would be placed on holders, all with the intention of molding an island society of mid-sized landholders, by preventing the consolidation of estates and a great concentration of wealth.¹²⁶ As far as those who were already wealthy, he hoped to limit their abilities to acquire more lands or to construct new buildings on their properties, such as mills or distilleries, by restricting ownership respectively to two and one each. This, he felt was sufficient for pressing enough sugar canes and making rum.¹²⁷

Furthermore, in order to prevent a cartelization of the industry, he wanted to break up and keep separate the roles of the planter and merchant. Control of these components by planter magnates had allowed a high level of integration within this business at each stage of production. According to Massie, this gave them too much power, as they were able to participate in British debt and commodity markets, the African slave trade, sugar and alcohol distribution, and they enjoyed freer access to East Indian goods than the British themselves.¹²⁸ By commanding such power in otherwise relatively restricted markets, they were able to dictate terms and manage prices. If, however, the composite parts were disconnected it would limit the ability of any planter or trading house to effectively corner the market and arbitrarily overcharge the public. On this point it is important to note that Massie's general arguments have recently garnered some criticism from the economic historian David Hancock, who makes the case that his assessments

¹²⁵ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 94.

¹²⁶ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 94.

¹²⁷ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 95.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

of the industry were “as much prescriptive as descriptive”, and did “not do justice to the complexity” of the trade; in addition, he argues that historians such as Sheridan should have scrutinized Massie more closely.¹²⁹

Overall, Massie’s was a pragmatic program in which two main aspects feature significantly. First, was the absence of any mention that slavery, and the associated slave trade, were problematic. This is not particularly surprising considering he was mainly interested in the economic problems of the plantation system, as they affected Britain; but, it perhaps shows that his negative characterizations of planters as horrific and cruel slave drivers were done more for the purposes of sensationalism than to demand any humanitarian action. Second, was his advocacy of using the power of law to significantly break up the established interests in the sugar industry. One can only imagine the outcry planters would have made against such a proposal that they would have severely opposed on the grounds of protecting their property rights and privileges from Parliament. While such a reform program may have been desirable in effecting much needed change to the corrupt system that actually existed in the mid-eighteenth century, it remained little more than one of Massie’s machinations. He was, however, hopeful that one day “TRUTH and JUSTICE will prevail over *Monopoly* and *Exorbitance*.”¹³⁰ Ultimately, it is difficult to gauge the number of supporters such a proposal might have attracted, and it certainly was not acted upon by Parliament. So, in a real sense it did not bring about the changes he had hoped for, but it did offer a critical reflection of a system in which a small number of families were able to grow exceedingly wealthy at the expense of a great number of metropolitan Britons and an enslaved population within the Caribbean colonies.

Despite his extensive study of this issue, among a myriad of others, Massie appears to

¹²⁹ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 130-1.

¹³⁰ Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade*, 93.

have had little impact while he was alive. This is somewhat unsurprising, considering the peak relative power and influence of mid-to-late eighteenth century planter families, and the natural reflex they had in fighting and lobbying to defend a system that effectively institutionalized the strength of the “plantocracy” by concentrating benefits and dispersing costs in their favour. Perhaps Massie’s own status as a little-known political economist and advocate of mercantile reform is rooted in the fact that he was challenging some of these most powerful economic and political interests of his day? Though his advocacy had no immediate impact on policy makers at the time, his works form an important part of a much broader and ongoing debate over mercantilism and imperial policy throughout the eighteenth century Atlantic world. Certainly, the wealth of information and calculations contained within his collections and own writings would have provided a valuable basis on which economic reformers could make their cases.

Indeed, Joseph Massie actually laid one of the most significant foundations for the economic critique of slave-based plantation societies and the folly of protectionism in the sugar industry. Though he was not primarily attacking the inhumanity of slavery as an institution or the horrific nature of the associated slave trade, they were implicitly present as a way to vilify the character of the planter. In the decades that followed the Seven Years’ War these were to become the main targets of humanitarian and evangelical crusaders, alongside a growing number of economic and social reformers opposed to regulatory inefficiencies and the burdens of war and empire. Yet, his articles and calculations outlining how the British public had been “fleeced” by these unscrupulous colonists were among the first and most extensive in painting such an extremely negative image of the British planter. As he warned his readers, “the EVIL GENIUS of ENGLAND haunts us in the Form of *Sugar-Planters*.”¹³¹ In some ways his work may reflect a slowly turning tide of British economic attitudes and sensibilities, which would usher in an era of

¹³¹ Ibid.

intellectual resentment towards the sugar colonies and their relative decline as central in an otherwise expanding imperial network.

Though the calls for systemic reform would grow ever louder in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was not until the nineteenth century that the sugar island plantation complex would be reformed in any substantial way. The Atlantic slave trade and slavery within the British Empire, excluding India, were respectively abolished in 1807 and 1833, while the preferential tariff system would not be dismantled until the 1840s. Massie, who died in 1784, never saw these changes come to a system that he so despised; it long outlasted him in what is ultimately a reflection of the ability of well-entrenched financial and political systems and influential groups to survive much longer than outsiders may ever expect or wish.

Colonies vs. Trade and Humanity

A contemporary of Massie, Josiah Tucker, was probably one of the most prolific and respected writers on the subjects of trade and the colonies, in the second half of the eighteenth century, and was a strong opponent of colonization. He has been characterized by many historians as a great economist of the period and subsequently a major critic of imperialism.¹³² Though he did not singularly focus his studies on the sugar industry to the same level as Massie, he acknowledged many of the same problems, but came to a much more profound conclusion about what should be done. This is reflective of the fact that Tucker approached the many technical problems of empire, including the enforcement of regulations, uneconomical arrangements, and humanitarian injustices, from a theoretical and philosophical perspective

¹³² Tucker's anti-imperialism has long been established within the historiography of the British Empire. For example, see Walter Ernest Clark, *Josiah Tucker, Economist: A Study in the History of Economics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903); Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); and W. George Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

rather than by examining each issue in isolation.

Tucker rejected the economic value of the sugar islands, as he broadly did with all other British overseas possessions, initially arguing against obtaining any new islands, and later advocating separation.¹³³ When Britain had acquired four new Caribbean islands from France after the Seven Years' War, Tucker famously made the case to Lord Shelburne, "that I had hardly thought these Islands, or any other Acquisitions, at so great a Distance from the Mother Country, worth the Costs both of Men and Money, which had been, and would be, bestowed on them."¹³⁴ Though his animosity towards empire, at the time, was mainly directed towards the American colonies,¹³⁵ he made many of the same arguments about the Caribbean colonies, by essentially noting that they were more trouble than they were worth to the Imperium. In *A Series of Answers to Certain Popular Objections*, from 1776, Tucker made the theoretical case that if the sugar colonies were lost, or more specifically if an independent America were to seize them, that the British should not lament their loss. Instead, it would serve as a sort of liberation for Britons from the "paultry little Islands in the *American Seas*", whose "Plunder... would not repay a tenth Part of the Expence of the Expedition".¹³⁶

He then challenged his readers to question conventional wisdom towards the sugar islands, for if someone else seized and maintained them "what would be the Consequence?"¹³⁷

He then proceeded to answer his own supposition, writing

¹³³ Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 122.

¹³⁴ These islands were: Grenada, St. Vincent, Tobago, and Dominica. He would later publish this in Josiah Tucker, *Four Letters on Important National Subjects, Addressed to the Right Honourable The Earl of Shelburne, His Majesty's First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury*, 2nd ed. (London: T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1773). Tucker was also quoted in Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, 14.

¹³⁵ Josiah Tucker's publications regarding the American colonies are addressed in the third chapter.

¹³⁶ Josiah Tucker, *A Series of Answers to Certain Popular Objections, Against Separating from the Rebellious Colonies, and Discarding them Entirely; Being the Concluding Tract of the Dean of Gloucester, on the Subject of American Affairs* (Gloucester: R. Raikes, 1776), 19.

¹³⁷ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 20.

[n]othing but this, that the *British* Merchants would in that Case buy Sugars, Rum, Ginger, Cotton, &c. &c. just as they now buy Wines, Fruit, Oils, Coffee, Chocolate, &c. &c.; that is, at the *best* and *cheapest* Market. And it is a Fact well known in the commercial World, that were we permitted to enjoy the like Liberty at present, we might purchase Sugars and Rum almost *Cent. per Cent.* cheaper than we now do, by being confined to the Market of our Sugar Planters.¹³⁸

This recognition of the fact that the British domestically paid double the market prices for sugar, at least those who bought their sugar legally, reveals that little had changed since the Seven Years' War period, when Massie was making his calculations, around seventeen years earlier. He pointed out that in each of those other various commodity markets where merchants were free to buy and sell their wares the problems specific to the sugar industry simply did not exist. Clearly, sugar, as well as rum and molasses as by-products, were outliers in this circumstance, and the regulations in place throughout the different stages of production in that complex industry and governing international and colonial trade were hampering a natural evolution. Thus, if the colonial ties were broken, it would by extension effectively force an unwinding of the sugar monopoly and likely end the arbitrary nature of the commercial regulations by rendering the Navigation Acts moot in the Atlantic.

While his considerations on these matters were certainly powerful enough, Tucker would go on to address the far more profound issue of slavery within the empire. More explicitly than Massie in this regard, Tucker made an important link between a theoretical loss of the Caribbean islands and a possible end to the horrors committed by British slave traders.¹³⁹ He asked readers to contemplate the nature of these colonies, and how the treatment of Africans ran counter to British perceptions of themselves and their empire. Consider that

¹³⁸ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 20.

¹³⁹ Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 122; here Knorr quoted Tucker as having written in the same place: "It would also be possible, then, to champion the anti-slavery cause." While I have been unable to locate this exact quote, it does nicely sum up his attitudes on this matter, here and in a number of his other writings.

we make Slaves of these poor Wretches, contrary to every Principle, not only of Humanity and Justice, but also of national Profit and Advantage; as I have often proved in several of my Writings both Commercial and Theological: - We, I say, the boasted Patrons of Liberty, and the professed Advocates for the natural Rights of Mankind, engage deeper in this murderous inhuman Traffic than any Nation whatever: - And to shew our Consistence, we glory in it!¹⁴⁰

If, however, the islands were lost to Britain, it would then at least force the British to make amends, if such a thing were possible, for the enslavement of so many individuals. It might even help to entirely end British participation in the slave trade. He argued that

we should probably be obliged through *Necessity* to do *that Justice*, and to make *that Restitution*, to a great Part of our Fellow Creatures, which we ought to have done long ago, by *Choice*, and through a Principle of *mere Humanity*, - to say nothing of higher Motives: - That is, we should teach the much-injured Natives of *Africa*, which might easily be done, and at a small Expence, to cultivate their own luxuriant and spontaneous Sugar Canes, and to manufacture Sugars, and several other Commodities, and more especially Rice and Indigo, in their own native Country; who would then exchange such Produce for our *European Goods* and Manufactures.¹⁴¹

His writings here serve as an important reflection of his belief that slavery was an inhumane practice which should cease and further that unfree labour of any kind was actually uneconomical. By establishing Africans as more equal trading partners, they would supposedly be inclined to produce more and would in turn be better customers for British wares. On the whole, it would allow for a much greater, and more moral, level of human economic interaction.

In addition to making the case that such systems were inhumane, and indeed even ungodly, Tucker also made a significant economic argument against the use of slave labour in his famous 1775 public *Letter to Edmund Burke*. He argued that

I am thoroughly convinced, that the Laws of Commerce, when rightly understood, do perfectly co-incide with the Laws of Morality; both originating from the same

¹⁴⁰ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 20-1.

good Being, whose Mercies are over all his Works. Nay, I think it is demonstrable, that *domestic* or *predial* Slavery would be found, on a fair Calculation, to be the most onerous and expensive Mode of cultivating Land, and of raising Produce, that could be devised. And I defy you, with all your Learning and Acuteness, to produce a single Instance from History either antient or modern, of a Country being well cultivated, and at the same Time abounding in Manufactures, where this Species of Slavery... is preferred to the Method of hiring free Persons, and paying them wages.¹⁴²

Here, he challenged Burke, and his readers more generally, to consider the intertwined immoralities and inefficiencies of the slave system. These arguments were also strongly pronounced by Adam Smith, who incorporated a good deal of historical anecdotes to illustrate his case. He argued that it was difficult for a freeman to compete with the slave labour of rich owners, particularly in closed or tightly regulated markets. This, he said, was typical in ancient Athens and Rome.¹⁴³ He then continued that

[s]laves, however, are very seldom inventive; and all the most important improvements, either in machinery, or in the arrangement and distribution of work which facilitate and abridge labour, have been the discoveries of freemen. Should a slave propose any improvement of this kind, his master would be very apt to consider the proposal as the suggestion of laziness, and a desire to save his own labour at the master's expence. The poor slave, instead of reward, would probably meet with much abuse, perhaps with some punishment. In the manufactures carried on by slaves, therefore, more labour must generally have been employed to execute the same quantity of work, than in those carried on by freemen. The work of the former must, upon that account, generally have been dearer than that of the latter.¹⁴⁴

Among the examples he used to defend his case included a comparison of comparable Hungarian and Turkish mines. In the former, freemen used machinery, which kept costs down and increased profitability, while in the latter slaves toiled away using only manual labour.

¹⁴² Josiah Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq; Member of Parliament for the City of Bristol, and Agent for the Colony of New York, &c. In Answer to His Printed Speech, Said to be Spoken in the House of Commons on the Twenty-Second of March, 1775*, 2nd ed. (Gloucester: R. Raikes, 1775), 22-3.

¹⁴³ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:284.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

As to the arguments of the planters who vehemently defended the institution of slavery as a necessary component of their industry, Tucker took them to task, pointing out that cane grew naturally in other places and sugar had historically been produced by freer people. Notice

that the Cane grows spontaneously in *Sicily*, where immense Quantities of Sugar might be made, were the *Neapolitan* Government to give the least Encouragement; - or rather, were the Court of *Naples* once to see its own Interest, by removing the many heavy Burthens, which are now laid *expressly* with a View... to check and prevent the Industry, Riches, and Population of the *prolific Sicilians*. This therefore is another striking Instance of the Practicability of making Sugars by Means of common Day-Labourers and hired Servants, without any Slaves at all.¹⁴⁵

In this particular case, he further pointed out that “the Peasants of *Sicily* could as well stand the Heat of the Climate in the Culture of Canes and the Manufacture of Sugars”.¹⁴⁶ He had previously presented this argument a year earlier, using another example, in his public *Letter to Edmund Burke*, in which he systematically refuted Burke’s arguments on the value of such colonies. He pointed out that

[b]efore the Discovery of *America*, there were upwards of 30,000 Hogsheads of Sugar raised in the Kingdom of *Granada*; and all raised by free People, without domestic, or predial Slavery. Whereas at present there are hardly any. Why? Because *Spain* has now Sugar Colonies in *America*; and the making of Sugar in *Granada* would interfere with their Interests.¹⁴⁷

By making the case that slavery is both immoral and unnecessary to the cultivation of sugarcane, he undermined the longstanding argument of the planters. He also questioned their characters, warning “[t]hat the Masters of such Slaves, are, for the most Part, haughty, insolent, and imperious in private Life; and also, that they are turbulent and factious in respect to the Public, incessantly endeavouring to pull down and lay low, even with the Dust, every Order and Degree

¹⁴⁵ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 21-2.

¹⁴⁶ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 22.

¹⁴⁷ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 41.

of Men above themselves.”¹⁴⁸ He then further addressed the convoluted issue of conflicting interests in the colony-mother country relationship, referring to the special interests of colonial planters and not the general well-being. While Britain did not have a suitable climate for growing cane, he likened the case of Spain to that of the British and tobacco, writing “[w]e have, I think, made no less than six Acts of Parliament here in *England*, on a similar Plan, to prevent the Cultivation of Tobacco, in order to favour the Colony of Virginia.”¹⁴⁹ He was thus making the case that these were deliberate political decisions, however ill-conceived or convoluted they might be, and therefore it was merely matter of will, both morally and politically to undo the damage caused by years of support for colonial projects.

Later, in the 1780s, Arthur Young reached similar conclusions about the nature of the sugar trade, namely that colonies were an entirely unnecessary part of the equation. He argued

[i]t is not, to be sure, of sugar and coffee that nations plant colonies; they are sure of those, and of any other commodities, if they be rich enough to pay for them; a Russian, or Pole, is as certain of commanding sugar as a Frenchman, or an Englishman; and the governments of those countries may raise as great a revenue on the import, as the governments that possess the islands.¹⁵⁰

The supposed benefits that the home country received from the colonies could be earned without them, and in fact, more people would even be better off if the system were overhauled. Further, this would be the right thing to do from both an ethical and economic standpoint. Given his extensive study, Young concluded that

[i]t would be right for every country to open her colonies to all the world on principles of liberality and freedom; and still it would be better to go one step farther, and have no colonies at all. The sugar islands of all nations, in the West-Indies, including the great island of Cuba, are considerable enough to form an

¹⁴⁸ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 23.

¹⁴⁹ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 41.

¹⁵⁰ Young, *Travels*, 492.

independent free nation; and it wants not many arguments to shew, that the existence of such an one would be far more beneficial to the English, French, and Spaniards, than the possession of those islands as colonies.¹⁵¹

These arguments were particularly striking in that the writers revealed how counterproductive the commercial regulations governing imperial trade, and guarding monopolies, could be and how these relationships could even tend towards metropolitan self-destruction. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the injustices committed by Britons, as well as other Europeans, served as an important indictment of the participants in the sugar plantation complex and those who helped to fuel the industry by supplying African slaves. This would continue to be a powerful argument that other major humanitarian campaigners would use against the slave trade through the rest of the century, and, as such, formed an important critique of the nature of the British Empire at the time.

Slavery and the Slave Trade

When addressing the idea of dissenting British perspectives towards the eighteenth century empire, or anti-imperial sentiments, it is crucial to consider the humanitarian arguments tied to the abolitionists and their campaign to eliminate the slave trade. This pervasive issue was especially important from the 1770s through to 1807.¹⁵² Though slavery, and the involuntary trade in human beings, had existed long before this time, this was the period in which the British slave trade reached its ascendancy. They had overtaken the Dutch as the foremost traders earlier on in the century, but it was only then that the subsequent reaction against it followed. While individuals such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and Josiah Wedgwood might not have always addressed the concept of imperialism directly, they were

¹⁵¹ Young, *Travels*, 492.

¹⁵² The existing literature on the slave trade and the abolition campaign is enormous. Notably, the scholarly works of Christopher Brown, David Ryden, Kenneth Morgan, James Walvin, and J. R. Oldfield, among others, are featured in this dissertation.

effectively attacking one of the largest economic components of the empire, within the trans-Atlantic world.¹⁵³ Those who voiced concern over specific endeavours directly tied to imperial enterprises and the eighteenth century experience, such as slavery or British misadventure in India, might not specifically be described as anti-imperialists. However, the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of the abolitionists were rooted in a shared sense of human morality and social justice, alongside other more explicitly anti-imperial figures.

The historiography on the slave trade and abolitionism has grown extensively in recent decades.¹⁵⁴ One recent study comes from David Ryden, who positioned the abolitionist case within an intellectual reform-minded spirit that ran counter to powerful economic interests. There were three main reasons for the rise in antislavery sentiment in the late eighteenth century. First was religious revivalism; second, changing economic conditions that reflected diminishing returns, particularly in sugar production; third, the changing sensibilities of Britons where many recognized the inconsistency between British primacy in the slave trade and the patriotic belief that they were also the “freest men on earth.”¹⁵⁵ The abolitionist campaign had a narrow focus, dedicated to ending the trans-Atlantic trade and not the institution of slavery itself, which Ryden argued was done out of practicality. Christopher Brown has likewise noted, in his seminal work *Moral Capital*, the extreme difficulty the antislavery campaigners faced considering they were

¹⁵³ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 13-20.

¹⁵⁴ For instance, see Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*; Brown, *Moral Capital*; Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*; Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); James Walvin, *Britain's Slave Empire* (Stroud, UK: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2008); Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Derek R. Peterson, ed., *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010); J. R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-slavery, c.1787-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*, 158-9.

challenging “the largest slaving empire in the world.”¹⁵⁶ When examined within this context, it seems truly remarkable that the reformers succeeded at all in changing the mindsets of enough individuals towards slavery. This was an institution which Kenneth Morgan has argued was generally accepted as necessary and went largely unchallenged until the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁵⁷ It took about a generation, from the 1770s on, but by 1807 campaigners managed to legally end the slave trade, something that had been such a crucial element of Britain’s Atlantic empire since the seventeenth century and remained so through the eighteenth.

As British moralists and other commercial writers often argued about Britain’s superiority in government, liberty, and civility, they simultaneously disparaged European rivals and even regarded British colonials as inferiors. In his recent work, Jack Greene explored the creation of the colonial other, in metropolitan discussions about empire. Critics of slavery and the plantation systems, such as Morgan Godwyn and Thomas Tryon, had voiced their concerns as early as the late 1600s; but, he dated the earliest construction of the notion of the inferior colonial Creole, to gain any widespread notoriety, to the 1740s and the anonymous publication of *The Fortunate Transport*.¹⁵⁸ This text told the story of the fictional Polly Haycock, who “was begot by Chance, came into the World with Life in spite of her Mother, nursed by Charity, brought up among Pickpockets, transported for Felony, and in spite of all that, now rolls in Ease, Splendor, and Luxury; and laughs at dull Moralists”.¹⁵⁹ It was a commentary on the nature of

¹⁵⁶ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 3. Also, see Walvin, *Britain’s Slave Empire*, 16; and Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*, 61-6, particularly on the primacy of Liverpool.

¹⁵⁷ Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*, 148-9. For more on the rise of Enlightenment thought and the link with anti-slavery see Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁵⁸ Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 156-7. Regarding the construction of the English Caribbean empire in the late seventeenth century and discussions over unfree labour, see Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire: Labor, Slavery, and the Origins of the British Atlantic Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

¹⁵⁹ A Creole, *The Fortunate Transport; or, the secret history of the life and adventures of the celebrated Polly Haycock, alias Mrs. B---, the lady of the gold watch* (London: Printed for T. Taylor, 1748), 4.

those who made their fortunes abroad, particularly within the cruel world of slavery, and returned to Britain, with the warning that “they treat free-born *Englishmen* as they do Negroes and Felons in the Plantations”.¹⁶⁰ This was but one example, among many others, in which British commentators denigrated the Creolean despotisms that existed in the American colonies and the West Indies. By using what Greene has called the language of alterity, metropolitan writers on colonial affairs attempted to undermine the characters of colonists and distance themselves from the misdeeds and horrors of those behaving in an un-British way.¹⁶¹

Many writers grew increasingly critical of these colonial figures, denigrated as un-British or lacking in domestic civility, or notions of basic humanity, as they intellectually separated their own society from the world of the slave plantations. There are no shortages of articles and pamphlets from this period that expose the inhumanity and injustice of those involved in the slave trade,¹⁶² and only a modest portion are offered here for consideration. Two good examples come from William Warburton and John Green, respectively the bishops of Gloucester and Lincoln.¹⁶³ Though they were primarily concerned with Christianizing the enslaved Africans in their sermons, they highlighted the horrific behaviour of slave traders and plantation owners.

While not rejecting the slave plantation system, and given the limitations placed on the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, Green advocated at least “correcting

¹⁶⁰ A Creole, *The Fortunate Transport*, 43.

¹⁶¹ Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 163-4. The language of alterity, or the construction of ‘otherness’, was historically very significant as many metropolitan writers typically used this to distinguish their society from those they considered inferior. For instance, colonial communities or indigenous populations were considered less advanced; additionally, Protestants often drew strong distinctions with Catholics as well. It was an important aspect in the construction of national identities and has been much discussed in the historiography. See Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309-329. Jack P. Greene, *Creating the British Atlantic: Essays on Transplantation, Adaptation, and Continuity* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2013).

¹⁶² One scholarly assessment comes from Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992). The first part in particular deals with the campaign to abolish the slave trade. The second and third parts examine, respectively, the opposition to colonial and universal slavery.

¹⁶³ Both are briefly discussed in Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 166-8.

many of the cruelties and abuses” and to “soften the misery and hardships of that servitude, in which these poor Africans are placed; to treat them with all the lenity, which such a state will admit”.¹⁶⁴ Warburton was more outspoken and questioned the “inhumane Policy of the Colonists” whereby they waged war and dealt in the “vast Multitudes yearly stolen from the Opposite Continent, and sacrificed by the Colonists to their great Idol, the GOD OF GAIN.”¹⁶⁵ He pitied the poor enslaved “[o]utcasts of humanity be torn from their homes and native Country by fraud and violence”¹⁶⁶ and lamented the general plunder of “the most remote Coasts of Africa; whose shores and inlands were made desert to enrich the Planters of the *new World*.”¹⁶⁷ He also refuted the notion of people as property, for enslaving “[c]reatures endowed with all our Faculties, possessing all our qualities but that of colour; our BRETHREN both by Nature and Grace, shocks all the feelings of humanity, and the dictates of common sense.” Further, he continued “nothing is more certain in itself, and apparent to all, than that the infamous traffic for Slaves, directly infringes both divine and human Law.”¹⁶⁸

Adam Smith also offered a sharp critique of those who would engage in the trade of human beings, while conversely constructing the image of the enslaved African as a hero, or sort of noble savage, writing

[t]here is not a negro from the coast of Africa who does not, in this respect, possess a degree of magnanimity which the soul of his sordid master is scarce capable of conceiving. Fortune never exerted more cruelly her empire over mankind, than when she subjected those nations of heroes to the refuse of the jails of Europe, to wretches who possess the virtues neither of the countries which they

¹⁶⁴ John Green, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: at their anniversary meeting in the parish church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday February 19, 1768* (London: E. Owen and T. Harrison, 1768), 20.

¹⁶⁵ William Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: at their anniversary meeting in the parish church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday February 21, 1766* (London: E. Owen and T. Harrison, 1766), 25.

¹⁶⁶ Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, 6-7.

¹⁶⁸ Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, 26.

come from, nor of those which they go to, and whose levity, brutality and baseness, so justly expose them to the contempt of the vanquished.¹⁶⁹

This was probably one of his greatest attacks on the institution of slavery, without regards to the economics of unfree labour.¹⁷⁰ Several years later, Thomas Parker voiced similar concerns about the violence the British brought to the African coasts, writing

[t]hey shew their unwillingness, by hazarding their lives in the most desperate battles, to prevent their being forced away from their native abode into our hands; and during the currency of our trade, as it is called, a much greater number appear to be yearly destroyed, to prevent their being taken away, than all we obtain.¹⁷¹

In forcing readers to consider the wars that they unleashed and all the lives lost, he exposed the evils at the root of the entire imperial plantation complex system, and reflected on the shared guilt that existed within a network that went far beyond commercial transactions. He continued

[w]e went to *their* coasts, taking these articles with us, (gold and silver) and offered them as inducements to their chief men to sell us those they had in their power, or could lay hold of among those that were not under their immediate authority. After some time, we forced our way into their country, and built forts to protect the trade we had begun, and for years past, we have been carrying away many thousands of men, women and children annually to our colonies and plantations.¹⁷²

These authors, Smith, Parker, and Tucker, along with many others, criticized slavery as a cruel debasement of human life, and illustrated the horrors of war that Europeans unleashed on the African continent in order to procure slaves. Furthermore, these were inhumane activities that Britain should, they affirmed, no longer tolerate.

One of the most thoughtful and thorough refutations of the slave system came from

¹⁶⁹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for A. Millar, in the Strand; And A. Kincaid and J. Bell, in Edinburgh, 1759), 402.

¹⁷⁰ Smith's views on slavery and as a moral philosopher have been addressed by many scholars. For instance see Charles L. Griswold, *Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 198-203.

¹⁷¹ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 13-4.

¹⁷² Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 14.

Granville Sharp, who rejected the legality of the institution in Britain, and while challenging the nature of colonial societies also provided a stern warning about the horrors of empire slavery returning home. Joseph Massie had raised the spectre of a tidal wave of slavery washing over Britain, after having made its way from the West Indies through the North American colonies, earlier on in the century. However, this case was made with even greater force by humanitarians who wished to avoid that fate by having the institution abolished. According to Greene, Sharp's 1769 *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery*, a four part work, was "the most systematic, learned, and powerful attack on the colonial slave system" up to that point.¹⁷³

In this text Sharp argued against this horrific institution which thrived under "the tyrannical constitution of the British colonies (to the indelible disgrace of the British name)."¹⁷⁴ He pointed out "the arbitrary, cruel and inhuman spirit of plantation legislators"¹⁷⁵ who had established petty self-serving tyrannies, and in enforcing their own dictatorial laws acted with impunity. But, he argued, "besides the gross infringement of the common and natural rights of mankind, it is plainly contrary to the laws and constitution of this kingdom".¹⁷⁶ He wanted to impress upon readers the illegality of extensively practiced contemporary slavery as its justifications rested on obsolete feudal laws abroad and should not be permitted.¹⁷⁷ He made the case that the support of "West Indian Slavery, [was] to revive or assume, like a lawful heir, the ancient rights of Villenage," and could not be justified, least of all in Britain.¹⁷⁸

His concern over feudal-slave states in the colonies was notable enough, but he then

¹⁷³ Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 171.

¹⁷⁴ Granville Sharp, *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery; Or of admitting the least claim of Private Property in the Persons of Men, in England. In four parts* (London: Printed for Benjamin White and Robert Horsefield, 1769), 48.

¹⁷⁵ Sharp, *A Representation*, 63.

¹⁷⁶ Sharp, *A Representation*, 40-1.

¹⁷⁷ Sharp, *A Representation*, 120-5.

¹⁷⁸ Sharp, *A Representation*, 133.

proceeded to voice an even more direct concern about moral degeneration and slavery in Britain itself. He argued that “a toleration of Slavery is the highest breach of social virtue...” that “too often renders the minds of both masters and Slaves utterly depraved and inhuman, by the hateful extremes of exaltation and depression.”¹⁷⁹ By extension

[i]f such a toleration should ever be generally admitted in England, (which God forbid!) we shall no longer deserve to be esteemed a *civilized* people: because, when the customs of *uncivilized* nations, and the *uncivilized customs* which disgrace our own colonies are become so familiar, as to be permitted among us with impunity, we ourselves must insensibly degenerate to the same degree of baseness, with those from whom such bad customs were derived, and may too soon have the mortification to see the *hateful extremes of tyranny and Slavery fostered under every roof*.¹⁸⁰

This was a discussion he continued in his *Appendix to the Representation*, which was published a few years later. He warned readers of this by means of a story:

several Negroes have been knocked down and kidnapped by Russians, hired for that purpose, and have been hurried on Ship Board in order to be transported to the West Indies, in open Contempt of the English Laws, and of the Habeas Corpus Act in particular, which denounces heavy Penalties against those who attempt to transport *any Person whatever* from this Kingdom against their Will.¹⁸¹

Here he emphasized the importance of the common law as a cherished British legal tradition that was under threat from slavery. He argued that people cannot claim private property over other men, for to do so would be “to stab the constitutional freedom of two Great and ancient Kingdoms at one blow.”¹⁸² If Britons merely turned a blind eye to these sorts of activities, the consequences could be severe “because it would, probably, tend to the introduction of the *diabolical* Tyranny and Injustice of our West Indian Colonies, whereby *human Nature is vilified*

¹⁷⁹ Sharp, *A Representation*, 104.

¹⁸⁰ Sharp, *A Representation*, 104-5.

¹⁸¹ Granville Sharp, *An Appendix to the Representation, (printed in the year 1769,) of the injustice and dangerous tendency of tolerating slavery, or of admitting the least claim of private property in the persons of men in England* (London: Printed for Benjamin White and Robert Horsefield, 1772), 4.

¹⁸² Sharp, *An Appendix*, 21-2.

and degraded to the Rank and level of brute Beasts”.¹⁸³ His warnings were certainly profound and this publication, in particular, was very timely as it appeared in 1772, while Lord Mansfield was simultaneously crafting his decision in the Somerset case, which would legally eliminate slavery in England and Wales.¹⁸⁴

Edmund Burke, though a defender of the colonies and their trade revenue, also expressed concern for the cruelties and inhumanity that were associated with the slave trade. Greene has noted the contradiction Burke faced, considering that he was an MP representing Bristol, a city that thrived from the profits of the slave trade.¹⁸⁵ In this regard he was best known for drafting a program of gradual abolition, in his *Sketch of the Negro Code*. He wrote that “it is expedient and conformable to the principles of true religion and morality, and to the Rules of sound policy, to put an end to all traffic in the persons of Men, and to the detention of their said persons in a State of Slavery,” though he did not advocate an immediate end to the institution. As such, he drafted this long list of regulations designed “to lessen the inconveniences and evils attendant on the said Traffic, and state of Servitude, until both shall be gradually done away.”¹⁸⁶ While some attempted pragmatic solutions towards mitigating some of the worst effects of slavery, Thomas Clarkson, a staunch abolitionist and founding member of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, rejected the mere regulation of the slave trade, in a lengthy essay, as it

¹⁸³ Sharp, *An Appendix*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ For more on this landmark legal case see Steven M. Wise, *Though the Heavens May Fall: The Landmark Trial that Led to the End of Human Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005); Daniel J. Hulsebosch, “Nothing But Liberty: Somerset’s Case and the British Empire,” *Law and History Review* 24 (2006): 547-557; Ruth Paley, “Imperial Politics and the English Law: The Many Contexts of Somerset,” *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (2006): 659-664; George Van Cleve, “Mansfield’s Decision: Toward Human Freedom,” *Law and History Review* 24, no. 3 (2006): 665-672; and Kristi Gourlay, “Anatomy of the Somerset Case of 1772: Law, Popular Politics and Slavery in Hanoverian Britain,” (MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 197. For more on the significance of Bristol as a metropolitan port in the trans-Atlantic trades see Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol & the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹⁸⁶ Edmund Burke, “Sketch of a Negro Code [post 9 April 1780],” in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 3, *Party, Parliament, and the American War: 1774-1780*, eds. Warren M. Elofson, John A. Woods, and William B. Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 563.

would not deal with the root of the problem. The nature of the slave trade contained “a *complication of evils*” that “none but slave-merchants will deny.”¹⁸⁷ Only abolition of the trade would do and campaigners would not settle for anything else, because,

[i]t is an evil, of all others the most flagitious, and of greater magnitude than those, which afterward occur either in the prosecution of the trade, or in the colonial slavery. It is an evil, the parent and foundation of all other evils, by means of which every tie of love, consanguinity, and friendship, is torn asunder, by means of which the pestilential dungeon presents itself afterwards on the passage, and the scourge and manacle in the land of slavery. It is that evil which first awakened the attention of the many benevolent opposers of the slave trade; which first roused them into action; and which will still, I hope (unless effectually cured) be uniformly opposed by them for the remainder of their lives.¹⁸⁸

There were many different strategies employed in this period, ranging from ideological campaigns against the immorality of slavery to pragmatic attempts at regulating the slave trade to moderate its worst aspects, such as through Dolben’s Act of 1788; but, major reform would ultimately reflect political realities. Even Prime Minister William Pitt, who greatly assisted William Wilberforce in this regard, was unable to generate enough support for the cause in the 1780s and 1790s. However, with legislative success in 1807, abolitionists hoped that by at least ending the slave trade they would deal a fatal blow to the entire slave plantation system.

Considering the imbalance between slave births and deaths on the sugar islands, it was certainly reasonable for observers to make the case that without new slaves arriving throughout the year, the plantation populations could not be naturally sustained. Further, the prospect of planters receiving regular shipments of slaves and materials, while enjoying political support,

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition, as Applied to the Slave Trade. Shewing that the latter only can remove the evils to be found in that commerce*, 2nd ed. (London: James Phillips, 1789), 1.

¹⁸⁸ Clarkson, *An Essay on the Comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition*, 16-7.

meant that their ability to enforce the system would continue indefinitely. Clarkson thus passionately argued that

by holding up to the planter the prospect of an annual supply, only encourages him to waste and dissipate human life, and to be cruel; and which, by furnishing him with people deprived of the natural rights of men, fills him frequently with alarm, and obliges him often to adopt a system of discipline and oppression...¹⁸⁹

The idea that these tyrannies were perpetually self-reinforcing meant that they would be unlikely to defeat themselves. Instead, abolitionists would have to bring about an even more powerful opposing force; only this could bring an end to the vicious cycle of plantation life.

These writers would also firmly argue against the slave system on religious grounds, forcing the public to consider their duties to fellow human beings as Christians. In his masterful *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* Clarkson argued “that slavery is incompatible with the Christian system.”¹⁹⁰ This text, which was honoured at the University of Cambridge in 1785, and would cause him to change his own direction in life, was a systematic refutation of the arguments of slave holding and trading. He rejected the wars of conquest in order to procure slaves, writing “how wicked, how beyond all example impious, must be that servitude, which cannot be carried on without the continual murder of so many and innocent persons! What punishment is not to be expected for such monstrous and unparalleled barbarities!”¹⁹¹ Clarkson, a devout individual, had taken the deacon’s orders, but then abandoned a potential career in the Church of England to pursue the abolitionist cause. He thus also challenged readers to engage themselves in the movement and to consider what fate awaited slave trade participants, as well as their defenders, at the end of their lives.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade. In Two Parts*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Phillips, 1788), 107.

¹⁹⁰ Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, particularly the African; translated from a Latin Dissertation*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Phillips, 1788), 151.

¹⁹¹ Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 153.

Similar arguments came from John Wesley, another strong opponent and a founding father of Methodism.¹⁹² He also blamed Europeans for their dealings in human beings, writing “[t]his equally concerns every Merchant, who is engaged in the Slave-trade. It is *You* that induce the *African* villain, to sell his countrymen; and in order thereto, to steal, rob, murder men, women and children without number”.¹⁹³ Instead, he implored Britons, to “[g]ive Liberty to whom Liberty is due, that is to every child of man, to every partaker of human nature. Let none serve you but by his own act and deed, by his own voluntary choice. Away with all whips, all chains, all compulsion!”¹⁹⁴ He further appealed to their sense of decency, writing

[w]here is the Justice of inflicting the severest evils, on those that have done us no wrong? Of depriving those that never injured us in word or deed, of every comfort of life? Of tearing them from their native country, and depriving them of liberty itself? To which an *Angolan*, has the same natural right as an *Englishman*, and on which he sets as high a value? Yea where is the Justice of taking away the Lives of innocent, inoffensive men? Murdering thousands of them in their own land, by the hands of their own countrymen: Many Thousands, year after year, on shipboard, and then casting them like dung into the sea! And tens of thousands in that cruel slavery, to which they are so unjustly reduced?¹⁹⁵

He challenged readers, who presumably would have cherished the ideas of British liberty and humanity, to consider the injustice of the wars they had unleashed on thousands of African peoples and to acknowledge that their lives should be equally respected.

He then proceeded to inquire as to what sort of justice awaited those involved in committing such acts of naked aggression and barbarity, asking “[i]s there a GOD? You know there is. Is He a Just GOD? Then there must be a state of Retribution”.¹⁹⁶ With this warning, he

¹⁹² For more on Wesley and the significance of Methodism in Britain and throughout the empire, see David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005) and David Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750-1900* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁹³ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London: Printed by R. Hawes, 1774), 47-8.

¹⁹⁴ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 52.

¹⁹⁵ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 30.

¹⁹⁶ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 46.

further challenged readers to consider “[t]hen will the Great GOD deal with *You*, as you have dealt with *them*, and require all their blood at your hands.”¹⁹⁷ Sharp likewise exclaimed that “the Europeans have taken upon themselves, for a long time past, *to attack, destroy, drive out, dispossess, and enslave*, the poor ignorant *Heathen*, in many distant parts of the world, and may, perhaps, plead custom and prescription (to their shame be it said) for their actions”¹⁹⁸ but “the offenders can no otherwise be esteemed than as *lawless robbers* and *oppressors*, who have reason to expect a *severe retribution* from God for their tyranny and oppression.”¹⁹⁹ Beyond his stern condemnations of slave traders, he also warned the British public, more generally, that they too were at least, in part, responsible for their toleration and seeming acceptance of it. He wrote

[t]he AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE, which includes the most contemptuous Violations of *Brotherly Love* and *Charity* that men can be guilty of, is openly encouraged and promoted by the British Parliament! And the most detestable and oppressive *Slavery*, that ever disgraced even the unenlightened Heathens, is notoriously *tolerated* in the British Colonies by the *public Acts* of their respective Assemblies, - by Acts that have been ratified with the Assent and Concurrence of BRITISH KINGS!

The horrible Guilt therefore, which is incurred by Slave-dealing and Slave-holding, is no longer confined to the few hardened Individuals, that are immediately concerned in those baneful Practices, but alas! the WHOLE BRITISH EMPIRE is involved!²⁰⁰

These writers thus employed a number of different strategies to mobilize supporters for their cause, appealing to public sensibilities; to a common sense of justice and humanity; as well as fear of eternal damnation for their complicity. Many writers in this period also feared that such injustices would bring down their oppressive and inhumane empire.

¹⁹⁷ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Granville Sharp, *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God, compared with the unbounded claims of the African traders and British American slaveholders* (London: Printed for B. White and E. and C. Dilly, 1776), 13.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Granville Sharp, *The Law of Liberty, or, Royal Law, by which all mankind will certainly be judged! Earnestly recommended to the serious consideration of all slaveholders and slavedealers* (London: Printed for B. White and E. and C. Dilly, 1776), 48-9.

Yet, so long as slavers had the support of Parliament and people did not actively oppose the institution of slavery, nothing would change. The implication was that the entire empire was therefore assumed guilty and would be subject to the wrath of vengeful God. While people such as Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and John Wesley were some of the most vocal abolitionists, they were hardly opposed to empire generally; they were only opposed to the way it existed at the time. Their warnings served as a wakeup call to reform and they sought to make the British Empire a force for moral righteousness in the world. For instance, Sharp and Clarkson were instrumental in setting up the Sierra Leone Company; while Wesley would inspire generations of missionaries who aimed to evangelize throughout the British Empire.²⁰¹ Indeed, Methodists, in particular, would later prove to be some of the staunchest advocates of imperial expansion, as a way to fight slavery as well as to share and spread their ideals of Christian civility, though beyond the period in question.²⁰²

While not all Britons actively participated in the slave trade or profited from human bondage, there remains the issue of tacit support among those who enjoyed the goods produced from slave labour or who indirectly benefitted from the thriving activities in ports such as Liverpool, London, and Bristol.²⁰³ Considering widespread British involvement in the Atlantic trade and consumption patterns of sugar, as well as tea, it might be tempting to conclude that there was a high level of complicity in, or least acceptance of, the sugar and slave trades. But,

²⁰¹ For more on the Sierra Leone Company see Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 279-312. Also, on Wesley and Methodism, see David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit and Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750-1900*.

²⁰² On the association of missionaries, anti-slavery, and colonization, see Deirdre Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For more on missionary activity, particularly in the nineteenth century, see Andrew Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

²⁰³ For more on the significance of these port cities and the slave trade, respectively, see David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles, eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); James A. Rawley, *London, Metropolis of the Slave Trade* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003); and Morgan, *Bristol & the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century*.

how wide could such a net of participation, or collaboration, be cast? For Thomas Parker, the entire nation was guilty of participating in this criminal enterprise. He wrote

[t]his conduct appears to be as much the conduct of the whole country, as any thing which is done by a few can be made the act of all. Our national arms product the ships that carry these unhappy people to their endless slavery; we fight for and defend the ground on which they suffer their miserable oppressions, as much as if it was within the island in which our nation is seated. We use the things which these men, women and children are made slaves, in order to cultivate; and as a nation, we have a constant regard to the advantages which result from their slavery.²⁰⁴

Again, he provided one of the best assessments and scathing rebukes of the behaviour of the British people. He further chastised the public for doing little to nothing regarding abolishing the slave trade in the decade after the Mansfield decision, noting that

[t]he conduct of this country to the people of AFRICA, has continued the same for so many years, that the most public endeavours of several individuals, to make us look upon that conduct as criminal in itself, have not produced any reformation, or removal of that sanction which is given by the state to the trade which at one produces and tolerates all the ill treatment which the Africans receive at our hands.²⁰⁵

Indeed, it appeared that reformers had accomplished little in that period of the American Revolution, and it would still take another twenty five years before the trade was abolished. Perhaps, on the other hand, it was unfair to lay blame so widely, when so few were actually involved. This was certainly a dilemma for reformers at the time who did not want to be associated, blamed, or punished in eternity, for what was done in the British name abroad. Also, as Christopher Brown has pointed out, very few people in Britain ever actually owned slaves or directly participated in the trade, making it difficult for abolitionists to generate interest in their

²⁰⁴ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 15.

²⁰⁵ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 13.

campaigns.²⁰⁶ At the same time, they were clearly fighting an uphill battle against some of the most powerful interests of their day, who also had tremendous influence over the generally entrenched institutions of political power.²⁰⁷

One interesting case of particular abolitionist activism came in the form of the boycott of 1791-2, when campaigners encouraged Britons to abstain from purchases of West Indian sugar. The idea was said to have been promoted by Hannah More, who had argued since 1788 that it was taboo to use slave-produced sugar in tea.²⁰⁸ At the time William Wilberforce was organizing a vote on abolition, and this was viewed as a good way to generate some popular support. Most notable in spreading the message was William Fox's widely circulated pamphlet, *An Address to the People of Great Britain*, of which 70,000 copies were printed, that called upon the people to voice their opposition to an entrenched "system of cruelty".²⁰⁹ Even though Parliament had failed to act, he encouraged all Britons to either indicate their support or abhorrence of West India slavery. In so doing, he urged readers to consider that

[t]he lust of power, and the pride of conquest, have doubtless produced instances, far too numerous, of man enslaved by man. But we, in an enlightened age, have greatly surpassed, in brutality and injustice, the most ignorant and barbarous ages: and while we are pretending to the finest feelings of humanity, are exercising unprecedented cruelty. We have planted slavery in the rank soil of sordid avarice; and the produce has been misery in the extreme.²¹⁰

His work was actively promoted by Clarkson and Wilberforce, and the strong and emotional arguments appeared particularly influential in the Midlands.

Individuals such as Josiah Wedgewood also encouraged the consumption of "free sugar"

²⁰⁶ Brown, *Moral Capital*, 196.

²⁰⁷ See Olson, *Making the Empire Work* and Kammen, *Empire and Interest*.

²⁰⁸ Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 140.

²⁰⁹ William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the propriety of abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum*, 6th ed. (London: M. Gurney, 1791), 2.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

from the East Indies as an alternative for those who had to have their sugar. While East India Company goods were not exactly pure either, they were regarded as being less tainted. This campaign was illustrated in works by both James Gillray and Isaac Cruikshank, who respectively, in March and April 1792, sketched *Anti-Saccharites, -Or- John Bull and his Family leaving off the Use of Sugar* and *The Gradual Abolition of the Slave Trade, or leaving of Sugar by Degrees*, both of which poked fun at the attempt of the royal family to enjoy their tea time without sugar.²¹¹ At its peak, there were an estimated 300,000 people participating, with particular enthusiasm in the north. While the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful at ending the slave trade, J. R. Oldfield has pointed out that at least it did encourage some popular participation, in protesting the high prices of sugar and encouraging competition from the east, while generating positive enthusiasm for the cause of abolition.²¹²

Within Parliament, William Wilberforce and Charles James Fox were the most outspoken on the issue, and on this matter they were able to get the support of William Pitt and Lord Grenville. Their argument also followed the idea that slaving violated the British constitution and that the system, as a whole, had corrupted West Indian societies producing an unstable and unreliable economic and social structure. This, they would contend, ran counter to the long-term national interest.²¹³ Wilberforce criticized the many fallacies that slave trade advocates used in their arguments. He rejected the idea that planters would ever treat their slaves well, so long as they were guaranteed new shipments, arguing “in some respects self-interest and humanity will go together,”²¹⁴ but in the case of West Indian slavery “evil springs from the very nature of

²¹¹ Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 177-8.

²¹² Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 57-8.

²¹³ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*, 177-185. Also, see Stephen Farrell, Melanie Unwin, and James Walvin, eds., *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

²¹⁴ William Wilberforce, *The Speech of William Wilberforce, Esq. representative for the county of York, On Wednesday the 13th of May, 1789, on the question of the abolition of the slave trade. To which are added, the*

things”.²¹⁵ He also rejected the common argument of his opponents that Britain would lose out to competitors in the slave trade business if they unilaterally abolished it, for,

France is too enlightened a nation, to begin pushing a scandalous as well as ruinous traffic, at the very time when England sees her folly, and resolves to give it up. It is clearly no argument whatever against the wickedness of the trade, that France will adopt it: - For those who argue thus may argue equally, that we may rob, murder, and commit any crime, which any one else would have committed, if we did not. – The truth is, that, by our example, we shall produce the contrary effect.²¹⁶

Thus, he made the case that Britain needed to provide moral leadership on this matter, regardless of other nations, since it was the right thing to do. His friend Charles James Fox would also take aim at various arguments against enslavement, notably the denial that Britain created “the Negroe Slaves,” and that they merely “found them already in that state, and condemned to it for crimes.”²¹⁷ He readily criticized this notion, writing:

[t]he nature of the crimes themselves (witchcraft in general) is a manifest pretext, and a mockery of all human reason. But supposing them even to be real crimes, and such as men should be condemned for, can there be any thing more degrading to sense, or disgusting to humanity, than to think it honourable or justifiable in Great Britain, annually to send out ships in order to assist in the purposes of African police?²¹⁸

Despite the fact that he was able to assign such ridicule to the arguments of opponents towards a cause that he actively supported, he was also forced to lament the fact that it took so long to generate enough support to abolish the trade.

There were, of course, many who sought to defend the institution of slavery and argued

resolutions then moved, and a short sketch of the speeches of the other members (London: Logographic Press, 1789), 22.

²¹⁵ Wilberforce, *The Speech of William Wilberforce*, 23.

²¹⁶ Wilberforce, *The Speech of William Wilberforce*, 44-5.

²¹⁷ Charles James Fox, *The Speech of the Rt. Hon. Chas. James Fox in the House of Commons, June 10th, 1806 on a motion preparatory to the introduction of a bill for the abolition of the slave trade* (Newcastle: Printed by J. Clark, 1824), 4.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

to maintain the status quo. For most Caribbean planters and white slavers the abolitionists proved thorns in their sides. There were also Parliamentarians, more from the Lords than Commons, who profiteered from the trade and wished the issue would disappear. Many powerful individuals, including the Duke of Portland, Viscount Melville, the Earl Camden, and Lord Spencer, opposed William Pitt on this initiative.²¹⁹ The arguments they used, and which came from the Caribbean assemblies, were also tied to the national interest – which meant preservation of the preferential, mercantilist economic system and continued commercial expansion through the trade. It was treated “as a cornerstone to colonial development” which was sanctioned by the constitution that was supposed to protect planters’ property rights and self-rule.²²⁰ Additionally, a major argument was based on the perception that if the British were to abandon their colonial plantation economies it would merely open up opportunities for the expansion of other European empires in this area.

This defence was two-pronged. First, the British planters would simply lose out on their livelihoods and see their incomes reduced, if they could not continue to acquire slaves and even more so if they were all granted freedom. This, in turn, would reduce state revenues and the domestic-imperial supplies of commodities, which would mean higher prices and a greater dependency on others, including colonial rivals or European adversaries, to supply the Isles. Second, it would only end the slave trade within the British Empire; it would not unwind the institution in its entirety. The result would be a major economic dislocation to British trans-Atlantic shipping patterns and a boon to their rivals, primarily the French and Dutch. Though done out of self-interest, by defending a major institution that was an integral part of the

²¹⁹ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*, 178.

²²⁰ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807*, 206-207. The debates on this issue were also tied to arguments over the British identity, which writers on both sides appealed to, and claimed to be defending. See Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009).

eighteenth century Empire, anti-abolitionists took a decidedly pro-imperial stance. The effect of this was that the abolitionists then appeared clearly as anti-imperial figures, at least in regards to this issue. However, it is necessary to distinguish between those who advocated for reform of this imperial system, and those for its outright destruction. In contrast, there were also ardent and passive defenders of slavery and of the empire more generally.

The extensive debates over the slave trade, and over the nature of the empire in the 1780s, were unique to a particular time and place. They form part of the greater criticism of the regulated colonial system, which had accelerated by the end of the century. While the end of the slave trade has been rightly subject to much historiographical debate, it is clear that it was a period of relative decline for the planter class, but that should not be overstated.²²¹ As J. R. Ward and Michael Duffy have pointed out, during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, these colonies still involved approximately half of Britain's long distance shipping and the duties collected brought in about one eighth of the Exchequer's revenue. As well, the connections between planters and the City helped make it possible for the government to float its war loans.²²² Thus, evangelical reformers were not exactly locked in a battle they could not lose. It was very much a long-term struggle, through to victory in 1807, at which point the slave trade was abolished and they shifted their efforts towards eradicating slavery within the British Empire. Many of these abolitionists, including Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and John

²²¹ The fall of the Caribbean planters, at the end of the eighteenth century and through the nineteenth century, has been traditionally addressed within British imperial history through the "decline thesis", which began with historian Lowell J. Ragatz, *The Decline of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833: A Study in Social and Economic History* (New York: Century, 1928). Subsequently, two opposing views came from Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944) and Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977). The historiographical discussion has been effectively summarized in Philip D. Morgan, "Ending the Slave Trade: A Caribbean and Atlantic Context," in *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*, ed. Derek R. Peterson (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 101-24; and David Richardson, "The Ending of the British Slave Trade in 1807: The Economic Context," in *The British Slave Trade*, eds. Farrell, Unwin, and Walvin, 127-40.

²²² J. R. Ward, "The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748-1815", 427; and Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 385-6.

Wesley, were interested in reforming the empire to make it a force for good in the world. As such they may not have been anti-imperialists in a universal sense, though they certainly were opponents of empire as it existed at the time. Indeed, fighting the slave trade would be an ever-increasing goal of humanitarians and missionaries through the nineteenth century, and at times used as a justification for imperial expansion.²²³

Examining the sugar and slave industries reveals that the multiple and entangled effects of the eighteenth century empire on Britain proved more complicated than might appear on the surface.²²⁴ This is evident here in the attempts of Parliament to order and manage colonial commerce, as well as with the contrast of staggeringly wealthy individuals, alongside the cruel realities of the slave world, returning home to British shores. Still, it was not always immediately obvious as to who profited and who lost from these imperial and commercial endeavours, despite the fact that most eighteenth century commentators viewed the sugar colonies as beneficial.²²⁵ But, did Britain simply profit at the expense of other places and peoples? On the surface it might appear so. Yet, on closer inspection, it is evident that broad generalizations, particularly within the contexts of status and nationality, do not tell the entire story. Certainly, British planters as well as wider European and African slave traders did well by this arrangement. On the other hand, African slaves were the most obvious victims;²²⁶ but, British taxpayers and consumers also appear to have gotten a raw deal out of this imperial framework, as many writers featured throughout this chapter vehemently argued.

Moreover, it is important to consider to what extent British values, customs, and the

²²³ For instance, see Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). Also, see Peterson, ed., *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*; Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia*; Coleman, *Romantic Colonization and British Anti-Slavery*; Porter, *Religion versus empire?*; and Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*.

²²⁴ See Olson, *Making the Empire Work* and Kammen, *Empire and Interest*.

²²⁵ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775*, 11.

²²⁶ The historiography on this issue is expansive. For more, see Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

idealized national character were changed, for better or worse, by those individuals who populated the empire. How could a people professing to be protestant, maritime, and free square up with the realities of slaving and hybrid ethnicities? These were crucial eighteenth century issues that a great many commentators grappled with and that still serve as examples of the many inherent contradictions related to the idealized nature, but ugly truths of empire.

Certainly by the end of the eighteenth century there existed a significant and well-structured critique of the way the British plantation societies were composed and how they were problematic. Ultimately, these attacks primarily came on two fronts. Firstly, commercial writers charged that the system as then constituted was uneconomical, in that a select few benefited at the expense of the many. In particular, this meant that island planters gained, while domestic Britons unwittingly paid. Secondly, and more profoundly, humanitarian and evangelical reformers argued that the entire system was immoral at its very core, as it was built up on the backs of slaves. These two aspects of the critique against the intertwined sugar and slave industries exposed the unjust nature of the system, as well as the inhumanity of those involved, and, more broadly, the significant ethical deficiencies with regards to the real empire of the eighteenth century. This, undoubtedly, was cause for major introspection, which would force Britons to reconsider the corrupting nature of the relationship between powerful commercial interests and the government; and, as well, to question the moral fabric of a society that knowingly and greatly profited from human suffering.²²⁷

²²⁷ See the 'Epilogue' of Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 341-62.

CHAPTER THREE: ADDRESSING PROBLEMS OF DOMINION IN THE AMERICAS

“THE Proposal for separating totally from *North-America* is observed to make Converts every Day; – it being now acknowledged by thinking People of all Denominations, that there can be no Medium between legal Subjection to the supreme Legislature on the one Hand, and an absolute Separation from it on the other. To pretend to make Distinctions in this Case is idle and vain; for the Nature of Things will not admit of them.”

Josiah Tucker, *A Series of Answers to Certain Popular Objections* (1776)¹

There were a whole host of challenges associated with British colonization in the Americas and many Britons were opposed, in a myriad of ways, to the many different imperial projects and designs on the North American continent. Initially, many of these fears and criticisms stemmed from ignorance of foreign and distance places. Familiar arguments against emigration and depopulation in Britain, as well as the enormous expenses involved to provision and maintain support for colonial settlements were common throughout the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth. However, many of the commentators throughout the period who weighed in on the multitude of questions about North America were neither whole heartedly opposed nor in favour of British empire-building and imperialism on the landmass across the Atlantic.² Political economists and commercial writers, including Josiah Tucker and Arthur Young, often examined the economic value of one territory, either in an abstract or comparative sense. Others, such as Samuel Johnson and James Anderson, considered the harmful nature of British imperialism in terms of competition with European rivals; or, increasingly, the destruction of native populations and land dispossession as a consequence of colonization.

¹ Josiah Tucker, *A Series of Answers to Certain Popular Objections, Against Separating from the Rebellious Colonies, and Discarding them Entirely* (Gloucester: R. Raikes, 1776), ix.

² Perhaps the best known eighteenth century example was Josiah Tucker, whose quotation opened this chapter.

Overall, an analysis of these many diverse and complex discussions regarding British involvement overseas has revealed a multitude of divergent perspectives towards the North American colonies and a notable level of negative criticism.

The Economic Burden of Colonies

Many political economists and commercial writers, from the Restoration period through the French Revolutionary era, disregarded the value of the North American mainland colonies, though such arguments typically varied greatly depending upon the time period and location in question. However, one of the most consistent themes was the decline in perceived and calculated value as one traveled further north. While the southern colonies provided exotic and favoured commodities such as tobacco and cotton, the New England colonies were often viewed as little more than havens for smugglers and rivals in domestic industries. By the 1750s, Nova Scotia was often criticized as being a great administrative burden and yielding little, while Canada as a whole was viewed as a vast wintry wasteland, of much expense and little value other than for its furs or second-rate timber;³ though, it was potentially a place that could be used to hold convicts, as a punitive and reformatory British Siberia.⁴ The exception was Newfoundland, which was typically given special treatment as a seasonal base for fishery

³ The issue of acquiring timber was of the utmost concern for the Navy and highlights many divergent perspectives on the resources and usefulness of these colonies. The Navy Board, during the period, generally disparaged colonial timber, favouring timber importation from the Baltics or Scandinavia and ship construction in England. On the other hand, the Board of Trade wished to advance colonial timber projects and the Admiralty often placed similar demands on the Navy Board during wartime. For a history of this see Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy 1652-1862* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926). Albion noted how using colonial timber was far less economical than European sources, as many American ports were three to five times the distance to Britain than Riga or Norway; shipping rates were about three times greater (£6-8 vs. 40-50s per ton of freight); and colonial labour cost about six times that of labour in Europe. See Albion, *Forests and Sea Power*, 240. This text was also briefly discussed in Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 113-4.

⁴ Tucker made this proposal in Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (Bristol, 1755), 128-9. He also suggested that if the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly were broken then the area might serve as a proper colony for disloyal Scottish Highlanders, who were hardy enough to manage in an inhospitable climate and could be made useful subjects. Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 126-7. This issue was also commented upon by Knorr, who noted that this was Tucker's early, more pro-imperial period. See Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 119-20.

operations and as such conceived of as a part of a more traditional English industry, and less so as a true or permanently inhabited colony. Although specific circumstances changed in each of the North American colonies over the course of the eighteenth century, many of these perspectives were recurring and reflected long established themes and trends.

One of the earliest criticisms of North American colonies came from Carew Reynell, a Tory and protectionist, who wrote during the Restoration period. Though he was not opposed to England acquiring colonies, or for empire-building generally, he questioned the benefit of the northern colonies. In his *The True English Interest*, which was perhaps written for the purpose of acquiring a position for himself on the Board of Trade, he clearly advocated smart and well-thought out colonization. Notably, he warned “not to waste men in large and unprofitable Territories, which hath ruin’d the *Spaniard*.” Here he was likely referring to the vast size of Spanish territories in South America, and arguing that the English should be mindful of their rival’s history. However, he continued, “[m]ost of our Plantations in the *West-Indies*, except *Jamaica*, and *Barbadoes*, are but unprofitable.”⁵ Specifically, he noted “these now insignificant Islands”, “of *Nevis*, *Mountserat*, *Antego*, and *St. Christophers*”.⁶ But, even the islands were less problematic than lands elsewhere. His sharpest criticism was reserved

[f]or our North Colonies, as those of *New England*, and the rest afford only such Commodities as we have ourselves, and so breed no good Commerce; besides, they hinder Trade to our Southern Plantations, by supplying *Barbadoes*, *Jamaica*, and the rest, with such things as we do: so that they take the bread out of our mouths, and are rather a disadvantage, than an advantage to us.⁷

Overall, his assessment of territorial acquisitions was done very much on a case by case basis.

He suggested that if the colonists in undesirable colonies could be moved south, or if the English

⁵ Carew Reynell, *The True English Interest: Or An Account of the Chief National Improvements* (London: Printed for Giles Widdowes, 1674), 88. This also appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 107.

⁶ Reynell, *The True English Interest*, 91.

⁷ Ibid. The first part of this quote also appeared in the footnotes of Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 93.

could instead acquire colonies in more strategic and profitable locations, such as the southern plantations, or Jamaica, then the imperial project would be worthwhile for the kingdom.

Even John Cary, a notable Bristol merchant writing two decades later, was skeptical of the value of the New England colonies. Though he was certainly not opposed to overseas empire or the acquisition and settling of plantations in the New World, this aspect of the Atlantic empire did concern him. He made a similar assessment, noting that

[a]mong these Plantations I look on that of *New-England* to bring least Advantage to this Kingdom, for being settled [*sic*] by an industrious People, and affording few Commodities proper to be transported hither, the Inhabitants employ themselves by trading to the rest of the Plantations, whom they supply with Provisions and other their Products, and from thence fetch their respective Growths, which they after send to Foreign Markets, and thereby injure the Trade of *England*.⁸

The problem was that this particular colony had been populated by hardworking Britons, who could have been beneficial to England, but were instead becoming rivals in trade. He also noted that “from hence it is Fleets of Ships and Regiments of Soldiers are frequently sent for their Defence, at the Charge of the Inhabitants of this Kingdom, besides the equal Benefit the Inhabitants there receive with us from the Advantages expected by the Issue of this War, the Security of Religion, Liberty, and Property, towards the Charge whereof they contribute little”.⁹ Thus, the colony was proving to be of questionable value to England, as it was a rival in terms of commodity production and it depended on the mother country for economic and military support. This was to become a persistent theme among commercial writers. Many of these debates over the value of the North American colonies would continue throughout the eighteenth century,

⁸ John Cary, *An Essay on the State of England* (Bristol: W. Bonny, 1695), 69-70.

⁹ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 70-1. As was the case with many commercial writers of the period, Cary did not like the idea of the government spending a lot of money to support and defend colonies whose value to the kingdom was questionable. Additionally, he was critical of the East India Company and the East Indies trades, from which he, as a Bristol-based merchant, was excluded. This is addressed in greater detail in the fourth chapter.

though it was perhaps in the context of the Seven Years' War that issues related to colonial expenditure and the associated debates over dominion became the most acute.

In the latter stages of the Seven Years' War, and during the peace negotiations, there was significant debate over Britain's acquisition of such a large amount of territory in North America.¹⁰ While on a map the gains would have appeared obviously tremendous, and the American colonists welcomed the end of French rule, many metropolitan commentators remained unconvinced that Britain should absolutely extend its North American dominions.¹¹ The two main arguments were that the northern territories of Canada were of questionable value, and that it was unwise to attempt to control such a vast territory, especially one populated by dissimilar peoples.¹² For instance, William Burke, who wrote *Remarks on the Letter Addressed to Two Great Men*, questioned why Britain would want this new territory, for "[i]f in the Hands of the *French*, who have no other Northern Colony, from whence to supply their Islands with Lumber, Corn, and Provision, *Canada* was of so very little Importance, what is it like to prove in ours, who have already such immense Tracts".¹³ He urged readers to consider

Canada, situated in a cold Climate, produces no Commodity, except Furs and Skins, which she can exchange for the Commodities of *Europe* and consequently she can have small Returns to make to the *English* Merchant. We know what trifling Returns we have, from some of our own very flourishing Colonies in *America*. The whole Trade of Furs and Skins, which *Canada* carried on with

¹⁰ Concerns particularly focused upon Quebec, the northern part of New France, which was an enormous territory whose boundaries were not always clear. See Philip Lawson, "'The Irishman's Prize': Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774," *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 3 (1985): 575-596.

¹¹ The debate has been discussed in Nancy Koehn, *The Power of Commerce: Economy and Governance in the First British Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). In particular, chapter five of Koehn's book considers 'the ambivalence of empire'.

¹² Lawson noted how this was an important example of "Little Englander" sentiment in the 1760s. See Lawson, "'The Irishman's Prize': Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774," 590.

¹³ William Burke, *Remarks on the Letter Addressed to Two Great Men. In a Letter to the Author of that Piece*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1760), 34-5.

France, fell short, in its most flourishing State, of 140,000l. a Year. The rest of their Produce, with regard to the Market of *Europe*, is as nothing.¹⁴

Such a colony would clearly be of little value to Britain, from an economic standpoint. However, it would still require administrative and military expenditures to maintain, and additionally came with some hazards that could not be ignored. He continued,

I shall only observe, that by eagerly grasping at extensive Territory, we may run the risque, and that perhaps in no very distant Period, of losing what we now possess. The Possession of *Canada*, far from being necessary to our Safety, may in its Consequence be even dangerous. A Neighbour that keeps us in some Awe, is not always the worst of Neighbours. So that far from sacrificing *Guadeloupe* to *Canada*, perhaps if we might have *Canada* without any Sacrifice at all, we ought not to desire it.¹⁵

Ultimately, Burke would make the case that it would have been better that France kept the territory and Britain retained the island of Guadeloupe instead.¹⁶

This similar sentiment was echoed in *Reasons for Keeping Guadeloupe at a Peace*, an anonymously published article the following year.¹⁷ In this series of five letters the author presented a number of arguments in favour of maintaining the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe and against expanding British dominion in North America. While the former would be a beneficial acquisition, on account of it being small and lucrative, the latter was dangerous and could potentially ruin Britain. In the first letter, he remarked that

having all North-America to ourselves, by acquiring Canada, dazzles the eyes, and blinds the understanding of the giddy and unthinking people, as it is natural for the human mind to grasp at any appearance of wealth and grandeur, yet it is

¹⁴ Burke, *Remarks*, 3rd ed., 36.

¹⁵ Burke, *Remarks*, 3rd ed., 51. Although William Burke is typically identified as the author, this piece has occasionally been attributed to Charles Townshend as well.

¹⁶ This issue was discussed in more detail in Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 3-24.

¹⁷ Historian Philip Lawson has noted that although this piece has been ascribed to William Burke, likely based upon its similarities to his other works from around the same time, its authorship is unknown. Lawson, "'The Irishman's Prize': Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774," 580.

easy to discover that such a peace might soon ruin Britain: I say the acquisition of Canada would be destructive, because such a country as North-America, ten times larger in extent than Britain, richer soil in most places, all the different climates you can fancy, all the lakes and rivers for navigation one could wish, plenty of wood for shipping, and as much iron, hemp, and naval stores, as any part of the world; such a country at such a distance, could never remain long subject to Britain;¹⁸

The author also made the case that this acquisition would be merely for the benefit of the American colonists, who, in the absence of a rival French power to the north, would be emboldened in their insolence against Britain. This would be the unavoidable consequence of acquiring the territory, “and must appear so to every man whose head is not too much affected with popular madness or political enthusiasm.”¹⁹ He then quipped that, realistically, the territory was of limited economic value, for “pray what can Canada yield to Britain, in this or any subsequent age, but a little extension of the furr-trade?”²⁰ Instead, he argued that France should be allowed to maintain territory in North America to check the ambition of the colonists; “but if we were to acquire all Canada, we should soon find North-America itself too powerful, and too populous to belong governed by us at this distance; we have often, too often, wasted our blood and treasure to raise up other powers to wealth and strength, only to be once our enemies; it were much to be wished that we could take warning, and do so no more.”²¹

In the second letter, the author addressed the absurdity of claims that for the purposes of safety, the French had to be wholly displaced from North America. He remarked “[w]hat further security can we have, unless they propose to extirpate the French from the face of the earth, which is not in their power to do, nor justifiable if they could? All the arguments they use for

¹⁸ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe at a Peace, Preferable to Canada, Explained in Five Letters, from a Gentleman in Guadaloupe, to his Friend in London* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, 1761), 6. This quotation was also discussed in Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 172.

¹⁹ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 8-9.

taking Canada, are as conclusive for taking France and Mississippi, sure those false glosses and chimerical representations can impose upon no man of any reflection.”²² Instead, he hoped that the evidence would guide the decision-making process, while “this giddiness of the people, this madness that reigns after North-America, be not in some measure extinguished, or at least moderated”.²³ If, however, this was not the case, he argued then that people should instead examine some likely outcomes, based upon precedents. “As to this favourite scheme of colonizing, let us look backwards and see what attempts the Grecians or Romans made that way.”²⁴ In addition, he urged readers to consider the notorious case of Spain. After all,

Spain grasped at conquests in a foreign country in the new world, so far above the extent and ability of the mother-country that she dispeopled herself: and though she conquered these countries, the inexhaustible fountain of those precious mettles [*sic*] that the world hunt after with so insatiable an appetite, yet she gradually declined from those mistaken maxims to the state she is now in.²⁵

It was a sad lesson, though perhaps one that people were destined to learn over and over again, as he further inquired, “[a]re we then so infatuated that we can neither take advice nor take warning? Are not we the only people upon earth, except Spain, that ever thought of establishing a colony ten times more extensive than our own”.²⁶ Indeed, it was highly likely that Britain would decline in the same way as Spain had, if the same sorts of imperial policies were pursued. He additionally argued that this was not unique to North America, but that it was a broader reflection of the problem of holding vast dominions. For,

[i]t is a maxim now established beyond dispute, that Britain cannot acquire territory upon the continent of Europe to any sort of advantage, but rather to her own detriment, as all her liberty, wealth, and happiness, are, in a great measure,

²² *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 18.

²³ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 28-9.

²⁴ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 31-2.

owing to her being an island disengaged from the dangers and quarrels of her neighbours. I flatter myself I have in these three letters made it as plain that she cannot acquire more property upon the continent of America, without more danger; and that she has more there already than she can manage to any profitable purpose.²⁷

As well as a financial burden, this expansion would also be a threat to the constitution, and undermine the most cherished traditional British liberties which made them so exceptional.²⁸

Considering some notable examples of history, he wondered how determined Britain would be to “hunt her own ruin through the deserts of America?”²⁹ It was clear that the French were ready and willing to part with North America “as they see it has nigh ruined them, they will easily part with what has been destructive,”³⁰ and likewise he argued that “Canada joined to what we have in America will prove our destruction,”³¹ too. However, the author remarked somewhat optimistically that “I hope we shall be wiser than grasp this gilded snake and be bit to death: will people consider that those shining advantages North-America has beyond any other country we know, is the very thing creates our danger,”³² The author even suggested that it might have been a conspiracy that the French were actively involved in the British press encouraging Britain to take their unwanted colony, writing “in what manner would such French missionaries attack us, but by gilding North-America with poetical fiction; to inflame the popular, but false ambition of extent of territory, so often prejudicial, in the annals of history”.³³ Unfortunately, he then warned, many seemed wrongly enticed,

²⁷ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 32.

²⁸ Whiggish notions about British and American exceptionalism are considered in Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Also, see J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty 1660-1832: Political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁹ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 33.

³⁰ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 55.

³¹ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 60.

³² *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 51.

³³ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 61.

[b]ut if the voice of our country, should still cry so giddily after that false and destructive ambition of extent of territory so often prejudicial to other states, yet much more so to Britain, and that Canada, at a treaty of peace, were added to the extensive possessions she has in North America, what would be the consequence, many, both fatal and dangerous to Great-Britain would ensue.³⁴

His suggestion that the French were eagerly encouraging British imperialists and stirring up a patriotic fervour was notable, and certainly not implausible. How better to get revenge than to have rivals run the risk of ruining themselves by their own hands? Yet, he remarked,

I hope these wolves in sheeps cloathing will be detected, and no longer listened to, as I think it is made very plain, that when they argue for acquiring Canada, and giving up Guadaloupe, or when they talk of a disinterested peace, they have neither the interest of Britain or North-America in their view. It is plainly the interest of France they aim at, joined perhaps with some small advantages to the sugar islands we have; but from these destructive principles, how warmly do they struggle against the trade, wealth, grandeur and honour of their native country (if they are British) I hope is now made very clear to the world.³⁵

This was a crucial negotiation that would drastically alter the balance of power in North America, and it was important for the British to understand the risks of incorporating a vast and dangerous territory of little apparent economic value.

In his 1762 assessment of the peace negotiations, William Burke provided an even more studied position regarding the value of these territories. He wrote that

[t]he Reader, habituated to the Declamations with which the Publick have been so often amused on the Subject of *Canada*, will undoubtedly be somewhat surprized at the inconsiderable Value of this immensely extensive Country; I believe that those Traders who, deluded by the popular Cry in favour of *Canada*, ventured to send some Cargoes thither, have had reason heartily to repent their Credulity.³⁶

³⁴ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 76.

³⁵ *Reasons for Keeping Guadaloupe*, 26.

³⁶ William Burke, *An Examination of the Commercial Principles of the Late Negotiation Between Great Britain and France*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1762), 58.

Thus, he cautioned readers to be wary of those who unjustly linked their own personal interests with that of the nation as a whole, and to think about the economic facts.³⁷ On this question, he remarked even that

[f]or my Part I never entertained a very high Opinion of its Importance in any, much less in a trading, Light. Yet the precise State of its Commerce has fallen below my own mean Opinion of its Value; it is even below the Income of very many private Estates: And here let it be remembered, that this Deficiency, in the direct Trade between *Canada* and *Great Britain*, is not compensated, as in our old northern Colonies, by an extensive Traffick to the *West- Indies*. The Trade between *Canada* and the Islands is absolutely none; and it has happened exactly as I at first foresaw, that whatever little Trade of this Kind was carried on whilst *Canada* continued in the Possession of *France*, must be lost and at an end, as soon as ever *Canada* became an *English* Possession.³⁸

Based upon such assessment, he noted that “[t]he entire Produce of this Province might be imported hither in one single Ship; and this is the whole existing Value of *Canada* to the Commerce and Navigation of *Great Britain*. 14,000 l. to the former; a Ship or two at most to the latter.”³⁹ While that might have been suitable for those few engaged in the trade, it would be won at a great cost to the nation. He then also encouraged readers to consider that

[w]hilst the *English*, giving a great Part of this very Trade out of their Hands, and incumbered with a Debt of a great deal above 100 Millions, acquired only a barren Expence of 62,484 l. a Year, without one single, even possible, Advantage to our Commerce; without any other Consolation than the Liberty of parading in boundless and fruitless Forests, and amusing ourselves with idle Speculations upon the Importance of *Canada*.⁴⁰

³⁷ Issues about the “common good” as well as the “national interest” have been most thoroughly addressed in Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³⁸ Burke, *An Examination*, 58.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Burke, *An Examination*, 62.

He was very concerned that negotiators perhaps were unaware of all the details of Canada's value or maybe did not care and were basing their decisions on emotions rather than evidence.

He stated that this was likely taking the country down the wrong path, as,

[t]his very groundless Opinion was the true Source of our Neglect, in the late Negotiation, of such real, commercial Advantages, as might augment the Resources of *Great Britain*. And from hence proceeded that utter Oblivion of all former Maxims of our Policy, whilst, under the Name of Security we sought with Eagerness extensive and unprofitable Empire, and rejected moderate but lucrative Acquisition.⁴¹

Unfortunately, the course that Britain was pursuing was to its own detriment, as Canada would bring in no enumerated commodities and would provide no other economic advantages. He even offered up, for the consideration of readers, an examination of the formerly French territories which they already controlled in North America, writing,

but *Nova Scotia*, tho' the Settlement there was planned with the utmost Wisdom, though a Million of Money has been already, within a very few Years, expended upon it, and though that enormous Sum has been applied with the most distinguished Oeconomy and Management, yet that Settlement has not hitherto been able to return Commodities to more than 181. 3s. Value *per ann.* for that was the Whole of their last Year's Export.⁴²

Burke's criticism here read as somewhat of a backhanded compliment, and reflected the fact that the northern territories Britain already held in North America were of negligible value at best. He also gave ample warning that expanding upon them would be more dangerous than not.

Another anonymous publication from around the same time questioned the reasoning behind continuing the war. In particular the author noted the high cost of building a large fleet and maintaining it on a war footing, writing "[w]hen a large fleet is fitted out at the expence of a whole nation, it should have something else for its object of enterprize, than exhausting its stores,

⁴¹ Burke, *An Examination*, 69.

⁴² Burke, *An Examination*, 75.

and exposing itself to destruction in hurricanes and high seas, in quest of Spanish trading vessels: and what has Spain so *extremely* valuable, that will indemnify our heavy charges in a short time?" The writer further questioned the motivations of those making the decisions, and inquired as to benefits that would accrue to the nation as well, in considering that

[w]e have more islands than we are able to keep, or at least more than our great minister thought it politic to keep, and more territory than we can people. What then are we to fight the Spaniards for? for taking a few ships, which will turn out beneficial only to a few merchants and brokers, and throw away the lives of the national forces, and lavish away the national treasures in making conquests which we must return, because they are more than we can keep.⁴³

Historians have dated this article to around 1762 based on its content and the context of the Seven Years' War, when there was no shortage of discussion about wartime expenditures.

In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War there was considerable discussion in Britain over what should be done with the newly acquired territories in North America. Associated with questions about governing a French population, were issues of expenditures and the economic value of Canada.⁴⁴ One such example of this public discourse came from an anonymous letter, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, published in 1765 under the pseudonym, Cato, which inquired as to "Whether is it probable that the Immense Extent of Territory acquired by this Nation at the late Peace, will operate towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of the Island of Great-Britain?" In attempting to answer this question, he asked readers to consider an old adage that "[w]hen either a Person or People are ruined by too much of any thing that is good in a moderate Degree, the greater the Quantity, their Ruin comes on so much the

⁴³ *Arguments Against a Spanish War* (London: Printed for E. Cabe, 1762), 35-6.

⁴⁴ For a recent assessment of communications, trade, and other imperial networks within the eighteenth century French Atlantic see Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

more speedily.”⁴⁵ In 1765, it was a timely question for his British audience.⁴⁶

Cato questioned the value of such lands and asked how they were to be developed when there was little money to do so. Here he facetiously posited,

[i]s any Man sure that it is not possible to get too much Land, as well as too much Money? We have now from the Gulph of Florida to the North-Pole, at least with very little Exception; how far West I really do not know. What pity is it that we did not keep the whole Island of Cuba, and by another Year’s War, take from the Spaniards all their Possessions in South-America? After we had done so, there would have remained still some more of the Globe to conquer. Is not the Lust of Conquest in a Nation as insatiable as the Lust of Gold in a Miser? And is it not much more hurtful? If any thinks otherwise, if he either thinks we have not enough, or not more than enough at present, let him explain clearly the Reasons of his Opinion, and what will be the probable Effect of the Acquisition upon the Society.⁴⁷

He then argued that he thought questions about maintaining well-populated communities at home had long been settled, but imperial policy was tending in the opposite direction. In particular, he noted that “[o]ur Plantations are becoming so extensive, that it is probable they will speedily set up Manufactures of their own, and be our Rivals instead of our Customers.”⁴⁸ Indeed, he was highly concerned that British goods were becoming uncompetitive. Though he noted that it was often considered some future problem, he regarded it as a process already well underway. Specifically, he remarked upon the concern about stocking-weavers leaving en masse from Nottingham, writing “[i]t has also been affirmed, that several different Branches of Manufacture are already set up in New-England: And our Merchants at home... are making dreadful outcries upon it. We are told it will be half a Million Sterling loss yearly to Great-Britain; and I can easily

⁴⁵ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public* (London: J. Dixwell, 1765), 13.

⁴⁶ For a broader discussion of the historical context see Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴⁷ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 14.

⁴⁸ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 23.

believe it will very soon be double that Sum. But what Remedy?”⁴⁹ It was very likely that this was a trend that would continue in motion, as the incentives in place encouraged individuals to go abroad, which inevitably augmented the rivalries within a multitude of industries.

Cato presented his arguments as a genuine patriot and lover of his country. He clearly saw the extended empire as a burden upon the British people themselves and urged sensible policies that would improve their lot at home. In stark contrast to pro-imperial figures who defended empire-building on the grounds that it enhanced the wealth and power of the kingdom, Cato argued that he was in fact the true loyalist, and

yet I sincerely wish he had given them back all that we took, and a good deal of our own besides; provided we had brought all the People to Great Britain; and obliged our Enemies to pay the real Expence of the War, that these new Subjects might be put at first into a way of living. The French, had they attended to their own Interest, had as little to do to fight with us in America, as we had to fight with them in Germany; and if their Expulsion from so great a Part of it shall make them so wise, as to cultivate their own excellent Country, to fill their Land with People, and employ their People in Industry, future Historians will be able to demonstrate that they were Gainers by being beat.⁵⁰

Here he made the familiar argument that a small densely-populated trading nation would be infinitely more prosperous than a grand empire built upon endless conquests. Referring to ancient city-states and the more recent success of the Dutch, he urged Britons to rethink national policies geared towards endless territorial expansion.⁵¹ This, he argued, would be the ideal way to build up one's own nation. Cato then asked his readers to consider

[w]hether this insatiable Desire in our Nation of such extensive Territories, as must be measured by the Heavens, and probably never will be perambulated, be

⁴⁹ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 25.

⁵⁰ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 37-8.

⁵¹ The politics of imperialism formed an important aspect of changing party and personal dynamics throughout this period. For more on patriotism and politics at the time see Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, 331-88. Also, on political ideologies and the American imperial problem, see John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 201-16.

not like all selfish interested Affections in Individuals, Destruction to ourselves. If my Fears are quite groundless, so much the better for us and our Posterity: If otherwise, it were to be wish'd that the best Means were pointed out for retarding our Ruin as much as possible.⁵²

Having then identified the problems afflicting the nation, including grasping at ever larger dominions, and as a consequence of such expansionism, a national depopulation which hurt the country and made it difficult to support its many great towns, he then likened the situation to a patient with a bad disorder. With the disease identified, and showing a genuine concern for his nation's interests, it was high time for the physician to act.

One anonymous writer to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1765 made a similar argument regarding the prosperity of the North American colonies. This was a persistent theme in the commentary on empire; however, by this time it was clearly established that the people and their industries were rivals in many respects, and were not useful to Britain in their ongoing state. In this letter, directed to the publisher, Sylvanus Urban, the author remarked upon the accelerated pace of emigration, as well as a wealth and technology transfer to the colonies, writing "ever since the regulations were made last year, concerning the *North American* trade, we hardly read a newspaper that does not mention manufacturers of one kind or another going from *England*, *Scotland*, or *Ireland* to settle in those colonies". He was not critical of those who had gone abroad, but rather remarked on the state of Britain, itself, in asking "[i]f from real want in the nation, or by iniquitous practices, our manufacturers and other labouring people here cannot acquire the means of comfortable subsistence, can it be imagined that they will not seek in other countries what they cannot find at home?"⁵³

Notably, he also questioned the economic regulations placed upon the Thirteen Colonies

⁵² Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 47.

⁵³ Sylvanus Urban, ed., *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle. Volume XXXV*. (London: Printed for D. Henry and R. Cave, 1765), 7.

by Parliament, which in many respects were having more detrimental effects on Britain.⁵⁴ He inquired “[i]s it to be considered as good policy, to reduce our colonies to the necessity of inviting over our manufacturing and other labouring people? and at the same time increase their temptations to leave us, by suffering them to experience great misery and want? and are there not great proofs of that want and misery”. Such measures, designed to regulate and tax colonial trade, while augment Parliamentary power, was clearly seen as punitive; though the decline was hitting Britain most of all, and encouraging an exodus. He then closed with the following statement, urging readers to think of the big picture,

[t]he numbers of labouring people of all kinds in a country, are justly considered to be the strength and riches of a state. It must therefore be well worthy of timely consideration, if we are not two ways contributing to the undoing of ourselves; for with a transfer of arts and people, we make such a transfer of strength and property; as will soon throw out of our own hands all power and wealth. Must it then not be worth while to look a little way before us?⁵⁵

This author was just one of many who would publically consider the relationship that existed between Britain and America, and ask for whose benefit the situation was maintained.

Another notable critic of aspects of the North American colonial enterprise was Arthur Young, the late eighteenth century agriculturalist and political economist. Among his numerous *Political Essays* in 1772, he commented on the state of the empire and its colonies, and in drawing upon many other sources and a significant amount of research, concluded that the British needed to significantly rethink their colonial strategies. In particular, he was concerned

⁵⁴ The issues of Parliamentary taxation of the American colonies in the 1760s, and the Stamp Act in particular, have been addressed in P. D. G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution 1763-1767* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). The Stamp Act and the colonies were also considered in Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Koehn noted too how the imposition of this tax triggered wide-scale commercial disruption as part of major colonial protest, causing British-North American trade to drop considerably. See Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 185-6.

⁵⁵ Urban, ed., *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle. Volume XXXV.*, 7. This quote also partially appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 73-4.

about the vast extent of North America and whether or not it was possible or beneficial for Britain to maintain all those lands. In his first essay he remarked that

[t]he detached parts of the British dominions in respect of extent, are prodigious: The North American colonies are alone supposed to contain, by different accounts, from 1,600,000 square miles to upwards of 2,000,000, and by others nearer 3,000,000; besides the West India islands, and the settlements in the East Indies; tracts of lands so prodigious, that there are few countries in the world equal to them.

While acquiring such extensive territories might have, on the surface, seemed to be an obvious gain for Britain, on further investigation it was actually less clear that maintaining such overseas dominions would be beneficial. He continued, “[i]ndeed this vast extent of the North American colonies is by no means an advantage in itself; for all the benefits resulting from colonies would proceed in a much securer manner from others of much less size; and especially as such a vast part of them is in a climate which can produce but little that is wanted in Britain.”⁵⁶

In his first section on colonies, Young examined in greater detail each British possession in North America, in order to assess its value and whether or not they should be retained within the empire. The conclusion he reached was very much based upon geography. He wrote

[i]t appears upon the whole, that the staple productions of our colonies decrease in value in proportion to their distance from the sun. In the West Indies, which are the hottest of all, they make to the amount of 8 *l.* 12 *s.* 1 *d.* per head. In the southern continental ones, to the amount of 5 *l.* 10 *s.* In the central ones, to the amount of 9 *s.* 6 ½ *d.* In the northern settlements, to that of 2 *s.* 6 *d.* This scale surely suggests a most important lesson – to avoid colonizing in northern latitudes! Eighteen pounds, the export of Nova Scotia, after several years settlement, after the utmost attention from the government, after a million sterling

⁵⁶ Arthur Young, *Political Essays Concerning the Present State of the British Empire* (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1772), 10.

of the publick money being expended upon it, is an example one would think sufficient to deter the boldest projector!⁵⁷

Young was notable for his ranking of the colonies, according to the value they provided to Britain. Based upon the volume of trade and the amount of revenue that could be brought in, he argued how colonies in different climes than Britain, and those that produced exotic commodities were highly beneficial. Conversely, colonies that produced similar goods as domestic industries were at best rivals, and at worst a drain on the mother country. Therefore, colonization was not an issue that should be considered in the abstract, but rather based upon particularities; for

[w]hatever ideas therefore are entertained of the beneficial influence of the colonies upon the manufactures and trade of Britain, a distinction ought constantly to be made between, 1. the islands; 2. the southern colonies; 3. the tobacco ones; and, 4. the northern. The first evidently add immensely to the wealth of the mother-country; the second, though inferior to the first, are yet of vast consequence; the third are of some importance; the fourth of very little, but probably of much detriment. – As this is the case, let an undistinguishing praise never attend them.⁵⁸

Clearly, he had no sympathy for the northern colonies, and as an agricultural observer he remarked that “[e]ven wheat, that hardy and almost universal grower, thrives not in New England.”⁵⁹ Yet, he had even greater scorn for Nova Scotia, and the more recently acquired territory of Canada.⁶⁰ As part of his criticisms of these colonies, he questioned the judgement of those who advocated or ordered the acquisition of such territories, asking,

[w]ill you plant a tract of land which produces wheat, barley, oats, and wool, or one which yields spices, sugar, and wine? – This knowledge, I say, is, or might be

⁵⁷ Young, *Political Essays*, 326. N.B., he sketched out the export numbers to Britain from the respective colonies on the previous page.

⁵⁸ Young, *Political Essays*, 337. This ranking of the colonies was also noted in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 128.

⁵⁹ Young, *Political Essays*, 229.

⁶⁰ For a notable comparative assessment of Massachusetts and Nova Scotia during the period, see Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

very common at present. And yet, in the name of common sense, must not that very question have been asked in the year 1750? We then possessed the Bahama Islands, and Nova Scotia, – both uncultivated; – the expence of the one already fixed in having a civil establishment; – that of the other to form; – the one extremely fertile in the tropical productions, the other scarcely yielding the necessaries of life, but peculiarly situated for rivaling us in our Newfoundland fishery. If any person was ignorant of the fact, would it be possible for him to conceive that we chose the latter?⁶¹

He clearly would have preferred the tropical island colonies in this regard, though remarked in in footnotes that “[i]t may, perhaps, be said, we settled Nova Scotia upon political motives relative to the neighbourhood of the French; but in such case a single fortification was sufficient, with only the expence of a military establishment, and not a *planting* and *fishing* colony, settled at the expence of a million sterling; and even bounties given for fishing: so that this plea cannot be well founded.”⁶² In addition to this detrimental colony, he then moved on to something even more egregious, writing that “[t]his is the proper place to introduce some account of the Hudson’s Bay trade; but it is really an affront to the understanding of the reader to attempt an elucidation of so frivolous a commerce.” He continued,

[n]umerous are the single merchants that carry on twice the trade of this company, and export twenty times the British manufactures. All the reasons that have been given for a continuation of this illegal, unnecessary, and even pernicious monopoly, are founded in private interests, falsified facts, and ill-founded suppositions. There is not a pretence of a want of this company now the French are driven out of Canada, and therefore it is much to be hoped that this paltry and ill-judged combination, to limit the consumption of our manufactures for the interest of a few private traders, whose conduct, in the chief business for which

⁶¹ Young, *Political Essays*, 444-5.

⁶² Ibid. For a thorough economic history of the territory, see Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998). The changing nature of the colony and the arrival of planters from Britain and New England in the second half of the eighteenth century have been addressed in Margaret Conrad, ed., *Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800* (Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1991). For a recent assessment of British administration of the colony in the mid-eighteenth century see Thomas Hully, “The British Empire in the Atlantic: Nova Scotia, the Board of Trade, and the Evolution of Imperial Rule in the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” (MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2012).

they were instituted, the discovery of a north-west passage, has been so highly reprehensible. To enlarge upon such a trade, except in arrainging the wretched conduct of it, would be tedious and disgusting.⁶³

He was certainly not alone in criticizing that monopoly at the time or in disregarding the value of British trade to and from Canada at the time, as it was considerably smaller than that to other places, yet was maintained at great cost. Indeed, it was likely a common viewpoint. In the decade that followed the final acquisition of New France, and within the context of the extensive and emotional debate over the Quebec Act, a comment appeared in the *Public Advertiser*, which revealed the widely-held sentiment that “[t]he Conquest of Canada every body now sees was like the Irishman’s Prize, gaining a Loss. The French when there were, in fact, an Army for Britain, which secured the Dependence of our Colonies.”⁶⁴ According to Young, the obvious decision would have been to concentrate on expanding British control in areas of economic benefit, including tropical locales, while abandoning or selling off colonies of significantly lesser value.

There were numerous examples of expenditures on colonial administrations and imperial projects that were derided by critics as being wasteful. One of the most prominent critics in this regard was Edmund Burke in his famous speech on economical reform in Parliament on February 11, 1780. While Burke was not exactly an anti-imperialist, or an opponent of Britain maintaining an empire in North America, he was in this case highlighting, admittedly in the midst of war, a number of associated problems. In particular, he questioned the utility of the

⁶³ Young, *Political Essays*, 501-2. He commented here in the footnotes that “[t]heir whole exportation is about 4,000 l. a year.” Young was just one of many critics of this monopoly at the time. The most famous perhaps was Arthur Dobbs, though he and others made the case that the Hudson’s Bay Company was a problem because it was a restraint on imperial expansion. For more, see Glyndwr Williams, “The Hudson’s Bay Company and Its Critics in the Eighteenth Century,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 20 (1970): 149-171.

⁶⁴ *Public Advertiser* (London, England), Tuesday, June 7, 1774. See Lawson, “‘The Irishman’s Prize’: Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774,” 575. For more on the debate over the Quebec Act of 1774, see Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution*, 126-45. Additionally, Lawson highlighted the underappreciated significance of the Conquest and the Quebec Act in Hanoverian history, as part of a grand experiment in political and religious toleration. See Philip Lawson, “A Perspective on British History and the Treatment of Quebec,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 3, no. 3 (1990): 253-271.

Board of Trade, whose abolishment he advocated as a way to reduce colonial expenditures, noting that “[t]his board of trade and plantations has not been of any use to the colonies, as colonies”.⁶⁵ He further urged members to consider that “[t]wo colonies alone owe their origin to that board” and that neither had a good record. First, was “Georgia, which, till lately, has made a very slow progress; and never did make any progress at all, until it wholly got rid of all the regulations which the board of trade had moulded into its original constitution.” This was the planned debtors’ prison and indentured labour colony envisioned by James Oglethorpe and founded in 1732,⁶⁶ but according to Burke, clearly had been an expensive, unsuccessful experiment, as

[t]hat colony has cost the nation very great sums of money; whereas the colonies which have had the fortune of not being godfathered by the board of trade, never cost the nation a shilling, except what has been so properly spent in losing them. But the colony of Georgia, weak as it was, carried with it to the last hour, and carries, even in its present dead pallid visage, the perfect resemblance of its parents. It always had, and it now has, an establishment paid by the public England, for the sake of the influence the crown; that colony having never been able or willing to take upon itself the expence of its proper government, or its own appropriated jobs.⁶⁷

Yet, it was the second of the two colonial projects which earned an even greater level of scorn from Burke. “The province of Nova Scotia was the youngest and the favourite child of the board [of Trade]. Good God! What sums the nursing of that ill-thriven, hard-visaged, and ill-favoured brat, has cost to this wittol nation!” he said. “Sir, this colony has stood us in a sum of not less than 700,000l. To this day it has made no repayment – It does not even support those offices of expence, which are miscalled its government; the whole of that job still lies upon the patient,

⁶⁵ Edmund Burke, *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T.C. Hansard, 1814), XXI:59.

⁶⁶ For more on Oglethorpe and the colony of Georgia see Phinizy Spalding and Harvey H. Jackson, eds., *Oglethorpe in Perspective: Georgia's Founder After Two Hundred Years* (Tuscaloosa, A.L.: The University of Alabama Press, 1989).

⁶⁷ Burke, *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbett, XXI:59.

callous shoulders of the people of England.”⁶⁸

In addition to pointing out the significant costs of this northern colony of questionable value, he did note that

[t]here was in the province of Nova Scotia, one little neglected corner, the country of the neutral French; which having the good fortune to escape the fostering care of both France and England, and to have been shut out from the protection and regulation of councils of commerce, and of boards of trade, did, in silence, without notice, and without assistance, increase to a considerable degree.⁶⁹

Referring here to the Acadians, he remarked on how their settlements had been prosperous, and would have added significant value to an otherwise useless colony. “But it seems our nation had more skill and ability in destroying, than in settling a colony”, which spoke perhaps to either the incompetence of those in charge, or perhaps their foolishness, for destroying the most productive parts of the colony. He then continued

[i]n the last war we did, in my opinion, most inhumanly, and upon pretences that in the eye of an honest man are not worth a farthing, root out this poor innocent deserving people, whom our utter inability to govern, or to reconcile, gave us no sort of right to extirpate. Whatever the merits of that extirpation might have been, it was on the footsteps of a neglected people, it was on the fund of unconstrained poverty, it was on the acquisitions of unregulated industry, that any thing which deserves the name of a colony in that province, has been formed. It has been formed by overflowings from the exuberant population of New England, and by emigration from other parts of Nova Scotia of fugitives from the protection of the board of trade.⁷⁰

In addition to questioning the judgement of those in charge, he also commented upon the inhumanity of the decision to expel the Acadians.⁷¹ This, he hoped, was “sufficient to prove...the inutility of that expensive establishment.” Burke’s case, therefore, did not make him a universal

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Burke, *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbett, XXI:60.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ For a recent history of the British domination of Acadia see Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

critic of empire, though he very particularly targeted one aspect of colonial enterprise, that of the Board of Trade, which had undertaken two expensive and unrewarded economic projects and had earned its abolition as part of a broader program of fiscal retrenchment.

On War, Dominion, and Dispossession

Many of the North American colonies flourished in the eighteenth century, but continued to earn disdain from British commentators. Individuals such as Josiah Tucker and Samuel Johnson looked down upon the colonists as radical and even lesser Britons. Their perspectives were reflective of a Tory ideology, though Tucker denied it, which despised American notions of liberty and its compatibility with slave-ownership. In addition, they and many other metropolitan writers noted shamefully the ravages of disease and warfare upon the indigenous populations throughout the Americas, along with the increasing dispossession of lands and dishonesty in European dealing-making, as well as the general lack of concern settlers had in these regards. The growing concern for North American natives was most evident in the second half of the eighteenth century, and closely corresponded with advancement of Enlightenment thought and criticism of the slave trade.⁷² Indeed, this became an important part of critical assessments of past European colonization, as rival powers expanded their dominions in North America. It was often intertwined with concerns over military expenditures and the loss of life of one's own countrymen. In informing eighteenth century historical narratives of European expansion, it was also to serve as a guide for policy makers. Typically, the Spanish were cited as being the worst of all offenders, as part of the Black Legend discourse, though certain commentators warned that

⁷² This issue was explored in Troy Bickham, *Savages within the Empire: Representations of American Indians in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 171-209. Also, see "Savages Noble and Ignoble: Concepts of the North American Indian," in P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind: Perceptions of New Worlds in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 187-226.

British behaviour abroad bore a strong resemblance, and increasingly so.⁷³

One of the earliest and strongest critics of imperial expansion and the acquisition of distant dominions was William Petyt, who in his 1680 *Britannia Languens*, made a lengthy case that this was in large part the reason for England's serious economic decline. His case was largely predicated on the fact that domestic industries had been neglected, while many in positions of power had wrongly advocated the settling of questionable or unprofitable plantations and pursued trades which did not benefit the country. He was certainly not against trade, as he wrote, "[i]t follows then, that a Forreign Trade (by increasing the National Treasure) will advance *home Markets*, and the value of *Lands in England*."⁷⁴ However, it needed to be a peaceable trade, which ideally allowed England to export more than it imported. He was also highly critical of wealth acquired by conquest, as he considered such gains to be largely illusory:

I shall admit that if a Nation can be *Victorious in War*, and can plunder the Conquered, some Treasures may happen to be Imported this way; But certainly those who consider it, will rather desire to be enriched by Trade than by War, since in the Course of Trade, far mightier Treasures may be gotten with *Peace, Innocence, Security, and Happiness to the People*, who cannot be Victorious in War without Bloodsheds, Rapines, Violences, and Perpetrations of all kinds;⁷⁵

It would, therefore, be better for the people to engage in peaceful transactions with others abroad, instead of trying to enrich one's nation at the expense of others. In addition, he added that

they also must be subject to perpetual difficulties and hazards in the hardships and event of War, which will disturb or subvert the Home Trade, nor can the Treasure

⁷³ There is a rich historiography on issues surrounding early modern European empires in a comparative sense. For instance, see John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); and P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For more on the origins of the Black Legend in England see William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971).

⁷⁴ William Petyt, *Britannia Languens, or, a Discourse of Trade* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring and S. Crouch, 1680), 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of a People so employed circulate in the Markets to any advantagious degree; or should we have any such *Bravoes* or *Knights Errant* as would rather purchase Wealth by Fighting than by Industry, yet are these imaginary Conquests absolutely impracticable at this day without the assistance of Forreign Trade.⁷⁶

Petyt's brief assessment of the nature of wealth accumulation, and in favouring trade instead of war, positioned him as a notable critic of early modern wars of conquest. His writings on this, and many related imperial issues, displayed a very gloomy outlook regarding the state of the nation, and perhaps of human nature, more broadly.

Another early discussion of conquest and dominion came from George Blewitt, in his 1725 *An Enquiry Whether a general Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?*, which was written as a response to Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*.⁷⁷ Primarily Blewitt's work was critical of the notion that private vices could tend towards the public good, as Mandeville had earlier contended. As part of his argument he entered into discussions about princes making territorial acquisitions out of a greed for wealth and power. Blewitt wrote "that History furnishes very few Instances of any wide Extent of Dominion, that was not *at first* procur'd by Methods very inconsistent with Virtue and Morality."⁷⁸ He did note that, in the short term, individuals and communities could live well off the plundered goods of others, in writing, "that a Man cannot raise so large an Estate by being content with his own, as if he plunder'd his Neighbours, and had sufficient Power to back him in his Outrage, and that such Plunder can't happen without the Assistance of Vice and Roguery.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ George Blewitt, *An Enquiry Whether a general Practice of Virtue tends to the Wealth or Poverty, Benefit or Disadvantage of a People?* (London: Printed for R. Wilkin, 1725). Also, see Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: Or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for J. Tonson, 1724). Mandeville's satirical work originally appeared as a poem, "The Grumbling Hive", in 1705. It later became part of the larger *Fable* in 1714 and caused quite a sensation. Subsequent editions were published throughout the decades that followed.

⁷⁸ Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 18.

In short, that it is impossible to be a mighty Robber, without being somewhat dishonest”.⁷⁹ However, this wealth seldom would last long, considering the nature of the individuals involved; and even more crucially, such theft would have immediately rendered one party worse off. But, he then wrote, “[i]f he could have prov’d indeed that no body was the *poorer* for this *plunder’d Wealth*, it would have been a Secret worth communicating to the World; a Secret of great Use to justify the Conduct of Ministers of State.”⁸⁰ Clearly, he was skeptical of such a proposition.

Blewitt further noted that societies did not necessarily benefit from the expansion of territory, even though their rulers might enjoy ruling over a greater dominion. He continued,

[f]or besides the proving that no other Prince is the poorer for these plunder’d Territories, he must shew, before he can make the least Use of it, that a wide Extent of Dominion is necessary to the Wealth and Happiness of the People. And as to that, it must be consider’d, that the Happiness of a Community, is nothing but the Happiness of the private Individuals who compose it.⁸¹

He was critical about the ways in which greatness or excellence of a society were measured.

While historically success was linked to conquest and territorial extension, he was more concerned with prosperity and general happiness, brought about by virtue and not plundering. He then proceeded to argue that

[t]o say, that a Community may be happy, where the private Individuals are unhappy, is to say, that an Army may be well cloathed, though every single Man in every Regiment were forc’d to go naked. ’Tis highly absurd to call a Nation happy and flourishing, only because it makes a Figure abroad, and is a Terrour to its Neighbours. For the greatest Power and Force that ever any Nation has possess’d, either to defend themselves, or to offend their Neighbours, has been of no real Use, but as they tended to make each Individual happy in his *private Life*, by securing to him the free and quiet Enjoyment of his own. If we are to judge by

⁷⁹ Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 18-9.

⁸⁰ Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 19.

⁸¹ Ibid.

this Test, of the Use that new Acquisitions of Territories are to a Society, they will be far from serving the Purposes of the Author.⁸²

He then asked “[a]re private Men the more happy or the more wealthy, because their Sovereign has the Glory to be a Conqueror?” His answer was quite simply that

[i]t is not the Grandeur of the Prince, that makes the People happy; nor the Extent of his Dominions, that makes them rich. New Provinces may be bought or added every Year, and yet the Estates of private Men be not at all enlarg’d by it. If one Part of a Prince’s Dominions grow the richer for any Addition to them, it can only happen by draining the Wealth from other Parts. All Ages and Countries will afford Examples enough of this Truth.⁸³

While much of his discussion centred on the vices of private individuals, and particularly those in positions of power, he then extrapolated from that aspect of humanity to comment on the broader community at large, writing, “[a] Society can never grow rich and flourish from such unsocial Practices, as Fraud, Plunder and Rapine.”⁸⁴ This section of his enquiry really spoke to the immorality of conquests; whether plundering one’s own neighbours or in distant dominions the case was the same; and society, as a whole, was not and could never benefit from this destructive behaviour.

These perspectives on the concepts of conquest and dominion, in relation to the nature and morality of a society, were discussed in even greater detail in the first half of the eighteenth century by Francis Hutcheson, the famous Irish moral philosopher and one of the leaders of the Scottish Enlightenment.⁸⁵ His lectures on empire, specifically as related to Britain, were among

⁸² Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 19-20.

⁸³ Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 20.

⁸⁴ Blewitt, *An Enquiry*, 21.

⁸⁵ For a history of Hutcheson, and in relation to David Hume and Adam Smith, see W.L. Taylor, *Francis Hutcheson and David Hume as Predecessors of Adam Smith* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965). Hutcheson was also considered more recently alongside John Locke and the third Earl of Shaftesbury in Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For the broader context of the development of a civil society within eighteenth century see James Livesey, *Civil Society and Empire: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

the earliest of academic treatises on the matter and were published posthumously in 1747, as part of his *System of Moral Philosophy*. In the sixth chapter of his second book, Hutcheson examined the rights of a society or a nation to acquire property or territory. He wrote that

the abilities of the occupier with his assistants must set bounds to his right of occupation. One head of a family, by his first arriving with his domesticks upon a vast island capable of supporting a thousand families, must not pretend to property in the whole. He may acquire as much as there's any probability he can cultivate, but what is beyond this remains common. Nor can any state, on account of its fleets first arriving on a vast continent, capable of holding several empires, and which its colonies can never sufficiently occupy, claim to itself the dominion of the whole continent.⁸⁶

Thus, if the colonizing power was willing and able to acquire new territory, it was therefore, within their rights to do so. But, how were suitable boundaries to be determined? Hutcheson's response adhered closely to Lockean ideas on private property rights:

[t]his state may justly claim as much as it can reasonably hope to cultivate by its colonies in any reasonable time: and may no doubt extend its bounds beyond what it can cultivate the first ten or twelve years; but not beyond all probable hopes of its ever being able to cultivate. The just reasonable time to be allowed to the first occupiers, must be determined by prudent arbiters, who must regard, not only the circumstances of this state, but of all others who may be concerned, according as they are more or less populous, and either need new seats for their colonies, or have already sufficient lands for their people.⁸⁷

His arguments here were clearly not for the unlimited acquisition of territory, but rather he was trying to determine a suitable framework whereby settlers might occupy and develop uninhabited lands based upon need. While it might have been wishful thinking that all powerful, yet neutral, arbiters would be able to legally and fairly determine boundaries that would be obeyed, obviously it would have been preferable to decision making by the sword.

⁸⁶ Francis Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy, in Three Books; Containing the Elements of Ethicks and the Law of Nature* (Glasgow: Robert Foulis, 1747), 156-7.

⁸⁷ Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 157.

His analysis was then extended to deal with the relationships between varying settlements themselves, each as colonies to different mother countries, if founded upon the same just principles. He wrote that “[i]f many neighbouring states are too populous, they may justly occupy the uncultivated parts of such a new discovered continent, leaving sufficient room for the first occupiers; and that without the leave of the first discoverers. Nor can the first discoverers justly demand that these colonies sent by other states should be subjected to their empire.” Such communities would have the right to live independent of one another; as he continued,

’Tis enough if they agree to live amicably beside them as confederated states. Nay as in a free democracy, ’tis often just to prevent such immoderate acquisitions of wealth by a few, as may be dangerous to the publick, even tho’ these acquisitions are a making without any private injuries: so neighbouring states may justly take early precautions, even by violence if necessary, against such acquisitions of any one, as may be dangerous to the liberty and independency of all around them; when sufficient security cannot be obtained in a gentler way. Nothing can be more opposite to the general good of mankind than that the rights, independency, and liberty of many neighbouring nations should be exposed to be trampled upon by the pride, luxury, ambition, or avarice of any nation.⁸⁸

His arguments regarding the rights of just settlements and the complex relationships they would develop notably excluded dominions established by conquest, either by seizing already occupied territory or acquiring the colonies of other nations.⁸⁹

Beyond the just establishment of dominion and the expansion of territory in uncultivated areas, he did also warn of aggression and the problems of conquest and plunder. In the sixth chapter of his third book, ‘Of the Various Plans of Government’, he noted how smaller states and

⁸⁸ Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 157-8.

⁸⁹ The literature on the use of the common law in colonial contexts and in determining formal and legal relationships between settler and indigenous societies is quite extensive. For more on this history within Ireland, North America, and Australasia, see Paul G. McHugh, *Aboriginal Societies and the Common Law: A History of Sovereignty, Status, and Self-determination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Also, see Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). A broader European context comes from Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

kingdoms had the right to unite and defend themselves against an unjust usurper or imperial power. He argued

[i]ndeed this is seldom matter of choice, what numbers should unite. For if once vast empires are formed, it becomes necessary to any little states around them to incorporate together, as many of them as may be, for their defence against a potent neighbour. But as agrarian laws are often justifiable in a state, to prevent the immoderate increase of wealth in the hands of a few; 'tis equally just, for the same reasons, that smaller neighbouring states should take timely precautions, and that by violence too, if gentler methods are not like to succeed, that no neighbour-state should acquire such force as may enslave all around; especially if they see a prevalent disposition in all the institutions and manners of any neighbour-state toward military affairs and conquest.⁹⁰

Here he made the case that the rights and traditions within communities and states, regarding the protection from aggression and aggrandizement should also exist at the international level. If one kingdom were to continually expand into an empire, then its threatened neighbours would be within their rights to seek to prevent it, even through alliances and conflict.

In the seventh chapter of book three, 'On Acquiring Power', Hutcheson summarized many of his previous discussions regarding property rights, settlements, and dominion, in analyzing colonial expansion and the relationships between colonies and their mother countries. He made the case that the exact nature of the association depended on the state of both entities at any given time, writing, "[w]hat we have said relates not only to monarchs but all sorts of governours, and to the power of a state itself over its colonies, or provinces." He continued that

[i]f any citizens, with permission of the government, leave their country, and at their own expence find new habitations; they may justly constitute themselves into an independent state, in amity with their mother-country. If any are sent off at the publick charge as a colony, to make settlements subject to the state, for augmenting its commerce and power; such persons should hold all the rights of the other subjects, and whatever grants are made to them are to be faithfully

⁹⁰ Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 297.

observed. If the mother-country attempts any thing oppressive toward a colony, and the colony be able to subsist as a sovereign state by itself; or if the mother-country lose its liberty, or have its plan of polity miserably changed to the worse: the colony is not bound to remain subject any longer: 'tis enough that it remain a friendly state. Nor are we to imagine that any early covenants founded upon errors about the most essential points in view, can still bind large societies of men fit to subsist as happy independent states, to continue in a submission eversive of all prosperity and safety.⁹¹

The colonists were thus to enjoy the same rights as other subjects, in proportion to their initial obligations to and from the mother country, and subsequently this relationship would be maintained in consideration of their ongoing respective responsibilities to each another. If then, the circumstances changed dramatically, the colonies would be entitled to act according to their own local interests, and could seek independence. He concluded this discussion, remarking,

[n]or has any thing occasioned more misery in human life than a vain and insolent ambition, both in princes and popular states of extending their empires, and bringing every neighbouring state under subjection to them; without consulting the real felicity either of their own people or of their new acquisitions. And hence have arose these vast unwieldy empires; the plagues of all around them; which after some time are ruined by their own bulk, with vast destruction of mankind.⁹²

Hutcheson's analysis of the nature of the just rights of dominion and settlement were instructive, and he clearly distinguished between the establishment of peaceful communities and relations, as opposed to the acquisition of territory by military might. Despite the soundness of his arguments, they would have largely been inapplicable regarding the vast majority of the territorial acquisitions that the competing European empires actually made throughout the Americas.

Within literary and intellectual circles of the eighteenth century, there were a number of individuals who commented upon questions of empire, and critically assessed the imperialism of

⁹¹ Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 316-7.

⁹² Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, 317.

their age through their works.⁹³ Three individuals who stood out in this regard were Jonathan Swift, Samuel Johnson, and Oliver Goldsmith. In each case, their writings presented notable critiques of government policies that tended towards the expansion of dominions, often both at the expense of other peoples, and in competition with European rivals. Their own works were often satirical in nature; however, through fictional representations they were able to make many strong arguments against the absurdities of empire-building, which would likely have been understood by at least some of their readers. Though Johnson was the most explicit in his condemnation of empire in his political histories, all have been crucially considered here.

Anti-imperial sentiments were notably present in the satirical writings of Anglo-Irish author Jonathan Swift.⁹⁴ His *Gulliver's Travels*, from 1726, were a huge sensation throughout the eighteenth century and displayed a remarkable critic of the imperialism of his age. While he did not explicitly argue against British empire-building, his observations offered up ridicule of imperial policies and an assessment of their effects. Indeed, Swift's works have been thoroughly analyzed by British literary scholar Stephen Karian, who noted the author's particularly clever pointed criticisms and ironic statements that would have been designed served to protect his publishers.⁹⁵ While the press was technically free, following the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1694, one was still open to lawsuits for slander and libel, and an especially inflammatory piece critical of Parliament or the Crown could be grounds for imprisonment or exile. As such, writers

⁹³ For more on the significance of geography and the emergence of empire in English literature see Bruce McLeod, *The Geography of Empire in English Literature, 1580-1745* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). On the construction of history and empire within an Enlightenment context see Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁹⁴ Swift and the politics of colonial Ireland have been addressed in greater detail in Robert Mahony, "Jonathan Swift and the Irish colonial project," in *Politics and Literature in the Age of Swift: English and Irish Perspectives*, ed. Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 270-289. Ireland's struggles against colonization and the British fiscal-military state were also highlighted within the broader print culture of the period in Sean D. Moore, *Swift, the Book, and the Irish Financial Revolution: Satire and Sovereignty in Colonial Ireland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

⁹⁵ Stephen Karian, *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113-5.

and their publishers were typically cautious.

Within Swift's work these sentiments were most clearly pronounced during a contemplative moment on the part of Lemuel Gulliver, while musing about his time among the *Lilliputians* and *Brobdingnagians*, after he had returned from his voyages. He commented how he "was bound in Duty as a Subject of *England*, to have given in Memorial to a Secretary of State, at my first coming over; because whatever Lands are discovered by a Subject belong to the Crown. But I doubt whether our Conquests in the Countries I treat of, would be as easy as those of *Ferdinando Cortez* over the naked *Americans*."⁹⁶ Yet, in examining the two different civilizations, he hardly considered it a noble or worthwhile endeavour. For, "[t]he *Lilliputians* I think, are hardly worth the Charge of a Fleet and Army to reduce them, and I question whether it might be prudent or safe to attempt the *Brobdingnagians*."⁹⁷ Additionally, he thought it unadvisable to make war against the mythical race of intelligent horses, the *Houyhnhnms*, as he suggested, they would have been better suited as invited guests to teach Europeans about virtue. He wrote "[b]ut instead of Proposals for conquering that magnanimous Nation, I rather wish they were in a Capacity or Disposition to send a sufficient Number of their Inhabitants for civilizing *Europe*, by teaching us the first Principles of Honour, Justice, Truth, Temperance, Publick Spirit, Fortitude, Chastity, Friendship, Benevolence, and Fidelity."⁹⁸ In each case he clearly favoured a policy of peaceful exchange as a way to learn from the different civilization, while also noting that there really was little to gain, but much could be lost through conflict.

Gulliver continued his assessment, remarking on why he had not advocated the pursuit of new territorial acquisitions, as was duly expected of him. He commented

⁹⁶ Jonathan Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World. By Captain Lemuel Gulliver. Part IV* (London: Printed for Benjamin Motte, 1726), 2:190.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, 2:191.

BUT I had another Reason which made me less forward to enlarge his Majesty's Dominions by my Discovery. To say the truth, I had conceived a few Scruples with relation to the Distributive Justice of Princes upon those Occasions. For instance, A Crew of Pyrates are driven by a Storm they know not whither, at length a Boy discovers Land from the Top-mast, they go on Shore to Rob and Plunder; they see an harmless People, are entertained with Kindness, they give the Country a new Name, they take formal Possession of it for their King, they set up a rotten Plank or a Stone for a Memorial, they murder two or three Dozen of the Natives, bring away a Couple more by Force for a Sample, return home, and get their Pardon. Here commences a new Dominion acquired with a Title by *Divine Right*. Ships are sent with the first Opportunity, the Natives driven out or destroyed, their Princes tortured to discover their Gold; a free Licence given to all Acts of Inhumanity and Lust, the Earth reeking with the Blood of its Inhabitants: And this execrable Crew of Butchers employed in so pious an Expedition, is a *modern Colony* sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous People.⁹⁹

His account here would have been an ample one to describe any number of expeditions and early conquests in the New World. Though perhaps targeting Spain most of all, this critique would have applied to all the various European colonizing powers, to varying degrees. However, immediately following this statement, he was then careful to cover himself from any patriotic attack or legal challenge, arguing

BUT this Description, I confess, doth by no means affect the British Nation, who may be an Example to the whole World for their Wisdom, Care, and Justice in Planting Colonies; their liberal Endowments for the Advancement of Religion and Learning; their Choice of devout and able Pastors to propagate *Christianity*, their Caution in stocking their Provinces with People of sober Lives and Conversations from this the Mother Kingdom; their strict regard to the Distribution of Justice, in supplying the Civil Administration through all their Colonies with Officers of the greatest Abilities, utter strangers to Corruption; and to crown all, by sending the most Vigilant and Virtuous Governors, who have no other Views than the Happiness of the People over whom they preside, and the Honour of the King their Master.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, 2:192-3.

¹⁰⁰ Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, 2:193-4.

He then made the case that the places he visited would not be suitable acquisitions, “as those Countries which I have described, do not appear to have a Desire of being conquered, and enslaved, murdered or driven out by Colonies, nor abound either in Gold, Silver, Sugar or Tobacco; I did humbly conceive they were by no means proper Objects of our Zeal, our Valour, or our Interest.”¹⁰¹ In the absence of those four most prized commodities of the period, those monetary precious metals and luxury goods, which were considered the most valuable aspects of colonies in the period, colonization should be avoided.¹⁰² It would also not be wise policy, for the inhabitants were against it. Following his assessment of such distant lands and peoples, he then returned home to manage his own personal affairs. He wrote

I here take a final Leave of all my Courteous Readers, and return to enjoy my own Speculations in my little Garden at *Reddriff*, to apply those excellent Lessons of Virtue which I learned among the *Houyhnhnms*, to instruct the *Yahoos* of my own Family as far as I shall find them docile Animals, to behold my Figure often in a Glass, and thus if possible habituate myself by time to tolerate the sight of a human Creature: To lament the Brutality of *Houyhnhnms* in my own Country, but always treat their Persons with Respect, for the sake of my noble Master, his Family, his Friends, and the whole *Houyhnhnm* Race.¹⁰³

Just as any eighteenth century Briton who had travelled the world would have returned to England, where the world made sense to him and where he could tend to his own personal garden unmolested by the ravages of war, Gulliver was able to return to his and reflect upon his own nation’s role in the world with all its ills.

From the mid to late eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson was perhaps one of the most

¹⁰¹ Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, 2:194.

¹⁰² Jessica Durgan, “Souvenirs of the South Seas: Objects of Imperial Critique in Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*,” in *Eighteenth-Century Thing Theory in a Global Context: From Consumerism to Celebrity Culture*, eds., Ileana Baird and Christina Ionescu (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 289-306. This work highlights the significance of material and consumer culture, as well as the association between empire and global economic integration, within the eighteenth century context.

¹⁰³ Swift, *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*, 2:196.

imposing of literary figures and became famous as a lexicographer.¹⁰⁴ As a well-known Tory, he was a defender of the English constitution and the country tradition, as well as the positive influence of the Anglican Church. As such, he was opposed to Whiggism, especially in its most radical forms as displayed in America, and historically was also one of the fiercest critics of European imperialism, and in regards to the ongoing wars of conquest in his own period.¹⁰⁵ He was most active around the time of the Seven Years' War, writing for *The Literary Magazine*, and in which his criticism of engaged governments was well distributed. Around the time of the formal outbreak of war, he offered his comments on the conflict, writing

[t]he general subject of the present war is sufficiently known. It is allowed on both sides, that hostilities began in *America*, and that the *French* and *English* quarrelled about the boundaries of their settlements, about grounds and rivers to which, I am afraid, neither can shew any other right than that of power, and which neither can occupy but by usurpation, and the dispossession of the natural lords and original inhabitants. Such is the contest, that no honest man can heartily wish success to either party.¹⁰⁶

In what would have likely seemed to many readers to be an unpatriotic or disloyal statement, Johnson made his dispassionate position very clear. Neither party really had any moral claim to these territories over which they were fighting, and indeed that had long been jealously guarded. He then wrote

[i]t may indeed be alleged, that the *Indians* have granted large tracts of land both to one and to the other; but these grants can add little to the validity of our titles, till it be experienced how they were obtained: for if they were extorted by violence, or induced by fraud; by threats, which the miseries of other nations had shewn not to be vain, or by promises of which no performance was ever intended,

¹⁰⁴ For more on Johnson, see Jack Lynch, ed. *Samuel Johnson in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ Johnson's politics have been explored by a number of scholars. For instance, see J. C. D. Clark and Howard Erskine-Hill, eds., *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and John Cannon, *Samuel Johnson and the Politics of Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," *The Literary Magazine* No. 4 (July 15 – August 15, 1756): 161.

what are they but new modes of usurpation, but new instances of cruelty and treachery?¹⁰⁷

Clearly, both European powers were aggressors in this case, and any person who truly considered the nature of the imperial conflict would be unable to determine any just claims or rights upon which they could offer their support. He continued,

[a]nd indeed what but false hope or resistless terror can prevail upon a weaker nation to invite a stronger into their country, to give their lands to strangers whom no affinity of manners, or similitude of opinion, can be said to recommend, to permit them to build towns from which the natives are excluded, to raise fortresses by which they are intimidated, to settle themselves with such strength, that they cannot afterwards be expelled, but are for ever to remain the masters of the original inhabitants, the dictators of their conduct, and the arbiters of their fate?¹⁰⁸

Thus, Johnson considered that even the treaties which determined alliances between the European powers and native populations were hardly just, but were more a reflection of the fact that natives had little choice other than to react defensively and pragmatically with the aggressors.¹⁰⁹ He then urged readers to consider the era of first contacts, for,

[i]t cannot be said, that the *Indians* originally invited us to their coasts; we went uncalled and unexpected to nations who had no imagination that the earth contained any inhabitants so distant and so different from themselves. We astonished them with our ships, with our arms, and with our general superiority. They yielded to us as to beings of another and higher race, sent among them from some unknown regions, with power which naked *Indians* could not resist, and which they were therefore, by every act of humility, to propitiate, that they, who could so easily destroy, might be induced to spare.¹¹⁰

The history of European and indigenous relations was, Johnson argued, largely based upon the latter reacting to the former's territorial expansion. While the entire history was perhaps more

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ This issue has been addressed in Colin G. Calloway, *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁰ Johnson, "Observations on the Present State of Affairs," 161-2.

complicated than just a one-sided slaughter and complete dispossession of lands, he did note that this was, tragically, often the case. He wrote that

[s]ome colonies indeed have been established more peaceably than others. The utmost extremity of wrong has not always been practised; but those that have settled in the new world on the fairest terms, have no other merit than that of a scrivener who ruins in silence, over a plunderer that seizes by force; all have taken what had other owners, and all have had recourse to arms, rather than quit the prey on which they had fastened.¹¹¹

Though he did notably make the distinction that each colony offered a somewhat unique context or study, and noted that all individuals who went abroad were not evil, the situation as a whole remained largely indefensible for his nation or their rival. As a result of his assessment, he could not help but determine that

[t]he *American* dispute between the *French* and us is therefore only the quarrel of two robbers for the spoils of a passenger; but as robbers have terms of confederacy, which they are obliged to observe as members of the gang, so the *English* and *French* may have relative rights, and do injustice to each other, while both are injuring the *Indians*. And such, indeed, is the present contest: they have parted the northern continent of *America* between them, and are now disputing about their boundaries, and each is endeavouring the destruction of the other by the help of the *Indians*, whose interest it is that both should be destroyed.¹¹²

This was really only the latest struggle between two rival powers, determined to battle one another wherever possible. Indeed, these “[t]wo powerful colonies enflamed with immemorial rivalry, and placed out of the superintendence of the mother nations, were not likely to be long at rest. Some opposition was always going forward, some mischief was every day done or mediated, and the borderers were always better pleased with what they could snatch from their neighbours, than what they had of their own.”¹¹³ This conflict on the imperial frontiers was likely

¹¹¹ Johnson, “Observations on the Present State of Affairs,” 162.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

to become an expensive quagmire on both sides, while an unmitigated disaster for the natives, regardless of who emerged victorious.¹¹⁴ However, Johnson especially warned the British that

[i]f we pursue them, and carry the war into their dominions, our difficulties will increase every step as we advance, for we shall leave plenty behind us, and find nothing in *Canada* but lakes and forests barren and trackless; our enemies will shut themselves up in their forts, against which it is difficult to bring cannon through so rough a country, and which, if they are provided with good magazines, will soon starve those who besiege them.¹¹⁵

What he was describing was really an exercise in futility, and in this case, it was one without any sound policy or righteous claims that could make such an endeavour seem remotely worthwhile. He further argued that “[a]ll these are the natural effects of their government and situation; they are accidentally more formidable as they are less happy. But the favour of the Indians which they enjoy, with very few exceptions, among all the nations of the northern continent, we ought to consider with other thoughts; this favour we might have enjoyed, if we had been careful to deserve it.”¹¹⁶ At the outbreak of the war, he clearly believed that the French had the upper hand, though neither power could really lay claim to the moral high ground.

That same year Johnson also presented an engaging historical overview of European colonization in North America, more generally, for *The Literary Magazine*, in which he was highly critical of all the colonizing powers, though to varying degrees. The British, he remarked, arrived later than some of the early colonizers, though

[w]e then likewise settled colonies in *America*, which was become the great scene of *European* ambition; for, seeing with what treasures the *Spaniards* were

¹¹⁴ There are many substantial histories on the Seven Years' War. Some recent examples include the two part series Phillip Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., *Revisiting 1759: The Conquest of Canada in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012) and Phillip Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., *Remembering 1759: The Conquest of Canada in Historical Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); as well as Frans De Bruyn and Shaun Regan, eds., *The Culture of the Seven Years' War: Empire, Identity, and the Arts in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

¹¹⁵ Johnson, “Observations on the Present State of Affairs,” 165.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

annually enriched from *Mexico* and *Peru*, every nation imagined, that an American conquest or plantation would certainly fill the mother country with gold and silver. This produced a large extent of very distant dominions, of which we, at this time, neither knew nor foresaw the advantage or incumbrance: We seem to have snatched them into our hands, upon no very just principles of policy, only because every state, according to a prejudice of long continuance, concludes itself more powerful as its territories become larger.¹¹⁷

In the north, he commented that “[t]he *French* therefore contented themselves with sending a colony to *Canada*, a cold uncomfortable uninviting region, from which nothing but furs and fish were to be had, and where the new inhabitants could only pass a laborious and necessitous life, in perpetual regret of the deliciousness and plenty of their native country.”¹¹⁸ He considered this to be something of a mistake, yet “[i]n this region of desolate sterility they settled themselves, upon whatever principle.”¹¹⁹ However, the worst of all his scorn was reserved for Spain, in the south, as was long established in colonial history, as the Black Legend was actively promoted throughout Protestant Europe.¹²⁰ He noted that

[i]f the *Spaniards*, when they first took possession of the newly discovered world, instead of destroying the inhabitants by thousands, had either had the unanimity or the policy to have conciliated them by kind treatment, and to have united them gradually to their own people, such an accession might have been made to the power of the king of *Spain*, as would have made him far the greatest monarch that ever yet ruled in the globe; but the opportunity was lost by foolishness and cruelty, and now can never be recovered.¹²¹

However, before any sort of complacency set in among his readers, he also warned that “[o]ur princes seem to have considered themselves as intitled by their right of prior seizure to the northern parts of *America*, as the *Spaniards* were allowed by universal consent their claim to the

¹¹⁷ Samuel Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” in *The Literary Magazine: Or, Universal Review: For the Year MDCCLVI* (London: Printed for J. Richardson, 1756), 1:1.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” 1:3.

¹¹⁹ Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” 1:4.

¹²⁰ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, 404-5. For more on the Black Legend see Maltby, *The Black Legend in England: The development of anti-Spanish sentiment, 1558-1660*. Important distinctions between European “conquest and settlement” empires in the New World were addressed in Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, 63-102.

¹²¹ Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” 1:4.

southern region for the same reason”.¹²²

He then explained the nature of early settlement all along the Atlantic coast, remarking that “[a]s we had, according to the *European* principles, which allow nothing to the natives of these regions, our choice of situation in this extensive country, we naturally fixed our habitations along the coast, for the sake of traffick and correspondence, and all the conveniences of navigable rivers.”¹²³ This then gave way to wide-scale population of the inland regions, and he further noted “that, as the colony increases, they may take lands as they shall want them, the possession of the coasts excluding other navigators, and the unhappy *Indians* having no right of nature or of nations.”¹²⁴ In this regard, Johnson perhaps considered the French as the least bad of the colonizing powers. As they tended to have the best relationships with the native populations, he considered that this must have been a powerful reflection of their behaviour. He noted how, in contrast to Britain or Spain,

[t]heir great security is the friendship of the natives, and to this advantage they have certainly an indubitable right; because it is the consequence of their virtue. It is ridiculous to imagine, that the friendship of nations, whether civil or barbarous, can be gained and kept but by kind treatment; and surely they who intrude, uncalled, upon the country of a distant people, ought to consider the natives as worthy of common kindness, and content themselves to rob without insulting them. The *French*, as has been already observed, admit the *Indians*, by intermarriage, to an equality with themselves; and those nations, with which they have no such near intercourse, they gain over to their interest by honesty in their dealings. Our factors and traders having no other purpose in view than immediate profit, use all the arts of an *European* counting-house, to defraud the simple hunter of his furs.¹²⁵

In conclusion, Johnson wrote that “[t]hese are some of the causes of our present weakness; our planters are always quarrelling with their governor, whom they consider as less to be trusted than

¹²² Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” 1:8.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Johnson, “An Introduction to the Political State of Great-Britain,” 1:9.

the *French*; and our traders hourly alienate the *Indians* by their tricks and oppressions, and we continue every day to shew by new proofs, that no people can be great who have ceased to be virtuous.”¹²⁶ Johnson’s critique served as a powerful indictment of European conflicts in their North American frontier territories. However, his attacks were perhaps too effective, and as a result his term as editor of the Pittite magazine was short-lived.¹²⁷

In 1759 Samuel Johnson also wrote a brief fictionalized essay for *The Idler*, entitled “Indian’s Speech to his Countrymen,” in which he highlighted the brutal realities of European colonization in North America and the dispossession of native lands.¹²⁸ Here Johnson portrayed a chief, among loyal followers, discussing the loss of territory to European invaders somewhere in Quebec and contemplating the day they might once again be able to enjoy their lands. The elder began his speech, saying “I have often heard from men hoary with long life, that there was a time when our ancestors were absolute lords of the woods, the meadows, and the lakes, wherever the eye can reach, or the foot can pass. They fished and hunted, feasted and danced; and, when they were weary, lay down under the first thicket, without danger and without fear.” This was the established context for time immemorial. “Many years and ages are supposed to have been thus passed in plenty and security; when at last a new race of men entered our country from the great ocean. They inclosed themselves in habitations of stone, which our ancestors could neither enter by violence, nor destroy by fire.” As well, “[t]hose invaders ranged over the continent,

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Robert Folkenflik, “Johnson’s politics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*, ed. Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 110.

¹²⁸ For a thorough and comparative history of settler colonialism and indigenous land dispossession see John Weaver, *The Great Land Rush* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003). Regarding the use of common law on colonial frontiers, see the previously mentioned work by Paul McHugh, *Aboriginal Societies and the Common Law: A History of Sovereignty, Status, and Self-determination*; as well, see his more recent work on aboriginal land title, Paul G. McHugh, *Aboriginal Title: The Modern Jurisprudence of Tribal Land Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

slaughtering in their rage those that resisted, and those that submitted, in their mirth.”¹²⁹

Johnson depicted a horrific scene of slaughter and devastation wrought by the unwelcome invaders. Though not all settlers were actively seeking war or to destroy the original inhabitants of these territories, even the partnerships that were established tended to be troublesome in many regards. He continued that

[o]thers pretend to have purchased a right of residence and tyranny, but surely the insolence of such bargains is more offensive than the avowed and open dominion of force. What reward can induce the possessor of a country to admit a stranger more powerful than himself? Fraud or terror must operate in such contracts; either the promised protection, which they never have afforded, or instruction which they never imparted.¹³⁰

He then acknowledged further questions of law and treaties, which were supposed to determine boundaries and establish working relationships,¹³¹ yet

[t]heir treaties are only to deceive, and their traffic only to defraud us. They have a written law among them, of which they boast as derived from him who made the earth and sea, and by which they profess to believe that man will be made happy when life shall forsake him. Why is not this law communicated to us? It is concealed because it is violated. For how can they preach it to an Indian nation, when I am told that one of its first precepts forbids them to do to others what they would not that others should do to them?¹³²

He concluded with a remark that suggested one day there might be a reversal of fortunes and the injustices committed would be met with reprisals, or the conquerors might ruin themselves,

[b]ut the time, perhaps, is now approaching when the pride of usurpation shall be crushed, and the cruelties of invasion shall be revenged. The sons of rapacity have now drawn their swords upon each other, and referred their claims to the decision of war; let us look unconcerned upon the slaughter, and remember that the death

¹²⁹ Samuel Johnson, “Indian’s Speech to his Countrymen,” *The Idler* (London) No. 81 Saturday, November 3, 1759.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ For a recent history of treaty making as part of the expansion of European empires see Saliha Belmessous, ed., *Empire by Treaty: Negotiating European Expansion, 1600-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹³² Samuel Johnson, “Indian’s Speech to his Countrymen,” *The Idler* (London) No. 81 Saturday, November 3, 1759.

of every European delivers the country from a tyrant and a robber; for what is the claim of either nation, but the claim of the vulture to the leveret, of the tiger to the faun? Let them then continue to dispute their title to regions which they cannot people; to purchase by danger and blood the empty dignity of dominion over mountains which they will never climb, and rivers which they will never pass. Let us endeavour, in the mean time, to learn their discipline, and to forge their weapons; and, when they shall be weakened with mutual slaughter, let us rush down upon them, force their remains to take shelter in their ships, and reign once more in our native country.¹³³

Johnson's emotional essay was republished on several occasions since it was originally written.

Though it was fictional, he provided a sharp critique of European behaviour, while offering audiences an opportunity to reflect upon the destructive nature of their competitive colonization of North America, much to the detriment of a distant and memorialized people.¹³⁴

Johnson's sentiments regarding the horrors of Spanish colonization were also made evident in a remark, quoted by James Boswell, his biographer, when he stated "I love the University of Salamanca; for when the Spaniards were in doubt as to the lawfulness of their conquering America, the University of Salamanca gave it as their opinion that it was not lawful.' He spoke this with great emotion, and with that generous warmth which dictated the lines in his 'London,' against Spanish encroachment."¹³⁵ This brief comment that clearly amused Boswell also revealed a sense of a humanitarian spirit and a scorn for the intertwined brutalities of conquest and plunder perpetrated by the Spanish conquistadors. Yet, while the worst of his

¹³³ Ibid. Parts of the speech were also included in Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16.

¹³⁴ While the concept of the "noble savage" had long been established by this point, alongside sentimental notions about less advanced civilizations, it should be noted that British perspectives and representations of native populations varied considerably depending particularly upon specific circumstances, including the existence of alliances during wartime. Conversely, imagery highlighting native savagery was at times employed to explore issues of barbarity and cruelty within indigenous and European societies. See Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, 92-8.

¹³⁵ James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (London: Henry Baldwin, 1791), 1:247. Here, Boswell was referring to Johnson's famous "London: A Poem" from 1738, within which he was critical of Spanish aggression and territorial ambitions. For more on the significance of the School of Salamanca, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Salamanca School in England," in *Sovereignty, Property and Empire, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 59-84; and Anthony Pagden, "Conquest and the Just War: The 'School of Salamanca' and the 'Affair of the Indies'," in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 30-60.

scorn for the imperial powers was targeted at the Spanish, he certainly reserved a good amount for the would-be conquistadors within his own country and throughout the British Empire too.

Oliver Goldsmith, the Anglo-Irish writer, and an associate of Johnson, voiced many similar concerns regarding British colonization in North America. As a member of “The Club”, a literary and social organization founded in 1764, he was part of a close knit group of authors and intellectual critics.¹³⁶ His views on imperialism were best illustrated in his *Citizen of the World*, which was written as a series of letters from the point of view of a Chinese philosopher in London, who was reporting home about this strange society. In Letter XVII, the author remarked upon the ongoing conflict; writing “[t]hey are at present engaged in a very destructive war, have already spilled much blood, are excessively irritated; and all upon account of one side’s desiring to wear greater quantities of *furs* than the other.”¹³⁷ He then continued

[t]he pretext of the war is about some lands a thousand leagues off; a country cold, desolate, and hideous; a country belonging to a people who were in possession for time immemorial. The savages of Canada claim a property in the country in dispute; they have all the pretensions which long possession can confer. Here they had reigned for ages without rivals in dominion, and knew no enemies but the prowling bear or insidious tyger; their native forests produced all the necessaries of life, and they found ample luxury in the enjoyment. In this manner they might have continued to live to eternity, had not the English been informed that those countries produced furs in great abundance.¹³⁸

When framed in such terms, he made the entire conflict appear entirely absurd.

He then turned to consider the other side of the conflict, and those indigenous peoples who had long occupied the lands. He wrote

¹³⁶ For more on “The Club”, as well as other similar literary and social networks at the time, see Douglas Root, “Two ‘Most Un-Clubbable Men’: Samuel Johnson, Benjamin Franklin, and Their Social Circles,” in *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coteries*, ed. Ileana Baird (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 243-264.

¹³⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, “Letter XVII,” in *The Citizen of the World; Or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London, to his Friends in the East* (London: Printed for J. Newbery, 1762), 1:59.

¹³⁸ Goldsmith, “Letter XVII,” in *The Citizen of the World*, 1:59-60.

[t]he harmless savages made no opposition; and could the intruders have agreed together, they might peaceably have shared this desolate country between them. But they quarrelled about the boundaries of their settlements, about grounds and rivers to which neither side could shew any other right than that of power, and which neither could occupy but by usurpation. Such is the contest, that no honest man can heartily wish success to either party.¹³⁹

Ultimately, the British were successful in conquering the territory, yet according to the author, this was hardly a cause for celebration. The war had been won at great cost and the newly acquired extensive dominions were of questionable value. He was particularly concerned about those who wanted to press on further, but

[t]he best English politicians, however, are sensible, that to keep their present conquests, would be rather a burthen than an advantage to them, rather a diminution of their strength than an encrease of power. It is in the politic as in the human constitution; if the limbs grow too large for the body, their size, instead of improving, will diminish the vigour of the whole.¹⁴⁰

This notion of misshapen body politic formed out of vast territorial expansion, wholly disproportionate to the mother country, was an often repeated concern among critics at the time. Goldsmith then concluded his assessment, writing, “[y]et, obvious as these truths are, there are many Englishmen who are for transplanting new colonies into this late acquisition, for peopling the desarts of America with the refuse of their countrymen, and (as they express it) with the waste of an exuberant nation.” Further, these unnecessary appendages would require attention and would likely call away Britons from their homes;

[b]ut who are those unhappy creatures who are to be thus drained away? Not the sickly, for they are unwelcome guests abroad as well as at home; nor the idle, for they would starve as well behind the Appalachian mountains as in the streets of London. This refuse is composed of the laborious and enterprising, of such men as can be serviceable to their country at home, of men who ought to be regarded as the sinews of the people, and cherished with every degree of political

¹³⁹ Goldsmith, “Letter XVII,” in *The Citizen of the World*, 60.

¹⁴⁰ Goldsmith, “Letter XVII,” in *The Citizen of the World*, 61.

indulgence. And what are the commodities which this colony, when established, are to produce in return? Why raw silk, hemp, and tobacco. England, therefore must make an exchange of her best and bravest subjects for raw silk, hemp, and tobacco; her hardy veterans and honest tradesmen, must be truck'd for a box of snuff or a silk petticoat. Strange absurdity!¹⁴¹

Goldsmith's amusing story thus provided another notable assessment of the British and French rivalry in North America. He ridiculed the notion that undesirable people went abroad to develop overseas colonies, and in a reformatory spirit actually benefitted the nation. In fact, such territories instead opened up opportunities for the most ambitious, leaving those others at home. Here, his broadly anti-imperial sentiments bore a remarkable resemblance to Johnson's, while the critique also fit within a much longer established intellectual context.

Similar sentiments regarding the effects of colonization and the tragedies of conquest and native dispossession could be found in William Blackstone's famous and extensive *Commentaries on the Laws of England* from the 1760s. In his masterful treatise, which sketched the development of the common law and English constitutional traditions throughout its long history, he made this remark about the cruel nature of empire-building:

[u]pon the same principle was founded the right of migration, or sending colonies to find out new habitations, when the mother-country was overcharged with inhabitants; which was practised as well by the Phaenicians and Greeks, as the Germans, Scythians, and other northern people. And, so long as it was confined to the stocking and cultivation of desert uninhabited countries, it kept strictly within the limits of the law of nature. But how far the seising on countries already peopled, and driving out or massacring the innocent and defenceless natives, merely because they differed from their invaders in language, in religion, in customs, in government, or in colour; how far such a conduct was consonant to nature, to reason, or to christianity, deserved well to be considered by those, who have rendered their names immortal by thus civilizing mankind.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Goldsmith, "Letter XVII," in *The Citizen of the World*, 61-2.

¹⁴² William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1768), 2:7.

Blackstone's comments were consistent with many of his contemporaries who saw the value, and at times necessity, of founding settlements in uninhabited areas. However, this was only useful and morally acceptable if the mother country was already well-populated and the colonies were not established by the displacement of other peoples, either through war or forced migration. Yet, he lamented that this was often not the case throughout history, and in his own time.

In his 1766 sermon to missionaries in London, William Warburton, the Bishop of Gloucester, also briefly recounted horrific aspects of the history of European colonization in North America. He stated "[t]he providential Discovery was at length made; and though, in itself replete with all the seeds of temporal and spiritual Blessings, was yet most horribly perverted: For as in the *Old* world so in the *New*, the Devil stepped in to take the first fruits of Creation and Renovation, due only to the all-bounteous Author." The discovery of another continent had offered such promise, yet was to become a scene of the most vicious acts of cruelty, for

[w]hile, under the mask of the Gospel (if Popery may be said ever to have worn that Mask) the Natives of *South America* were murdered by millions because they had more Gold than they knew how to use; and the Savages of the *North* driven from their kindred Woods and Marshes, because they differed from their Invaders in the mode of cultivating their Lands: And neither One nor the Other deemed to have a right to any thing because they were Pagans and Barbarians.¹⁴³

The historical forces of barbarism and savagery, which were mainly linked to popery, had thus done a tremendous amount of damage in these new lands. He then continued, "[i]ndeed, by that time, the Inhabitants of this *new World* were in so fair a train towards total extirpation, God raised up his chosen Instruments in the *old* to restore Christianity to its Gospel health and purity,

¹⁴³ William Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: at their anniversary meeting in the parish church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday February 21, 1766* (London: E. Owen and T. Harrison, 1766), 6. This quotation which highlighted Warburton's attack on Catholicism and the Black Legend was briefly discussed as part of a broader analysis of the Society in Bickham, *Savages within the Empire*, 232.

then labouring in its last pangs under popish tyranny and superstition.”¹⁴⁴ His statements obviously displayed a strongly anti-Catholic sentiment, and were primarily designed to motivate his followers to propagate a more benevolent evangelical message in the New World. They were now tasked with the job of moral regeneration and attempting to rectify past wrongs. Yet, this also offered a clear recognition of the savagery of earlier colonization, in which Warburton also displayed a notable degree of compassion and a humanitarian spirit.

Although Adam Smith pointed to the tremendous economic advantages that European discoveries brought about in his *Wealth of Nations*, he also addressed the horrific nature of the conquest and colonization that followed. Though he argued that the Spanish were the worst of the plunderers, as did most of his British contemporaries, he did note that the other powers were not much better. He wrote that

[i]n consequence of the representations of Columbus, the council of Castile determined to take possession of countries of which the inhabitants were plainly incapable of defending themselves. – The pious purpose of converting them to Christianity sanctified the injustice of the project. But the hope of finding treasures of gold there, was the sole motive which prompted to undertake it.¹⁴⁵

According to Smith, the goal of mass conversion was little more than a thin veneer for the greater quest for riches, as he continued “ALL the other enterprizes of the Spaniards in the new world, subsequent to those of Columbus, seem to have been prompted by the same motive. It was the sacred thirst of gold that carried Oieda, Nicuessa, and Vasco Nugnes Balboa, to the isthmus of Darien, that carried Cortez to Mexico, and Almagro and Pizarro to Chili and Peru.”¹⁴⁶ While the Spanish were the initial conquerors, he noted that “SUCH have been the general outlines of the policy of the different European nations with regard to their colonies”,

¹⁴⁴ Warburton, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel*, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1776), 2:153.

¹⁴⁶ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:154.

and that “THE policy of Europe, therefore, has very little to boast of, either in the original establishment, or in the subsequent prosperity of the colonies of America.”¹⁴⁷ He then argued that no noble motivations or policies underpinned European colonization in the New World, but rather

FOLLY and injustice seem to have been the principles which presided over and directed the first project of establishing those colonies; the folly of hunting after gold and silver mines, and the injustice of coveting the possession of a country whose harmless natives, far from having ever injured the people of Europe, had received the first adventurers with every mark of kindness and hospitality.

In terms of the people who left Europe to populate the new colonies, he made a similar argument, pointing out that the individuals involved were not exactly the ideal candidates to build stable or model societies. This was almost universally the case, as,

THE English puritans, persecuted at home, fled for freedom to America, and established there the four governments of New England. The English catholics, treated with equal injustice, established that of Maryland; the Quakers, that of Pennsylvania. The Portugeze Jews, persecuted by the inquisition, stript of their fortunes, and banished to Brazil, introduced, by their example, some sort of order and industry among the transported felons and strumpets, by whom that colony was originally peopled, and taught them the culture of the sugar cane. Upon all these different occasions it was, not the wisdom and policy, but the disorder and injustice of the European governments, which peopled and cultivated America.¹⁴⁸

Smith also spent some time in his discourse talking about the discovery of America and the passage around the Cape of Good Hope, and the general benefits that had accrued as a result of expanding horizons and opening up trade possibilities. But, he then noted the extremely negative consequences that had been visited upon the many indigenous peoples of the world, writing,

[t]o the natives, however, both of the East and West Indies, all the commercial benefits which can have resulted from those events have been sunk and lost in the

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:187.

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:188.

dreadful misfortunes which they have occasioned. These misfortunes, however, seem to have arisen rather from accident than from any thing in the nature of those events themselves. At the particular time when these discoveries were made, the superiority of force happened to be so great on the side of the Europeans, that they were enabled to commit with impunity every sort of injustice in those remote countries. Hereafter, perhaps, the natives of those countries may grow stronger, or those of Europe may grow weaker, and the inhabitants of all the different quarters of the world may arrive at that equality of courage and force which, by inspiring mutual fear, can alone overawe the injustice of independent nations into some sort of respect for the rights of one another. But nothing seems more likely to establish this equality of force than that mutual communication of knowledge and of all sorts of improvements which an extensive commerce from all countries to all countries naturally, or rather necessarily, carries along with it.¹⁴⁹

His assessment reflected a clear sense of wrongs having been committed, though aspects of it were highly speculative in regards to the fortunes of the world transforming in such a dramatic way. Smith was one of the best known moral philosophers and political economists at the time and his words were no doubt read by a great number of people, and carried significant weight among an intellectual audience.¹⁵⁰ Later writers, such as Joseph Priestley, would cite his work or appropriate it as part of their own discussions of early modern European imperialism. Since then, the historiography on Smith's work has become extensive, while he has been recognized as a crucial anti-imperial figure from the eighteenth century.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 2:236.

¹⁵⁰ It was perhaps not until a decade after the initial publication of the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 that Smith's work was widely acknowledged in Parliamentary circles, as asserted in John E. Crowley, "Neo-Mercantilism and the Wealth of Nations: British Commercial Policy after the American Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 33, no. 2 (1990): 339-360.

¹⁵¹ In the earliest historiography on the subject of eighteenth century anti-imperialism Smith was generally considered alongside Tucker. See Robert Livingston Schuyler, "The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England," *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1922): 440-471 and Robert Livingston Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 [1945]). One chapter focused on Smith and the mercantile system in Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 6-24. Smith also featured heavily as a dissenting voice in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 155-164; 175-195; and was a central figure in Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). As Smith was a crucial reference point and historical source for later critics of empire, particularly from the Victorian era, so too have subsequent historians considered his work as a useful starting point

One of the strongest critics of early modern European imperialism in the period was James Anderson, a Scottish agriculturalist and political economist. A contemporary of Smith and a Scottish Enlightenment figure, he is not nearly as well known despite the strength of his work.¹⁵² His criticism of colonization, stemmed from its very core, as something being carried out under the “sanction of this imaginary title,” of “*the law of nations*”, which he argued had its cruel origins in the medieval period, under Catholic authorities.¹⁵³ He was also critical of many other authors in their treatments of the expansion of Europe, as being too partial to their own countries of origin in their assessments of the history. In particular, he wrote,

[t]he Spanish and the British settlements in America resemble each other in so many respects, that it is impossible to treat of the one without thinking of the other; yet it is not a little singular to observe, that authors have not been more unanimous in attributing the ruin of Spain to her American colonies, than they have been in ascribing the prosperity of Britain to her's. From what causes, it may be asked, do two institutions, so nearly alike, produce such opposite effects?¹⁵⁴

for anti-imperialism in later periods. For instance, see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, 2nd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 6-10, 18, 33, 42, 77; Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17, 21-2; Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 16, 19, 23.

¹⁵² James Anderson is perhaps better known for his treatises on agricultural and economic development in Scotland, including on the much desired fisheries. For example, see Salim Rashid, “James Anderson, Fisheries and Regional Economic Development in Scotland,” *History of Economic Ideas* 17, no. 1 (2009): 9-31; and within the context of more recent environmental history, see Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013). On questions related to empire, Anderson was discussed in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 205-6; 220-3. He was also briefly mentioned as a contemporary of Smith in Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, 29. It has also been suggested that Anderson's discourses about political economy, and chiefly regarding eighteenth century Corn Laws and agricultural regulations, encouraged Smith to make modifications to parts of the *Wealth of Nations*, which appeared in the 2nd and 3rd editions. See Renee Prendergast, “James Anderson's Political Economy—His Influence on Smith and Malthus,” *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 34, no. 4 (1987): 388-409; and Alexander Dow, “The Hauteur of Adam Smith: An Unpublished Letter from James Anderson of Monkshill,” *Scottish Journal of Political Economy* 31, no. 3 (1984): 284-285.

¹⁵³ James Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies, Considered* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1782), 13. Here he distinguished between ancient and modern colonization, explaining briefly the divergent histories of Greeks and Romans in the ancient Mediterranean world versus early modern European expansion across the Atlantic.

¹⁵⁴ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 40.

He was skeptical of the fact that even though Spain had declined so severely as a result of its colonies, and while that was well established and generally agreed upon, Britain seemed immune to a similar fate despite such glaringly obvious similarities. While Anderson would make the case that the two countries were different in many respects, there were many lessons that Britain needed to learn from the Spanish example.¹⁵⁵

Notably, Anderson challenged the narrative of Spanish decline brought about as a result of the procurement of precious metals, claiming that the specific materials or commodities acquired were inconsequential. Instead, what really mattered was the nature of the society and its conduct towards others that would enable a kingdom to flourish or deteriorate. He wrote

[i]t thus appears that the phenomena complained of do not arise from the precious metals, considered as such, that were found in the new world, but from the accumulated treasures that were there found, and the rapine and devastation that were then permitted. The same effect might have been produced, had riches of any kind there abounded, and had the same destructive policy been permitted. The same effect would be produced by destroying the inhabitants, and wasting the property of the people of Britain. Plunder, when authorized, intirely destroys every species of industry. The riches thus obtained are soon exhausted, nor can the stores when once dispersed be easily replaced again.¹⁵⁶

Clearly, he wrote, it was “[b]y a blindness of conduct that has not perhaps a parallel in history, Spain has contrived to ruin herself for the sake of her colonies, and then has transferred the

¹⁵⁵ For comparisons of the early modern European empires of the Atlantic see Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World* and Pagden, *Lords of All the World*. For an overview of the relative decline of the Iberian empires and the rise of Britain and France see chapters three and four of Jonathan Hart, *Empires & Colonies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 92-170. On the Spanish Empire’s economic decline and late eighteenth century revival see Carlos Marichal, *Bankruptcy of Empire: Mexican Silver and the Wars Between Spain, Britain and France, 1760–1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a broad history of Spain and the Spanish Empire at the time, consider Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power 1492-1763* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003).

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 53-4. N.B., the quote was in the footnotes. He additionally wrote that “[t]he army, however, while the wars continued, offered a ready asylum for many, and from this cause was always easily recruited. For some time things went on very smoothly in this track; but after the plunder of the natives of America ceased, money became more scarce, and remittances home were less abundant. Treasures must then be dug from the mine instead of being wrested from the inhabitants. So many of the natives had been killed by the wantonness of cruelty, that the hands were wanting to work the mines to perfection.”

profits that result from them to other states.”¹⁵⁷ Yet, he was also concerned that Britain was heading down a similar path, writing, “[e]very circumstance, therefore, which tends to facilitate the sudden acquisition of money by court favour, should be guarded against with care, as endangering the liberty of the state. In this sense, extended empire must ever prove pernicious.”¹⁵⁸ Though immediately critical of the earliest Spanish plunderers of the New World, he additionally noted the jealousy of rival European powers, writing “[w]hile the court of Spain enjoyed the temporary splendor she derived from the plunder of the new world, the neighbouring nations not only beheld her with terror, but with envy. Every European state wished anxiously to get some share of those distant territories, from which treasures were obtained in such abundance.”¹⁵⁹

Anderson was also highly critical of early English colonization, arguing that “a sect of fanatics seem to have been the first who formed the idea of establishing a colony, with an intention of remaining for ever in that country. Persecuted at home by bigots, a number of persons still more bigoted,”¹⁶⁰ were supported by a government obsessed with treasure. In particular, he mentioned how jealousy inflamed the passions of “the needy monarch”, James I, “who through bad œconomy, was ever in want, and who, fond of arbitrary power, could ill put up with the parsimonious restraints his subjects so often put upon him.”¹⁶¹ He was additionally disdainful of Sir Walter Raleigh, who, “at once the boast and the opprobrium of the age in which he lived, by specious falsehoods took advantage of the popularity he enjoyed to poison the minds of the people, and to buoy up the prince in his favourite hopes.”¹⁶² Their desires to imitate Spain

¹⁵⁷ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 55.

¹⁵⁸ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 101-2.

¹⁵⁹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 16-7.

¹⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 19.

¹⁶¹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 17.

¹⁶² Ibid.

went ahead, despite any delusions of grandeur, and “[t]he adventurers effected a landing in America; but instead of those mountains of gold they looked for, they only found poverty and wretchedness; and soon fell a sacrifice to their own rapacity, improvidence, and brutality.”¹⁶³ Eventually, “[a] feeble settlement was at length effected, at an immense expence to the company, and with a deplorable waste of the human species, from which no adequate returns to the partners could ever be drawn. They were at last obliged to relinquish their hopes, and give up their property in an adventure which had been fraught with endless trouble and accumulated expences.”¹⁶⁴ According to Anderson, these early trials and failures, at what can be assumed to have been Jamestown, should have been enough of a warning for the English to abandon their political designs on North America, but it was not to be. Then, “[f]or more than a century the nation had been accustomed to look upon America as a paradise. Individuals indeed had experienced that this was a mistake, but the national prejudice still leaned to that side.”¹⁶⁵

Anderson lamented the founding of the American colonies for a whole host of reasons, including the destruction of native populations as well the tendency of imperial expansion to, perhaps counter-intuitively, weaken the mother country. He was also concerned about rivalries and war, writing “[b]ut it is not on this account alone that our connection with the American settlements is to be dreaded. The temptation it affords for frequent wars, is a source of still greater mischiefs to a free, commercial, and manufacturing state.”¹⁶⁶ On this issue he was particularly adamant, for, “[o]f all the scourges to which mankind are subjected, war is doubtless the most considerable. It not only sweeps away by a premature death numbers of the human species, but it often paves the way for such miseries to the survivors, as makes the lot of those

¹⁶³ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 18-9.

¹⁶⁶ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 102.

who fell in battle worthy of envy.”¹⁶⁷ He also urged readers to consider the associated economic costs, writing

[d]uring the continuance of war, the national expence is greatly augmented; and in the confusion that necessarily arises from its numerous operations, a wide door is opened for accumulated frauds and abuses. Fortunes thus come to be acquired with a rapidity, and to an extent unknown at other periods: and this being foreseen, makes every needy expectant in the nation look forward with joy to the period when it seems to approach, and do every thing he can to accelerate it.¹⁶⁸

He continued further, “[n]or is the idle and the needy dependents on the court only, who look forward with pleasure to the approach of war: monied men behold it with equal joy. They foresee that the wants of government will soon be such as to demand their assistance.”¹⁶⁹

It was also, uncoincidentally, typically encouraged “[f]rom the influence of these two powerful classes of men, aided by the national folly, which ever grasps at extended dominion”.¹⁷⁰ The money that then would go into war could not be used for productive purposes, and he wrote,

[i]t is thus that war, while it destroys with wonderful rapidity the industrious part of the nation, increases almost in the same proportion the number of its useless, its destructive members. By drawing the whole money towards the capital, and a few other places, its circulation is confined. It involves the provinces in misery, while it overwhelms the court and its dependents with riches, and buries them in dissipation. National wealth, to those who judge only from the capital, is increasing; while in truth, want and indolence are approaching with hasty strides.¹⁷¹

The problem, of course, was that extended empire tended to aggravate this situation, and the larger the dominions, the more this was the case. Here he expanded,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 102-3.

¹⁶⁹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 103.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 104-5.

[b]ut extent of empire in every case, affords numberless temptations to engage in war; and an empire extended like the British empire in America, is peculiarly liable to this defect. It at the same time diminishes our strength, and exposes us to danger. Was it for the interest of Britain to drain herself of men, to people those vast deserts, when such effects might naturally be expected to flow from it?¹⁷²

Thus, Anderson presented a powerful case against the acquisition and maintenance of vast overseas empire. He was critical of those who advocated such policies, historically and in his own time, and remained notably skeptical of those especially interested parties who were always eager for war and the possibility for imperial gains.

One anonymous author, Cato, remarked upon Britain's recent territorial gains, commenting that "our late Acquisition may be justly called mere Earth", "though we had all that the Indians possess behind, as which we shall very soon have, it will be the same Thing; for they seem upon the Eve of either dwindling into nothing of themselves, or being exterminated by us."¹⁷³ In addition to his arguments questioning the value of these territories, discussed earlier in the chapter, he likewise questioned the manner in which these extensive lands were being acquired. He wrote that "we are never satisfied, but still driving them into Corners, and obliging them to cede vast Tracts, which are necessary to them, and which possessed by them, might be of some use to us, but which without them can be of no Service to us at all. This Cruelty however, it will be said, tho' undesirable, was necessary, because they would not let us alone. It is impossible to believe it."¹⁷⁴ Here he was especially critical of the destruction of native lives that this particular conquest and imperial expansion, more generally, had brought to North America. In addition, he was critical of the wanton waste of British lives too, as he continued,

¹⁷² Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 105.

¹⁷³ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 15. He noted here in the footnotes here that "[t]he Severities exercised upon the Indians, have certainly given much pain to Princes of humanity, among us, who hear of them, as they appear to have given to several of our Officers who were obliged by their Orders to commit them."

¹⁷⁴ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 16. N.B., this was in the footnotes.

[w]e suffer no inconsiderable Loss in the many thousands of Seamen and Soldiers, which must now be sent to all Parts of the known World, to annoy our Enemies in Time of War, and to protect our Friends in Time of Peace. If all the Men who died an untimely Death by Sickness, Famine or the Sword, in the Havannah Expedition, had been employed in some useful Occupation in Great Britain, they and their Posterity, would have been of greater Benefit to this Nation, than any two Islands in the West-Indies.¹⁷⁵

According to Cato, these victories had come at a very high price.

Even though Britain had emerged victorious in the war, eliminated their rival France, and had acquired vast territories in the process, it was not something that would make the country great. Instead he argued quite a different case, in paraphrasing Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, "that the moral Causes of the Thriving or Decay of a Nation, viz. such as arise from the Tempers or Principles of the People, the Spirit of their Constitution, or their Situation with regard to others, are unspeakably more powerful than occasional Causes, such as War, Famine and Pestilence."¹⁷⁶ Thus, it was not, especially in the long term, victory on distant battlefields or the acquiring of dominions to exploit economically that made a nation great. Instead, he suggested that relying upon new territories might tend towards the undoing of his country, "[i]f therefore our exclusive Right to trade to our own Plantations, tempts us to trust or lean too much to it, it may sink under the Weight, and prove the Cause of our Destruction."¹⁷⁷ This dependency was one of the causes of the earlier ruins of rivals Spain and Portugal, and

[t]his shews how it is at least possible, that our Possessions may have the same Effect upon us, that the Conquest of Mexico and Peru had upon the Spaniards. We may slacken our own Industry, and supply our Settlements by the Industry of others. Great Men and great Merchants who have Estates and Property abroad,

¹⁷⁵ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 21-2.

¹⁷⁶ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 27.

¹⁷⁷ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 28.

may make a splendid Figure for a Time, while the Body of the Kingdom is gradually losing its Nourishment, and falling into an incurable Consumption.¹⁷⁸

Cato was also extremely critical of the behaviour of his fellow countrymen and the mark Britain was making in the world. He questioned readers to think

[i]f we are so partial to ourselves, as to trample upon every Law and every national Engagement, when we hope to do it with Impunity or Profit, why should we expect others to be more honest than ourselves, or that our Colonies will continue to trade with us longer than it is their Interest to do so? For this Reason we should bend all our Force to the Improvement of our own Country, by increasing the Number, Sobriety and Industry of its Inhabitants. If there be any Defect here, the most valuable Settlements will do us no good, and if there be a visible Disproportion between our Colonies and our Ability to trade with them, upon just and equal Terms, the more they are enlarged, the sooner shall we be destroyed.¹⁷⁹

Cato was just one among many informed writers who, at a critical historical juncture, made the case that holding more and larger colonies was not beneficial for the nation. Grasping at greater dominions and then trying to maintain them would create more enemies than subjects, and would most likely weaken the nation itself.

It was clear that a notion of common humanity and a regard for the world's indigenous populations was present among enlightened and educated segments of the British population. This was also evident in the writings of James Douglas, the Fourteenth Earl of Morton, a natural philosopher and President of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh from 1737-68 and President of the Royal Society from 1764-8. Shortly before his death, his sentiments were illustrated in his handwritten 'hints' of consideration for James Cook, Joseph Banks, and Doctor Solander before they embarked on their *Endeavour* voyage in 1768. His note was intended as an informative and instructional guide and clearly displayed an antipathy for unwarranted aggression. He wrote

¹⁷⁸ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 29-30.

¹⁷⁹ Cato, *Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public*, 33-4.

To exercise the utmost patience and forbearance with respect to the Natives of the several Lands where the Ship may touch.

To check the petulance of the Sailors, and restrain the wanton use of Fire Arms.

To have it still in view that shedding the blood of those people is a crime of the highest nature: – They are human creatures, the work of the same omnipotent Author, equally under his care with the most polished European; perhaps being less offensive, more entitled to his favor.

They are the natural, and in the strictest sense of the word, the legal possessors of the several Regions they inhabit.

No European Nation has a right to occupy any part of their country, or settle among them without their voluntary consent. Conquest over such people can give no just title; because they could never be the Aggressors [*sic*].

They may naturally and justly attempt to repel intruders, whom they may apprehend are come to disturb them in the quiet possession of their country, whether that apprehension be well or ill founded.

Therefore should they in a hostile manner oppose a landing, and kill some men in the attempt, even this would hardly justify firing among them, 'till every other gentle method had been tried.¹⁸⁰

Douglas had made his position explicitly clear. Though he saw native populations as being less developed, they were no less entitled to maintaining their own territories in peace, and if necessary to defend them from would-be invaders. His was, of course, a metropolitan and enlightened point of view, which was often not shared by those who went overseas.

Similar sentiments regarding the tragedy of imperial and colonial histories came from Francis Duncan, a doctor and natural scientist, in his *Description of the Island of St. Helena* from 1805. He wrote that “[t]he history of discovery and colonization is too often the history of injustice and oppression; of countries invaded, because they were rich and valuable; and of their

¹⁸⁰ James Douglas quoted in J. C. Beaglehole, ed., *The Journals of Captain James Cook on His Voyages of Discovery, vol. 1: The Voyage of the Endeavour, 1768-1771* (Cambridge: Printed for the Hakluyt Society at the Cambridge University Press, 1955), 514-5. The *Hints* are also cited and Douglas’s worldview discussed by Anne Salmond, a distinguished anthropologist in Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and Europeans, 1642-1772* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 112-4.

inhabitants enslaved or exterminated, because they were weak.”¹⁸¹ However, St. Helena was quite a different place, which he argued was a suitable British colony, for “[h]appily, the settlement of this barren island has afforded no opportunity of increasing the catalogue of crimes, committed by the discoverers of new regions. It was found without any human inhabitants, without quadrupeds, and almost without birds.”¹⁸² As there would be no need for violence or destruction, this then made the remote island an ideal spot for a colony, and could potentially serve as notable area for scientific discovery and experimentation.¹⁸³ He then wrote,

[b]ut it is to be lamented, that Europeans have seldom traversed the ocean, for the purpose of practising this rare beneficence. The progress of their discoveries, if we except those made in the present reign, instead of diffusing the benefits of nature, and communicating the advantages of culture to remote lands and their inhabitants, has too frequently been marked by rapine and injustice. From the painful recital of the wrongs committed by them on the opposite shores of America and Africa, we may turn with a momentary satisfaction, to contemplate the appropriation and improvement of a desolate and barren spot; the rise of an establishment, effected without injury to any one; and a little colony speaking the language of England in a remote island of the Æthiopic Ocean.¹⁸⁴

In his advocacy of new colonization on this tiny remote island he hoped that readers would at least pause for a moment and consider the brutal realities of most empire-building projects. This, however, was supposed to be different as the island had not been seized from an indigenous population, and offered the opportunity for Britons to honestly disengage and live at a distance from the rest of the world. It was not long before this remote outpost would prove politically useful, for within a decade, it would serve as an exiled Napoleon’s final home.

Joseph Priestley, the late eighteenth century scientist, theologian, and historian, in his

¹⁸¹ Francis Duncan, *A Description of the Island of St. Helena: Containing Observations on Its Singular Structure and Formation* (London: Printed for R. Phillips, 1805), 7.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ The significance of St. Helena has been recently considered within a broader environmental history of the East India Company. See Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom, and Alan Lester, eds., *The East India Company and the Natural World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁸⁴ Duncan, *A Description of the Island of St. Helena*, 9.

Lectures, published in 1788, also provided a thorough assessment of the nature of European dominion of the period. He made the case that colonies were a not exactly of economic value, but rather served as a source of war. He wrote that

[i]t was the possession of colonies, which gave the princes Europe an idea of the importance of trade. Our wars are now chiefly commercial wars; whereas commerce was never made affair of state, before the planting of colonies in the last century. In fact, colonies, conducted according to the modern maxims, of their entire subserviency to the mother-country, are distant nations, supplied with every commodity they want, by their mother-country, if she can supply them with it. According to these maxims, in which the liberty and happiness of colonists, are not considered, a colony must never interfere with the manufactures of its mother-country, and all its commerce must be carried on by the shipping of its mother-country. The inhabitants of colonies must not even fish upon their own coasts. In short, according to these maxims, colonies can only be for culture.¹⁸⁵

He then extended his argument to assess the notion of greatness as being measured by the extent of territory that one nation controlled instead of, or over, its rivals. He remarked that “[i]t may be said that a nation must be stronger by the addition of the power of foreign dominions.” Yet, this was hardly the sole determiner of power or well-being, for,

in proportion as any nation becomes powerful, it excites the jealousy of other nations, and thereby has much more powerful enemies to contend with; and if the liberty of commerce can be obtained (which does not seem to be difficult in the present state of the world) and the stock of a nation consequently encrease, without the expence of conquering and keeping foreign dominions, that great surplus of wealth will purchase more assistance in war than could in general be furnished by any conquered nation or colony; and it might be better applied for the purpose of *self-defence*, which is the only justifiable use of arms.¹⁸⁶

In fact, he then posited, “[h]ad England nothing to do with the East or West Indies, America, or Gibraltar, it would have fewer wars, and would, no doubt, be much more wealthy (as its industry

¹⁸⁵ Joseph Priestley, *Lectures on History, and General Policy* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1788), 400-1.

¹⁸⁶ Priestley, *Lectures on History, and General Policy*, 498. This was partially quoted in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 197.

would, by one means or other, find a market) and if it was invaded, would have much greater resources for defending itself.”¹⁸⁷ As many writers and theorists before him had argued and demonstrated, Priestley too made the case that this was a mistaken notion. A nation, and especially a trading one such as Britain, would have been better off without acquiring vast and distant dominions, but by engaging others peaceably in the world and building wealth.

Advocating Colonial Emancipation

Leading up to the American Revolution, critics increasingly made the case that Britain should willingly give up the colonies if they desired self-rule, as they were becoming gradually more self-sufficient and independent.¹⁸⁸ While many had long argued that parts of North America were of little or questionable value to Britain, and thus should be abandoned, either entirely or for more lucrative areas, this was primarily a question of the ability and willingness of Britain to maintain control of the extensive Thirteen Colonies. By this point it was already fairly well-established that these territories were no longer dependencies in a practical sense; though, in terms of law there were notable debates over the rights, responsibilities, and nature of authority that Britain had over them. Many engaged commentators recognized that they were expensive to maintain and any attempt from Parliament to exercise its power over colonial assemblies and in matters of regulation or taxation would be sure to provoke a strong reaction. Yet, taxpayers in Britain had primarily shouldered the burdens of administration, defence, and territorial acquisitions for the benefit of those same colonists.¹⁸⁹ It was an unenviable and untenable

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Some of the strongest advocates in this regard were the conservative Josiah Tucker as well as radical figures such as Major John Cartwright; they, along with many of their contemporaries are considered in this dissertation.

¹⁸⁹ Arthur Young, the agriculturalist and political economist, in his many calculations, regarded much of North America as completely unnecessary to Britain. Additionally, Adam Smith, and later Joseph Priestley, commented upon how the British public had paid a tremendous price to acquire and maintain such distant colonies. Debts and taxes had risen to pay for the many imperial wars of the eighteenth century and the British government was unable to meet all of its financial obligations without reducing spending, raising revenue, or a combination of both.

position for Britons, themselves, and either the Americans would need to contribute financially, or it would simply be in Britain's best interests to relinquish sovereignty of those colonies.

One notable advocate of selectively abandoning colonies was Arthur Young. Though not an anti-imperial figure in a theoretical sense, he was pragmatic in advocating colonial independence. In the case of America, he noted that the colonies were increasingly populous and self-sufficient, and not serving British interests, in writing

*all planters then will be converted into common farmers; so that these people will then form a nation of husbandmen, manufacturers, and fishermen: Britain's fishery, and not improbably that of France too, will fall into the hands of those who are so much better situated for it than either. Now, before we extend this supposition further, I should remark, that this situation of these colonies would to Britain (as far as respected them alone) be no better than an actual revolt; for all she would in such a case enjoy more than after the revolt, would be merely their nominal allegiance. And I should also observe, that this is now the case with those I have distinguished by the title of the northern colonies; insomuch that Nova Scotia, Canada, New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania [sic], would be nearly of as much benefit to this country buried in the ocean, as they are at present.*¹⁹⁰

He clearly saw little value in trying to maintain those northern American and Canadian colonies, though also argued that this tainted peoples' views of empire generally, as he wrote "THERE is a too common prejudice to be combated with upon the very mention of such a plan as that of a new colony. It is directly said, are we not plagued enough with colonies, not to want any more? Have we not colonies enough? – Yes, doubtless, too many bad ones".¹⁹¹ He then noted that "[i]f the old settlements of Britain are grown populous out of proportion to the benefits they yield her; if her American trade is at a stand rather than upon the increase; if there is in idea the least danger of her losing their allegiance; if these evils threaten at the very time when the nation most requires (in consequence of her immense drains of treasure and her debts)" then it was time they

¹⁹⁰ Young, *Political Essays*, 424.

¹⁹¹ Young, *Political Essays*, 442.

were independent. Regarding “[a]ll the evils, inconveniencies, and froward conduct Britain has experienced from her subjects in America,” Young remarked that they would be better off without trying to govern those colonies. After all, he argued they were “very unpolitically settled in an improper climate; and the greater the evils which result from such a mistake,”¹⁹² from which Britain was then suffering. However, he made the case that while many colonies were poorly conceived, and America was a problem, that there were still good colonies and more could be acquired; therefore, smarter or better colonization would still be beneficial.

One of the strongest, and best known, critics of the British Empire, especially with respect to the maintenance of the American colonies in this period was Josiah Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester.¹⁹³ He was an extremely active pamphleteer and fiercely advocated his position, engaging most notably in a disagreement with Edmund Burke in 1775 regarding the colonies that the latter prized. In particular, Tucker was critical of the nature of these colonies, going back to their foundations.¹⁹⁴ He wrote that

[o]ur first Emigrants to *North-America* were mostly Enthusiasts of a particular Stamp. They were of that Set of *Republicans*, who believed, or pretended to believe, *that Dominion was founded in Grace*. Hence they conceived, that they had the best Right in the World both to tax, and to *persecute* the *Ungodly*. And they did both, as soon as they got Power into their Hands, in the most open and atrocious Manner. The Annals of the Quakers will tell you, that they *persecuted* Friends even to the Death.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Different aspects of Tucker’s many critiques of empire are discussed throughout this dissertation. For more on his anti-imperialism, see Walter Ernest Clark, *Josiah Tucker, Economist: A Study in the History of Economics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1903); Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850*; and W. George Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981).

¹⁹⁴ The exchange was briefly discussed in J. G. A., Pocock, ed. *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 278.

¹⁹⁵ Josiah Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke, Esq; Member of Parliament for the City of Bristol, and Agent for the Colony of New York, &c. In Answer to His Printed Speech, Said to be Spoken in the House of Commons on the Twenty-Second of March, 1775*, 2nd ed. (Gloucester: R. Raikes, 1775), 10.

In addition to his criticism of republicanism and religious fanaticism, Tucker was also dismissive of the extent and value of British-American trade, writing “the Trade to *North-America*... is much less than that to *Holland* and *Germany*; yet this Trade alone has made more Bankrupts, and ruined more Merchant Exporters, for these fifty Years last past, than almost every other Export-Trade besides.”¹⁹⁶ He also pointed out that Americans were notorious for running up debts in Britain and not paying back their creditors, by either demanding the Englishman turn up in an American court of law to make his case, or by printing local paper currency to settle up.¹⁹⁷ This had negatively impacted many traders, he noted as “from a Variety of such Causes, it has actually come to pass, that so many Merchants of London, Bristol, Liverpool, &c. &c. have failed, and become Bankrupts, if they traded chiefly and principally to North America:— And that so few have acquired any considerable Fortunes by this Trade, notwithstanding the great Riches which have been acquired by almost all others.”¹⁹⁸ Indeed, he argued, “if the *North-American* Provinces were erected into independent States, their Subjects would be afraid to insult us with such shocking Provocations, as they have done with Impunity for many Years past. No neutral Power dares to attempt the like against *Great-Britain*.”¹⁹⁹

Tucker saw the American colonies as a nuisance and a burden on Britain, for a whole host of reasons, and he systematically made his case to Burke, and all who would read his writings. He warned that Britain was heading down a dangerous path, in much the same way

¹⁹⁶ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 2nd ed., 27-8. In his footnotes he compared the value of English exports to Holland and Germany to the American colonies, based upon the Customs’ House records, for the period 1763-1772. The former was valued at £30,294,126, 11s, 3d; the latter £20,061,023, 3s, 8d; with the difference amounting to £10,233,103, 7s, 7d. He noted that the findings directly contradicted “the general Cry of the Mal-contents... that the Trade to our Colonies is worth all other Trades besides”, and instead showed the greater value of trade to places “where we have no Colonies”. With this in mind, he asked the question so “what is it to make such a mighty boast of? And why is our Commerce with other Countries so much vilified and degraded, if brought into Comparison with the Trade of *North-America*?”

¹⁹⁷ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 2nd ed., 29-33.

¹⁹⁸ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 2nd ed., 33.

¹⁹⁹ Tucker, *A Letter to Edmund Burke*, 2nd ed., 33-4.

Spain had done previously, to its detriment. He further addressed many of these issues in his treatise *A Series of Answers*, the following year, which he noted was written “to obviate certain Objections raised by the Crafty, swallowed by the Credulous, and terrible only to the Ignorant, against the Idea of a total Separation.”²⁰⁰ In it he argued that

the sooner a Separation shall take Place, the better; for nothing short of this can be a radical Cure. Suppose, for Instance, that the *British* Legislature had yielded to the late Demands of the *American* Congress, before they openly declared for absolute Independence: That is, suppose they had granted, that the *Americans* should always enjoy the Rights, Privileges, and Protections of *Englishmen*, without being *obliged* to contribute a Farthing towards the general Expence: – In that Case the whole *British* Nation would have been highly and justly incensed against the Authors of such an infamous Concession, a Concession, which would in Fact have made *America* the *Sovereign*, and *Great-Britain* the *subject* and *tributary* State.²⁰¹

Here he fundamentally undermined the structure of the imperial model and challenged readers to consider whose interests were really being served by the maintenance of this empire. Clearly, he saw Britain as losing by such arrangement, earning only the scorn of disgruntled republicans. So, why not cut them loose and let them fight themselves? Tucker then argued that “[w]hen a Separation shall ensue, the Faults in the American Government, be they what they may, will then be all their own: Whereas every Thing which they dislike at present is imputed to us; and on this they ground their repeated Injuries and Acts of Injustice.”²⁰² He also noted how many recognized that at some point all colonies would seek independence, and that it was futile to try and fight against this course of political life. He wrote

[n]ay, every Man of every Denomination is so thoroughly convinced, that the Colonies will and must become independent one Time or other, that the only Point to be decided is, --- at which Time, or at what Juncture, can such a

²⁰⁰ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, xiii.

²⁰¹ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 26.

²⁰² Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 16.

Separation be made with the most Benefit, or, if you please with the least Detriment to the Mother Country? And the Answer to this Enquiry is very obvious, --- *No Time like the Time present.*²⁰³

Here he urged readers to consider being proactive in this regard, instead of waiting for some abstractly appropriate time in the future, to do the right thing.

In his *True Interest of Britain*, also from 1776, Tucker argued his main case for American independence. As the basis of the text, he argued “[f]or if we neither can govern the Americans, nor be governed by them; if we can neither unite with them, nor ought to subdue them; – what remains, but to part with them on as friendly terms as we can?”²⁰⁴ He proposed five possible plans; the last and ideal one being separation. Within this context he refuted many common arguments against granting colonial independence, while proposing a long list of reasons for doing so. To the apprehensive, he wrote that “the idea of separation, and the giving up the Colonies forever will shock many weak people, who think, that there is neither happiness nor security but in an overgrown unwieldy Empire,”²⁰⁵ but, Tucker noted, Britain would ultimately be the beneficiary. Among the many great advantages Britain would enjoy, upon American independence, he wrote, “[a] disjunction from the northern Colonies would effectually put a stop to our present emigration. By the laws of the land it is made a capital offence to inveigle artificers and mechanics to leave the kingdom, but this law is unhappily superseded at present as far as the Colonies are concerned.”²⁰⁶ This would address a long standing issue concerning the depopulation of Britain. Additionally, he noted “[a]nother great advantage to be derived from a separation is, that we shall then save between 3 and 400,000l. a year, by being discharged from the payment of any civil or military establishment belonging to the Colonies; for which generous

²⁰³ Tucker, *A Series of Answers*, 27.

²⁰⁴ Josiah Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain, Set Forth in Regard to the Colonies* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1776), 50.

²⁰⁵ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 50.

²⁰⁶ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 59.

benefaction we receive at present no other return than invectives and reproaches.”²⁰⁷

From an economic point of view, Tucker envisaged a significant savings for Britain, if America were to become independent. In addition to reductions in administrative costs, he also remarked positively upon

[t]he ceasing of the payment of bounties on certain Colony productions will be another great saving; perhaps not less than 200,000l. a year: and it is very remarkable, that the goods imported from the Colonies in consequence of these bounties, could not have been imported into any other part of Europe, were there a liberty to do it; because the freight and first cost would have amounted to more than they could be sold for: so that in fact we give premiums to the Colonies for selling goods to us, which would not have been sold at all any where else.²⁰⁸

To him this was an absurd peculiarity of the economics of empire, or what has traditionally been called the old colonial system. These commercial regulations obviously benefitted some, but it was naturally at the expense of others, and primarily this meant people in Britain. Additionally, Tucker made the case that

[w]hen we are no longer connected with the Colonies by the imaginary tie of an identity of government, than [*sic*] our merchant-exporters and manufacturers will have a better chance of having their debts paid, than have at present: For as matters now stand, the Colonists chuse to carry their ready cash to other nations, while they are contracting debts with their Mother-Country, with whom they think they can take great liberties: and provided they are trusted, they care not to what amount this debt shall rise: – For when the time for payment draws on, they are seized with a fit of patriotism; and then confederacies and associations are to discharge all arrears; or at least, are to postpone the payment of them SINE DIE.²⁰⁹

This last one was a longstanding concern for many merchants in Britain, yet was an issue that was often insufficiently addressed. Clearly, there were many advantages to be enjoyed.

Tucker hoped that crafting an international relationship with the Americans would create

²⁰⁷ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 60.

²⁰⁸ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 60.

²⁰⁹ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 61.

a more positive environment than the imperial one ever offered. If effected, the results would be truly transformative and beneficial, for “[a]fter a separation from the Colonies, our influence over them will be much greater than ever it was, since they began to feel their own weight and importance: For at present we are looked upon in no better a light than that of robbers and usurpers; whereas, we shall then be considered as their protectors, mediators, and benefactors.”²¹⁰ So, Tucker argued, “[l]et therefore the Mother-Country herself resign up all claim of authority over them, as well ecclesiastical as civil; let her declare North America to be independent of Great-Britain in every respect whatever; --- let her do this, I say, and then all their fears will vanish away, and their panics be at an end.”²¹¹ As prophetic as these words, written in 1776, may have been, they were tragically unheeded.

Towards the end of the American Revolution, he wrote his famous *Cui Bono?*, a series of letters directed to Monsieur Necker, in which he commented on what might have been, and how the devastating conflict could have been avoided. He remarked to the Frenchman that

THE very best System [*best I mean in Behalf of England*] would have been, To have thrown up all foreign Dominions at once; – and to have trusted solely to the Goodness and Cheapness of our Manufactures, and to the long Credit we can give, for procuring them a *Vent* in these [abdicated] Governments, as well as in other Countries. – In the next Place to have relied on the Strength of our great Capitals, and on the commanding Influence of good *Price*, and good *Pay*, for purchasing all Sorts of Goods and Commodities from every Nation under Heaven: – And in the third Place, to have kept our Strength both by Land and Sea, well centred on our own Coasts, not dissipated by foreign Expeditions, always ready at Hand for our Defence against Invaders. This, I say, would have been the best, and the wisest Scheme;²¹²

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Tucker, *The True Interest of Britain*, 66.

²¹² Josiah Tucker, *Cui Bono?: Or, an Inquiry, What Benefits can Arise Either to the English or the Americans, the French, Spaniards, or Dutch, from the greatest victories, or successes, in the present war, being a series of letters, address to Monsieur Necker, Late Controller General of the Finances of France* (London: T. Cadell in the Strand, 1782), 129.

Tucker's anti-imperial discourses have earned him the recognition of many historians, who have rightly considered him the greatest advocate of American independence at the time.²¹³ Indeed, he had been making the case that both America and Britain would have benefitted from this arrangement for decades before it actually occurred. While over time he earned many converts to his point of view, it was not politically sufficient. Unfortunately, his position was not widely held enough to effect such change in a peaceable way and it took a bloody civil war for it to happen. Although he was eventually proven right with regards to the economic and civil benefits that both societies then enjoyed, it would have likely been a sombre vindication in 1783.²¹⁴

During the American Revolution many Britons were sympathetic to the cause of the colonists and opposed the war.²¹⁵ Radical thinkers and reformers alike also viewed Parliament as having overstepped its authority in attempting to tax the Americans without their consent and were resentful of the high taxes levied at home to service the large National Debt, which had greatly escalated during the Seven Years' War.²¹⁶ In this regard, the pro-Americans of London, and other individuals associated with the radical libertine John Wilkes, are perhaps among the best known.²¹⁷ Members of political factions, such as the Rockingham Whigs, were also notably

²¹³ For more on Tucker, see Clark, *Josiah Tucker, Economist*; Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought*; Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System*, 38-49; and Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings*; as well as Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 117-25; and Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*, 9-49.

²¹⁴ For more on the loss of the Thirteen Colonies and Britain in the 1780s, see Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783*; and C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989). Regarding the displacement of loyalist populations in the aftermath of the war, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

²¹⁵ Jerome R. Reich, *British Friends of the American Revolution* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1998).

²¹⁶ Such individuals included Major John Cartwright, Richard Price, and Catharine Macaulay. The seminal work on the British fiscal-military state and the national debt from the Glorious Revolution through the American Revolution is John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Also, see Koehn, *The Power of Commerce*, 1-24. For a study of radical perspectives in Britain of the American imperial problem see Robert E. Toohey, *Liberty & Empire: British Radical Solutions to the American Problem, 1774-1776* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978).

²¹⁷ John Sainsbury, "The Pro-Americans of London, 1769 to 1782," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1978): 423-454. The classic work on Wilkes and the period of the American imperial crisis comes from George Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: A Social Study of 1763 to 1774* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). Also, see the three more

opposed to the Grenville and North administrations, as well as the war, and favoured a peaceable solution, albeit one that retained the colonies within the empire.²¹⁸ Notable anti-war figures voiced their concerns over the horrors of this conflict that was often likened to an unjustifiable civil war, which divided families and fractured the empire. In particular, many Britons were concerned about the use of native warriors and cruelties perpetrated by the British military against their own subjects. As the war progressed however, critics were increasingly silenced publically with the threats of libel, slander, imprisonment, or exile.²¹⁹

One of the best known radical thinkers from the period was Richard Price, who in his 1776 *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, made common cause with the American colonists.²²⁰ Though not opposed to the existence of empire, he was deeply concerned with, and opposed to, the nature of the British Empire, as it then existed, and was exemplified in the government's attempt to maintain authority over America. He wrote that "[m]uch has been said of the right of *conquest*; and history contains little more than accounts kingdoms reduced by it under the dominion of other kingdoms, and of the havock it has made among mankind. But the authority derived from hence, being founded on violence, is never *rightful*."²²¹ He notably questioned the motivations of those advocating war to defend Parliamentary authority, and disregarded notions of a parental relationship. Furthermore, he noted

recent studies of Wilkes, Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: The Lives of a Libertine* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2006); and Arthur H. Cash, *John Wilkes: The Scandalous Father of Civil Liberty* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

²¹⁸ This includes individuals such as Edmund Burke and Sir George Savile. Many of these issues are addressed in P. J. Marshall, "Empire and Authority in the later Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15, no. 2 (1987): 105-122.

²¹⁹ For more on public perspectives about the war, within the press, see Troy Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009).

²²⁰ Price's many notable political pamphlets from the period have been thoroughly considered in D. O. Thomas, ed., *Price: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²²¹ Richard Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1776), 24.

[i]f *for its own sake*; the only object of the war is the extension of dominion; and its only motive is the lust of power. – All government, even *within* a state, becomes tyrannical, as far as it is a needless and wanton exercise of power; or is carried farther than is absolutely necessary to preserve the peace and to secure the safety of the state. This is what an excellent writer calls GOVERNING TOO MUCH; and its effect must always be, weakening government by rendering it contemptible and odious.²²²

With respect to questions of dominion, he argued that “[w]e are struggling for dominion over OTHERS. They are struggling for SELF-dominion: The noblest of all blessings.”²²³ As such, this clearly gave the Americans the moral high ground. Unfortunately, however, it appeared that both sides were determined not to back down. But, for what purpose, he asked, as

this is a contest from which no advantages can possibly be derived. – Not a revenue: For the provinces of America, when desolated, will afford no revenue; or if they should, the expence of subduing them and keeping them in subjection will much exceed that revenue. – Not any of the advantages of trade: For it is a folly, next to insanity, to think trade can be promoted by impoverishing our customers, and fixing in their minds an everlasting abhorrence of us. – It remains, therefore, that this war can have no other object than the extension of power. – Miserable reflection! – To sheath our swords in the bowels of our brethren, and spread misery and ruin among a happy people, for no other end than to oblige them to acknowledge our supremacy. How horrid! – This is the cursed ambition that led a *Cæsar* and an *Alexander*, and many other mad conquerors, to attack peaceful communities, and to lay waste the earth.²²⁴

He was especially concerned that British policymakers were not acting thoughtfully, but were merely following in the misguided footsteps of ambitious leaders throughout history. He then remarked, “[b]ut a worse principle than even this, influences some among us. Pride and the love of dominion are principles hateful enough; but blind resentment and the desire of revenge are infernal principles: And these, I am afraid, have no small share at present in guiding our public

²²² Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, 5th ed., 51.

²²³ Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, 5th ed., 53. N.B., this was written in his footnotes.

²²⁴ Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, 5th ed., 54-5.

conduct.”²²⁵ Though Price was in favour of maintaining the colonies on good terms, he was also determined to defend what he saw as their natural rights as British subjects. His discussion also clearly revealed an abhorrence of wars of conquest and the lust for dominion.

Major John Cartwright, who later became known as a foremost radical reformer, also published a notable piece on the question of American independence. His document was written as a series of letters to Parliament in 1774 and reprinted the following year, though it apparently had little impact. The second, or new edition, featured two memorable quotations from the late John Trenchard, who had been one of the two famous Commonwealthmen earlier in the century and greatly informed Cartwright’s own discussion about the empire.²²⁶ The discourse opened

It is not to be hoped, in the corrupt State of human Nature, that any Nation will be subject to another, any longer than it finds its own Account in it, and cannot help itself.

No Creatures suck the Teats of their Dams longer than they can draw Milk from thence or can provide themselves with better Food; nor will any Country continue their Subjection to another, only because their great Grand-mothers were acquainted. This is the Course of human Affairs, and all wise States will always have it before their Eyes.²²⁷

Trenchard, along with Thomas Gordon, had published a series of discussions on countless topics in the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble crisis, in the early 1720s, called *Cato’s Letters*. These articles famously illustrated eighteenth century patriotic and liberal thought in their many

²²⁵ Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, 5th ed., 55.

²²⁶ For more on the Commonwealthmen and discourses in radical Whiggism and republicanism see the new edition of Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004) and David L. Jacobson, ed., *The English Libertarian Heritage* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965). More recent work has considered the writings of Commonwealthmen on religious liberty in greater detail as well. See Justin Champion, *Republican learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1696-1722* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Additionally, the Anglo-French radical republican dimensions have been considered in Rachel Hammersley, *The English republican tradition and eighteenth-century France: Between the ancients and the moderns* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

²²⁷ John Cartwright, *American Independence The Interest and Glory of Great-Britain. A New Edition* (London: H. S. Woodfall, 1775). The quotes come from John Trenchard, “No. 106: Of Plantations and Colonies,” in *Cato’s Letters*, vol. 3, (London: Printed for W. Wilkins, T. Woodward, J. Walthoe, and J. Peele, 1724). This article was originally published Saturday, December 8, 1722.

discourses.²²⁸ Although their musings on empire were limited, they were still informative and had some influence in certain circles.²²⁹ Trenchard had written that plantations were “a Subject understood but by few, and that there is but little Use made of that Understanding.”²³⁰

The Commonwealthmen were primarily concerned with notions of liberty, including the defence of private property, and whether or not the government respected the rights of its subjects. This largely informed the discussion towards empire, which could be negative or positive for the nation. In particular, Trenchard noted “if any Nation drives or distresses any of its Subjects out of their Country, or sends any of them out in foolish Wars, or useless Expeditions, or for any other Causes, which do not return more Advantage than bring Loss, they so far enervate their State, and let out Part of their best Hearts Blood.”²³¹ He also distinguished between colonies as conquered countries held in subjugation or those planted for the purposes of acquiring commodities and trade. Of the two, the former was problematic and such territories could hardly be held in dependence in perpetuity. He wrote

[f]orce can never be used effectually to answer this End, without destroying the Colonies themselves Liberty and Encouragement are necessary to carry People thither, and to keep them together when they are there; and Violence will hinder both. Any Body of Troops considerable enough to awe them, and keep them in Subjection, and under the Direction too of a needy Governor, often sent thither to make his Fortune, and at such a Distance from any Application for Redress, will soon put an End to all Planting, and leave the Country to the Soldiers alone; and if it did not, would eat up all the Profit of the Colony.²³²

²²⁸ The letters have been more recently compiled in Ronald Hamowy, ed. *Cato's Letters, Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995).

²²⁹ Trenchard and Gordon perhaps best illustrated in print the ideologies of a radical Whiggish opposition or the Country Party at the time, though it is likely that their influence was greater in the Thirteen Colonies than in Britain. For more on this question see the work of Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Lee Ward, *The Politics of Liberty in England and Revolutionary America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²³⁰ Trenchard, “No. 106: Of Plantations and Colonies,” 3:282.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Trenchard, “No. 106: Of Plantations and Colonies,” 3:286.

These sentiments would carry forward into the radical discussion about the colonies, and were most evident in Cartwright's letters. He wrote "[l]et us then hear no more of a right in our present constituted parliament to govern the Americans, as being derived from any former exercise of this sovereignty, from the original dependence and protection of the emigrants and infant colonies, or from the tenour of grants and charters! The respective governments in America are no longer dependent colonies; they are independent nations."²³³ He also notably

denied that America, when we drop the popular language, and speak correctly, is a part of the British empire, it will naturally be expected I should say what are, and where are its limits. The British empire, then, I hold to be confined to the British Isles, and to the various *settlements and factories of our trade* in the different parts of the world, including *the government of Newfoundland*; together with the garrisons of *Gibraltar and Minorca*.²³⁴

Given the circumstances, he also thought it foolish to try and recover the costs of previous wars through direct taxes upon the colonist, arguing that they could only be repaid through trade. Furthermore, "by leaving them to their own independency, the charges of government may be greatly retrenched."²³⁵ This was the potential promise of accepting American independence.

Cartwright appreciated the work of Josiah Tucker, with whom he actually agreed on a number of issues. The Dean's writings "amply supply all the examples and explanations necessary to illustrate my principles, and shew to a demonstration the absolute necessity, in a political light, of relinquishing our claims to the sovereignty of America," he wrote. "But I am far from subscribing to this gentleman's doctrine as to the rights of sovereignty."²³⁶ While he did not agree with Tucker's methodology, he certainly concurred that Parliament was being reckless and that the government needed to recognize political reality. As later noted by Schuyler, Price

²³³ Cartwright, "Letter II," in *American Independence The Interest and Glory of Great-Britain*, 7-8.

²³⁴ Cartwright, "Letter IV," in *American Independence The Interest and Glory of Great-Britain*, 22-3.

²³⁵ Cartwright, "Letter VI," in *American Independence The Interest and Glory of Great-Britain*, 32.

²³⁶ Ibid.

and Cartwright were not exactly anti-imperial figures, though their advocacy of a voluntary federation was quite different than the imperial relationship that existed between Britain and the colonies at the time.²³⁷ Their conceptions of such an arrangement would more closely resemble aspects of the nineteenth century informal empire and the twentieth century British Commonwealth.

Catharine Macaulay was another noted radical writer who was highly critical of the North government, and its predecessors, on the questions of imperial policy towards the American colonies. Her criticisms, however, were aimed at maintaining the empire on peaceable terms, which was clearly not the case at hand. She scolded readers, noting that the ministry

after having exhausted all those ample sources of corruption which your own tameness under oppressive taxes have afforded, either fearing the unbiassed [*sic*] judgment of the people, or impatient at the slow, but steady progress of despotism, have attempted to wrest from our American Colonists every privilege necessary to freemen; – privileges which they hold from the authority of their charters, and the principles of the constitution.²³⁸

This was highly shocking, as it showed a lack of concern in Britain for its legal traditions. She noted that “to the eternal shame of this country, the stamp act, by which they were to be taxed in an arbitrary manner, met with no opposition, except from those who are particularly concerned, that the commercial intercourse between Great-Britain and her Colonies should meet with no interruption.”²³⁹ In addition, she added, “[w]ith the same guilty acquiescence, my countrymen, you have seen the last Parliament finish their venal course, with passing two acts for shutting up the Port of Boston, for indemnifying the murderers of the inhabitants of Massachusetts-Bay, and

²³⁷ Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England,” *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1922): 459-60.

²³⁸ Catharine Macaulay, *An Address to the People of England, Scotland, and Ireland, on the Present Important Crisis of Affairs* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1775), 5-6.

²³⁹ Macaulay, *An Address to the People*, 6.

changing their chartered constitution of government.”²⁴⁰ However, this was not just about the distant colonies, for in failing to speak out against the government, or to act in defence of the American colonists, the British people would be ensuring their own downfall.

She was additionally critical of the Quebec Act and the new territorial arrangement for North America, commenting that “for the purpose of enlarging the bounds where despotism is to have its full sway, the limits of that province are extended so as to comprehend those vast regions that lie adjoining to the northerly and westerly bounds of our colonies.”²⁴¹ These warnings were not just written for the purposes of entertaining a literate audience; they were to be instructive,

but should you be contented to bid defiance to the warnings of common policy, – should you be contented to be slaves on the hope that the Americas will bear the greater part of the burden of your enormous taxes, – be assured, that such an alternative will never be in your power: – No; – if a civil war commences between Great-Britain and her Colonies, either the Mother Country, by one great exertion, may ruin both herself and America, or the Americans, by a lingering contest, will gain an independency; and in this case, all those advantages which you for some time have enjoyed by your Colonies, and advantages which have hitherto preserved you from a national bankruptcy, must for ever have an end;²⁴²

She further warned that “with the loss of all those blessings you have received by the unrivalled state of your commerce, will be left to the bare possession of your foggy islands; and this under the sway of a domestic despot, or you will become the provinces of some powerful European state.”²⁴³ Macaulay’s criticisms were particularly pointed and according to historian Charles F. Mullett, she achieved a great degree of fame at the time as a noted radical female author, who put

²⁴⁰ Macaulay, *An Address to the People*, 6.

²⁴¹ Macaulay, *An Address to the People*, 7.

²⁴² Macaulay, *An Address to the People*, 26.

²⁴³ Macaulay, *An Address to the People*, 26-7.

her name in print and weighed in on the crucial questions of imperialism and despotism.²⁴⁴

Such sentiments were common among writers at the time, and also appeared in the correspondence of the Earl of Chesterfield, who, worried about militarization and a loss of civil liberties, commented to Lord Southwell that “I call our standing army now 50000 men, and they are as well disciplined and as much enemies to the civil rights of their country as the regular army can possibly be...But the military madness has infected every country in Europe...”²⁴⁵ This concern over the rise of militarism and authoritarianism in the second half of the eighteenth century, was a persistent and worrisome theme in conversation and in the literature from the period. In part, this was an important aspect of political attacks upon unpopular ministries, whereby they were a danger to the constitution and British liberties.²⁴⁶ It was, however, also reflective of the expansion of the fiscal-military state, the extended empire and broadened international warfare, as well as the frightening escalation of the National Debt.

John Dalrymple, the 5th Earl of Stair, though not entirely an anti-imperial figure, was a noted opponent of the war with America, which he considered a costly, wasteful, and futile effort. Deeply concerned with the loss of men and treasure and worried about national bankruptcy, his *Facts and their Consequences*, written in the aftermath of Yorktown, presented a somber picture of the state of the nation. He wrote “[t]he Year 1781 is now closed, and all the sad Consolation that remains for Millions squandered; for Dominions, Fleets, and Armies lost, is the Reflection that our Enemies, though so superior in all Respects, in Counsels as well as in

²⁴⁴ Charles F. Mullett, “English Imperial Thinking, 1764-1783,” *Political Science Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (1930): 563-4. The radical writer Macaulay was discussed in greater detail, within the context of the imperial crisis, in Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, “The Brood Hen of Faction: Mrs. Macaulay and Radical Politics, 1765-1775,” *Albion* 11, no. 1 (1979): 33-45. Macaulay has been more recently examined among other Enlightenment thinkers in Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²⁴⁵ Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to Lord Southwell, London, December 12, 1769, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Osborne MSS 19409. This letter was also cited in Livesey, *Civil Society and Empire*, 147, as part of Livesey's broader discussion about the challenges of territorial empire upon metropolitan civil society.

²⁴⁶ In this regard, much of the radical or oppositionary criticism was directed at the Grenville, elder Pitt, and North administrations, though the latter was not more generally scorned until the outbreak of the American war.

Arms, were yet so little enterprising; for whatever they attempted they have carried without any Resistance on our Part, either very gallant or very judicious.”²⁴⁷ He further commented that

[t]his disastrous Campaign has devoured all the Scraps that the Industry of this Jackal Commission of Accounts had provided for the lordly Lion War; and, like spendthrift Heirs, we have anticipated all the Rest; both Possession and Reversion, all is spent, all is gone. The noble Lord at the Head of the Treasury takes the Field for his financial Campaign for 1782, unencumbered with any contingent Remainder of Hope, unembarrassed with any Auxiliary of profitable Expectation, present or distant;²⁴⁸

He placed the blame for this conflict squarely upon the governing elite in Britain. They had taken this disastrous path and he notably questioned their motivations and sincerity, remarking “[a]n honourable Peace is now the Phrase in Fashion with those who guide our Councils. If by an honourable Peace, they mean a Peace adequate to our present distressful Circumstances, and to our gloomy future Prospects, they mean something; if not, nothing at all, but to keep their Places.”²⁴⁹ He was doubtful about those men who were merely “[i]nvolved by Passion and by Pride in a Contest,” and he asked “[w]hat signifies it to rant and rave about Rights which, were they as clear as they are doubtful, have been, by us the Aggressors, submitted to the Arbitration of the Sword, and are determined against us? Not the Power, not the Pre-eminence, but the Salvation, the Existence of the State are now brought into Question.”²⁵⁰

Though he was known for his pessimism, he at least hoped that enough people had grown tired of the conflict in order to bring it to an end. He argued that “[w]ith weaker Hands, and with no greater Share of Wisdom, if Causes and Effects have any Connection, what can be expected by continuing the War, but a Campaign more disastrous than the last? A losing Peace must be

²⁴⁷ John Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences, Submitted to the Consideration of the Public at Large; But More Particularly to that of the Finance Minister, and of those who are or Mean to Become Creditors to the State*, 4th ed. (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1782), 4.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 26.

²⁵⁰ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 27.

infinitely better now, than a ruinous One at the End of another unfortunate Year.”²⁵¹ However, he then made the case that, in fact, “[m]any of the Consequences of a losing Peace are speculative and remote, and may be visionary. Things may take another and a better Turn. The Ruin, which if the War continues is at Hand, is obvious, is sure.” Indeed, it was a gloomy time in Britain, yet it would have been better to accept the political and military realities than to cling to an unwinnable war with the hope that an empire could be restored. He then addressed the lingering notion that

American Independence is held out as incompatible with our holding our Sugar Islands: this is reckoned an Argument for the War not to be answered: to me, the very Contrary seems true; for without American Independence no friendly Intercourse can take place betwixt America and our Islands: consequently no Supplies of Lumber or Provisions can be received by them, without which they cannot be held with Profit by the Proprietor; and what is held unprofitably by Individuals is seldom held long. But the more than threatened Attack, and defenceless State of our Sugar Islands, has probably before this, by the Loss of them, made vain all Arguments about their Safety.²⁵²

Clearly, the British situation was impracticable at the time and the best course of action, for a whole host of reasons, would have been to pursue a policy of peace and reconciliation. For,

[p]eace costs nothing; for America is independent already; and whenever the War ceases, it is highly probable that much of the antient Intercourse betwixt this Country and her American Brethren will be renewed, perhaps on a Footing not much less advantageous than formerly; provided always that Pride, Passion, Insolence, Injustice, and Inhumanity shall cease to be, as they have hitherto been, the ruling Principles of our Conduct towards them: Public Generosity is public Wisdom: without it Success meets with no Praise, Misfortune with no Pity.²⁵³

While this was his hope for future relations between Britain and America, he skeptically remarked that “[s]uch a Change of System, if it is really meant, would be but changing Madness

²⁵¹ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 28.

²⁵² Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 28-9.

²⁵³ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 34-5.

for Folly, Lunacy for Idiotism. Our Superiority at Sea was the Charm that bound fast and harmonized the jarring Elements that composed this great but artificial Empire; that now dissolved, it crumbles into Pieces, and every varying Wind will bring sad Tidings.”²⁵⁴ He further noted that Britain should no longer attempt to continue the war, as it was lost and struggling to reverse the tide would only make the country’s own situation worse. He wrote

[t]he Line of public Policy and of public Conduct that we have to pursue, is plain and obvious: in a Situation so desperate, all (if so much) that remains in our Power is, among Evils to chuse the least: Pressed in Front by foreign Enemies, to whom we have Nothing of nearly equal Force to oppose, goaded behind by domestic Indigence, and the well-grounded Apprehensions of public Bankruptcy, and its sure Consequences, Anarchy and civil Commotion, no Peace, short of absolute Ruin, can be pronounced a bad one: all but this, is either Phrenzy, Folly, or Flattery.²⁵⁵

Acquiring a peace settlement with America to end the war that he never supported was really the best that the British could hope for by that point. He then urged Britons to consider that “[h]aving profited so little by our foreign Excursions, let us turn Homewards, and try what Precedent and Experience will do for us there.”²⁵⁶ Such an era of peace might then have allowed the state to rebuild its financial health while the domestic economy could be strengthened by improving Britain’s own infrastructure, which had been so long neglected. Within this wartime context, Stair’s political and economic criticisms were best linked with anti-imperialism.

One of the strongest advocates of American emancipation was James Anderson, who argued that “the Interest of Great Britain has been hurt by the establishment of her North American colonies.”²⁵⁷ In his lengthy treatise he consistently made the case that Britain did not benefit from maintaining its American colonies, and that the war had been a poorly conceived

²⁵⁴ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 37.

²⁵⁵ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 38.

²⁵⁶ Dalrymple, *Facts and their Consequences*, 4th ed., 19.

²⁵⁷ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 116.

disaster. In particular, he noted that Britain did not gain from the colonial monopoly and that it was a nothing more than an economic burden. So, he asked “[w]hy, then, should we take upon ourselves the troublesome and ungracious task of squeezing from them a scanty pittance, that never could be adequate to the purposes required? The Americans themselves have offered to free us of that task. No satisfactory reason has yet been given, why we should not accept their offer.”²⁵⁸ He notably suggested that “[h]ad our people, instead of going to America, remained at home, our manufacturers would have been far more numerous than at present.” Additionally,

[h]ad we been freed of the expence of protecting them, our taxes would have been the fewer, and their pressure upon industry much less severe. Had we never experienced the destructive effects of the American monopoly, our labour would have been less expensive, and our manufacturers more industrious. From all these considerations it is obvious, that our manufactures in general could have been afforded much cheaper than at present: in consequence of which they would have found a ready vent in those nations where our commerce has declined, because of the circumstances already enumerated. The probability therefore is, that our foreign trade, as well as internal commerce would have increased to a much greater degree than it has done, had it not been so our American colonies.²⁵⁹

Notably, he rejected the idea that the colonies accounted for British superiority at sea, arguing that foreign trade, more generally, was the reason. Additionally, he challenged the notion that Britain benefitted by excluding rival European powers from colonization and trade in North America, and questioned the great expenditures and drive to colonize there, writing “[b]ut supposing it could be proved that the trade thither would have been of as much consequence to those nations, or to us, as it is here supposed, would it not have been possible to have secured it

²⁵⁸ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 13-4, in the Appendix. His advocacy of ‘demonopolization’ was discussed in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 228.

²⁵⁹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 120-1.

to ourselves, by erecting proper forts along the coast, without adopting the idea of peopling the country?”²⁶⁰ He then suggested, as more economical examples,

[t]his has been done in Hudson's bay, in Africa, and in Asia, with an infinitely smaller expence and waste of people. Why might not the same have been done in America? The answer is easy. The trade with the natives would not have been worth even that expence, small as it might have been. But if the commerce with the natives was not worth the expence of strong factories along the coast, it was of small consequence who had taken possession of it. And if these desarts were to be peopled by the subjects of any European state, it has been already shewn, that the trade and manufactures of that state would be much hurt, and its internal riches and strength greatly diminished thereby. It was not therefore our interest to prevent either the French or the Spaniards from taking possession of it, and peopling it, if they had been so dispersed, we ought rather to have promoted this design, if we meant to avail ourselves of their distractions and internal weakness.²⁶¹

As a result of his lengthy and thoughtful inquiry, Anderson challenged readers to reconsider some of the most frequently argued perspectives, and deeply held beliefs, regarding the significance of the colonies to Britain.²⁶² He was probably one of the strongest anti-imperial writers of the period, particularly with regards to the American colonies. Yet, the economic aspects of his discourse in large part were closely aligned with Adam Smith's, in concluding that Britain would be better off free of America.

With the eventual loss of the American colonies, which many Britons then viewed as both an inevitable and a desirable outcome, the relationship was reformed and trade re-established. Though the new borders and American sovereignty were not always respected, the loss of the colonies spared Britain the expense of administering those territories. As individuals

²⁶⁰ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 124.

²⁶¹ Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 124-5.

²⁶² Anderson, *The Interest of Great-Britain with Regard to Her American Colonies*, 136. Here he wrote: “*That our American colonies instead of promoting the trade and manufactures of Great Britain, have tended in a most powerful manner to depress them. That instead of adding strength and stability to the empire, they have necessarily weakened it in a great degree, and exposed it to the most imminent danger. That, therefore, the settling of these colonies at first was unwise, and the subsequent encouragement that was given them highly impolitic.*”

such as Josiah Tucker and Adam Smith had previously argued, among others mentioned here, Britain then enjoyed the positive aspects of their Atlantic relationships: the economic benefits of trade with America, without the negative: the high costs and great administrative obstacles.

This perspective was notably summed up by Joseph Priestley, who wrote “[i]t is however pretty manifest, that a mother-country may injure itself by an extreme jealousy of its colonies.”²⁶³ In his more extensive assessment of the situation, he drew upon the writings of Smith, arguing

[l]ittle did Great-Britain think of the price they were to pay for their foreign colonies in North America. For to this account we must put, besides the expence of planting them (which indeed was so small as to give this country very little original claim upon them), both the expence of defending them, and that of the war in which we lost them. The war before the last, which was undertaken on account of the colonies, cost Great-Britain upwards of ninety millions. The Spanish war of 1739 was principally undertaken on their account, in which Great-Britain spent upwards of forty millions. If we call the whole only a hundred millions, and add to it the expence of the last war with the colonies and their allies, we may say that they have been the cause of our expending no less than two hundred and fifty millions. Such is the foresight and wisdom of great nations!²⁶⁴

Priestley was one of many, who, writing in the decade that followed the loss of the Thirteen Colonies, reflected upon the folly of national policies that tended towards inflaming animosities and were self-destructive. Arthur Young also remarked that “as far as the experiment of the loss of North America goes, I am justified by that vast and important fact—that a country may lose the monopoly of a distant empire, and rise from the imaginary loss more rich, more powerful, and

²⁶³ Priestley, *Lectures on History, and General Policy*, 402.

²⁶⁴ Priestley, *Lectures on History, and General Policy*, 403. This quotation partially appeared in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 197.

more prosperous!”²⁶⁵ Indeed, he and many other like-minded writers were being vindicated, as Britain was enjoying an economic windfall on account of peace, expanded trade with America, and with a noted reduction in North American administrative expenditures.²⁶⁶ He then pushed the inquiry further, remarking that “[i]f these principles be just, and that they are so is confirmed by an immense range of facts, what are we to think of a politician who declares, that the loss of Bengal... would ruin England?”²⁶⁷

Sir John Sinclair, the Scottish statistician and economist, shared many of the same sentiments as these individuals with whom he shared notable correspondences. Though Sinclair was primarily interested in financial and agricultural reform, many of his writings naturally weighed in on questions about the empire. In particular, he was concerned about the declining state of Britain in the 1780s, as noted in his memoirs: “I recollect, when I was lamenting to the Doctor [Adam Smith] the misfortunes of the American war, and exclaimed, ‘If we go on at this rate, the nation *must be ruined*;’ he answered, ‘Be assured, my young friend, that there is a great deal of *ruin* in a nation.”²⁶⁸ He thus set out to devise a plan to restore British fortunes. In his lengthy multivolume treatise, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, Sinclair offered a number of suggestions for reforming the international order as a way to put an end to an age of destructive European rivalry and warfare. Among his proposals, he suggested that the British might trade away their islands in the Caribbean to the French, in exchange for France’s

²⁶⁵ Arthur Young, *Travels During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789. Undertaken more particularly with a View of Ascertaining the cultivation, wealth, resources, and national prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (Bury St. Edmund’s: J. Rackham, 1792), 495.

²⁶⁶ Many writers at the time remarked upon the positive economic benefits that would be felt in Britain with the loss of the Thirteen Colonies and these issues have subsequently been addressed in many historical studies. See Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade*, 63-9; 80-97. Also, Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 201-9; and more recently, P. J. Marshall, “Britain Without America—A Second Empire?” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, P. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 585-90.

²⁶⁷ Young, *Travels*, 495.

²⁶⁸ Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair, Bart: With Reminiscences of the Most Distinguished Characters who Have Appeared in Great Britain, and in Foreign Countries, During the Last Fifty Years* (London: Henry Colburn & Richard Bentley, 1831), 1:390-1.

territories in Asia. This would then serve to establish zones of influence and would ideally eliminate any cause for rivalry.²⁶⁹ Sinclair's perspective had no doubt been influenced by his correspondence with Adam Smith, who was critical of his policy proposals as being too partial to Britain over the other European powers, with regards to his plan for armed neutrality.²⁷⁰

In addition to Smith, Sinclair had also known Josiah Tucker, and was heavily influenced by his work as well. Tucker had also written to Sinclair, providing some him some instruction on questions of colonial matters and international affairs:

I am happy to hear that you are returned from the Continent, full of instruction to our deluded countrymen. The right way to proceed is to mind their own affairs. We have no need to wage war with other nations, either in a commercial or martial sense; for if we sell our own goods cheaper, foreigners will certainly buy of us, and we cannot expect they would lay out their money on other terms.²⁷¹

In later commentary about the Dean, he wrote that “[t]his respectable dignitary of the church had a peculiar turn for political discussions. He was almost the only man in England who contended, that the independence of the colonies, instead of ruining England (which was the general belief, both at home and on the Continent), would ultimately prove highly advantageous to both countries, – an opinion which has been justified by the event.”²⁷² In fact, Tucker had helped to frame Sinclair's perspective on dominions, as he then continued,

[i]n fact, overgrown dominions are as injurious to a state, as corpulence to an individual. They are the source, not of strength, but of weakness. When a war breaks out, the fleets and armies of the country are employed in protecting distant possessions, instead of being used as the means of internal defence; and it is thus

²⁶⁹ Sir John Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed. (London: A. Strahan, 1803), 2:116-8.

²⁷⁰ Smith's letter to Sinclair, dated October 4, 1782, was published in Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, 1:389. This was also discussed in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 204-5.

²⁷¹ Josiah Tucker's letter to Sinclair, dated February 23, 1786, was published in Sir John Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, 1:233-4.

²⁷² Sinclair, *The Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Sinclair*, 1:233.

exposed to risks, from which it might otherwise be exempted. How far such observations may be applicable to any of the possessions of the British Crown, it would certainly be desirable that our Government should deliberately consider.²⁷³

This was the broad sentiment towards empire that would underpin his case for reform.

While his ideas were more pragmatic in nature than based upon a consistent theoretical framework, they were clearly aimed at realistically improving the geo-political situation, namely by ending colonial monopolies and removing causes for conflict. In particular, he made the case for more open trade and better relations with France, Britain's long-standing rival, despite the obvious difficulties, writing

that many obstacles must be removed, and many prejudices got the better of: and as the greater part of our past expences, has been owing to our colonial possessions in the West Indies, and in North America, which never yielded a revenue to compensate for the charges which they have occasioned; and as a war might always be carried on by this country, without much difficulty or expence, unless it became burdensome by providing for their protection, it is proper to consider, if the preceding system is found impracticable, whether it would not be politic, to propose to the different nations of Europe, and to the new states of North America, *a general colonial emancipation*.²⁷⁴

His hope was that each major European power would, at the same time and in a spirit of co-operation, grant each of their colonies independence. He argued that

[s]uch a measure, it is evident, would prevent the enormous expences, to which, in the course of future wars, this country will otherwise be subject, for the preservation of its colonies. Perhaps the very next war may see those colonies torn from us; and in the very act of losing them, we may add millions to our debts. Nay, if they are preserved, they will cost us more in the course of a single war, than all the advantages to be drawn from them will ever compensate.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:119. It was noted here in the footnotes that he had previously offered this suggestion in *La Crise de l'Europe*, a pamphlet he had published in French and circulated on the continent in 1783.

²⁷⁵ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:119-20.

Thus, the economic benefits of proactively liberating one's own colonies were obvious and would be immediately felt. He then continued,

[b]ut a saving of expence, is not the only circumstance to be considered. If the French, the Portuguese, and Spanish settlements, were emancipated, as well as ours, from the monopolising spirit, and restrictive regulations, of the countries to which they belong, an unbounded tide of wealth and commerce would flow into this country: our present burdens would then seem light and easy, and we should be enabled to discharge, with little difficulty, no inconsiderable part of them.²⁷⁶

Therefore, in addition to reducing expenditures, as a result of no longer having to pay for the administrative costs and defence of such colonies, all nations would then enjoy a significant victory bounty by ending the system of restrictive monopolies and trade barriers.

He then suggested that just as the British colonies had successfully fought and won their independence, such an outcome would be likely in the French and Spanish colonies as well. Further, how could those rivals have supported the cries of the subjugated American colonists, yet resist the same arguments as they appeared in their own colonies? Though he recognized that this plan faced much criticism throughout Europe, he suggested that it was really the only sensible way forward. In that regard, he particularly noted that “[w]ith regard to Spain, it is much to be wondered at, that the indigation [*sic*] and resentment of Europe has not long, ere now, burst forth against that imperious country. The feelings of mankind must be callous indeed, to have suffered the most fertile and valuable provinces in the world, to be so long subjected to her stern and detestable domination.”²⁷⁷ He then concluded his reformatory plan on an optimistic note, appealing to one's emotions, in writing

[m]y breast glows at the idea, that a time may possibly soon arrive, when the ships of Denmark, of Sweden, and of Russia, of Holland, of Austria, of France

²⁷⁶ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:120.

²⁷⁷ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:122.

itself, and of Great Britain, shall no longer be debarred from sailing to the coasts of Chili and of Peru, or be precluded by any proud monopolist, from exchanging the commodities of Europe for the riches of America; and when every state, in proportion to the fertility of its soil, and to the industry of its inhabitants, may be certain of procuring all the necessaries and the conveniencies of life. With such a new and extensive field opened to the exertions of mankind, what discoveries might not be expected, what talents might not break forth; to what a height would not every art and science be carried? The mind of a philanthropist, must be overpowered with the magnitude and importance of the ideas which present themselves to his view; when he can figure for a moment, mankind united together by mutual interest, and bound by the ties of an unfettered commercial intercourse, to promote the general happiness of the species.²⁷⁸

Sinclair's sentiments regarding colonial emancipation and free trade as a cosmopolitan path towards shared prosperity and universal peace had become increasingly popular in this period, among Enlightenment era economic commentators.

In a similar vein were the much better known works of the utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, who was a strongly anti-imperialist figure in the period.²⁷⁹ Most notable was his *Emancipate Your Colonies*, which was an address to the National Convention in France during the French Revolution, which explicitly called upon the new government to unilaterally grant its overseas dependencies their independence. Though this document had been written and privately circulated in 1793, it was not published until 1830. He began his treatise by calling out to

²⁷⁸ Sinclair, *The History of the Public Revenue of the British Empire*, 3rd ed., 2:123. It was mentioned here in the footnotes that this piece, which offered such suggestions towards attaining peaceful relations and promoting a cosmopolitan spirit, was originally written in 1790, prior to the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War, though to maintain the integrity of the work, it was republished unaltered at this later date (1803).

²⁷⁹ Bentham's enlightened anti-imperialism has been probably best addressed in Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies*, 25-38. Winch subsequently addressed criticisms of his assessment in his more recent article, Donald Winch, "Bentham on Colonies and Empire," *Utilitas* 9 (1997): 147-154. Bentham's critique of Pitt and British foreign policy in the period have also been addressed in Stephen Conway, "Bentham versus Pitt: Jeremy Bentham and British Foreign Policy 1789," *The Historical Journal* 30, no. 4 (1987): 791-809. Bentham was also considered among many other European Enlightenment thinkers who worried about perpetual imperial warfare at the time in Richard Whatmore, *Against War & Empire: Geneva, Britain, and France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012). He was considered among Anti-imperial Bentham had been earlier considered alongside James Mill and David Ricardo in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 251-268.

members of the assembly to consider the state of the world, and how they might avert disaster, and even improve it. He wrote

[w]ar thickens round you: I will shew you a vast resource: - EMANCIPATE YOUR COLONIES. You start: Hear and you will be reconciled. I say again, *emancipate your Colonies*. Justice, consistency, policy, economy, honour, generosity, all demand it of you: all this you shall see. Conquer, you are still but running the race of vulgar ambition: Emancipate: you strike out a new path to glory. Conquer, it is by your armies: Emancipate, the conquest is your own, and made over yourselves. To give freedom at the expence of others, is but conquest in disguise: to rise superior to conquerors, the sacrifice must be your own.²⁸⁰

Using the reformist language of the age, he urged readers to consider the value they themselves would derive from taking such an action, and how noble it would be to seize the moral authority in supporting emancipation on such a large scale.

He then posed questions regarding the value of maintaining colonies, in asking “[w]hat then should they be worth to you, but by yielding a surplus of revenue, beyond what is necessary for their own maintenance and defence? Do you, can you, get any such surplus from them? If you do, you plunder them, and violate your own principles. But you neither do, nor ever have done, nor intend to do, nor ever can do any such thing.”²⁸¹ Not only were the colonies not providing the expected revenues, but to attempt to make them do so would undermine their own professed egalitarian spirit and would likely fail anyway. He also called upon the French to consider recent British history, whereby the former had supported the cause of independence of the latter’s American colonies, but where Britain had ultimately been an economic beneficiary, in terms of trade relations. He asked “[w]ill you believe experience? Turn to the United States. Before the separation, Britain had the monopoly of their trade: upon the separation of course she

²⁸⁰ Jeremy Bentham, *Jeremy Bentham to the National Convention of France [Emancipate Your Colonies]* (London, 1830 [1793]), 1-2.

²⁸¹ Bentham, *Jeremy Bentham to the National Convention of France [Emancipate Your Colonies]*, 13.

lost it. How much less is their trade with Britain now than then? On the contrary, it is much greater.”²⁸²

Granting such colonial emancipations would be the true test as to the sincerity of leaders and theorists of those enlightened ideas that supposedly underpinned that society. He then asked, more profoundly, “[i]f hatred is your ruling passion, and the gratification of it your first object, you will still grasp your colonies. If the happiness of mankind is your object, and the declaration of rights your guide, you will set them free. – The sooner the better: it costs you but a word: and by that word you cover yourselves with the purest glory.”²⁸³ Ultimately, as Bentham and others had noted, this was something that political leaders of each European imperial power would have to decide. Would they grant independence to their overseas colonies or endeavour to maintain them at all costs? Based upon the increasingly significant and well-argued criticisms against the maintenance of such territories, many of which were uneconomical and merely sources of rivalry and conflict, the former seemed the ideal choice. Yet, despite such evidence, governments at the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century tended to pursue the opposite course.²⁸⁴ What typically followed were the predicted consequences of heightened European warfare on a scale not before seen and many explosive wars of independence, in which colonies throughout the Americas were lost anyway.²⁸⁵

As this chapter has illustrated, there were many notable individuals who questioned the nature and morality of European colonization in the Americas. There were also strongly divergent perspectives regarding the value of such overseas dominions that had to be maintained

²⁸² Bentham, *Jeremy Bentham to the National Convention of France [Emancipate Your Colonies]*, 25.

²⁸³ Bentham, *Jeremy Bentham to the National Convention of France [Emancipate Your Colonies]*, 48.

²⁸⁴ For a thorough analysis of this period following the loss of the Thirteen Colonies, see Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*.

²⁸⁵ A number of substantial histories on the many revolutions at the time, particularly within the European Atlantic empires, have been published in recent years. For instance, see David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

at great, or even debilitating, costs, while serving as a perpetual source of resentment towards rival powers. Additionally, these same territories increasingly required the use of force to maintain them within the imperial fold, which was something that many commentators warned was undesirable, as it would encourage authoritarianism abroad and at home. This presented a clear threat to the constitution and would simply not work in the long run. The Thirteen Colonies served as the greatest example of such an insurrection during this period, and the loss of these territories revealed the obvious futility of attempting to haphazardly govern lands across an ocean. Yet, while notable critics, such as Josiah Tucker or Edmund Burke, had long derided Parliamentary policies in this sphere of the empire, the many arguments and lessons they offered up, chiefly regarding foreign wars and conquests, administrative and economic burdens, as well as the practical problems of overseas governance and imperial overreach, to those who would listen, they were ultimately not wholeheartedly embraced. While theoretically these problems of dominion might have seemed soluble, or at least some of the worst effects might have been avoidable, politically that proved not to be the case, which was something that would eventually manifest with deadly consequences.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ It was perhaps not until the mid-1800s that such independent or self-governing dominion schemes fully appealed to Parliamentarians in Britain. This corresponded with the growth of informal imperial networks and fiscal retrenchment, alongside major British economic and industrial expansion. See Robert Livingston Schuyler, "The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire," *The American Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1920): 18-36. Also, see Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

CHAPTER FOUR: DROWNING IN THE MONSOONS OF ORIENTAL DESPOTISM AND IMPERIAL CORRUPTION

“Yet, if the merit of some historian does not interest posterity by the beauty of his [Charles James Fox’s] narration, this age will be as little known as the annals of the Byzantine Empire, marked only by vices and follies. What is England now? – A sink of Indian wealth, filled by nabobs and emptied by Maccaronis! A senate, sold, and despised! A country overrun by horse-races! A gaming, robbing, wrangling, railing nation, without principles, genius, character, or allies; the overgrown shadow of what it was!”

Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann (1773)¹

This chapter will address a number of issues related to the British Empire in India that concerned metropolitan Britons. Initially, it will examine a number of controversies surrounding one of the most celebrated, and conversely despised, organizations: the East India Company (EIC).² This royally chartered society, founded in 1600, grew to become one of the largest corporate and imperial entities that ever existed, relative to the size of the economy in which it operated, until its extinction in 1874. In the seventeenth century it was responsible for establishing on behalf of the rest of the English nation, a large commercial presence in Asia, which would provide the foundations for the massive expansion of (post-1707) Britain’s territorial empire in India in the eighteenth century. As such a significant body in this period it was perhaps also one of the most highly debated organizations at the same time. In Britain, countless publications circulated, much of which survives, related to EIC business, political, and

¹ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937-1983 [1773]), 23:499.

² There are many substantial histories about this organization, including K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965); John Keay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the English East India Company* (London: HarperCollins, 1993); Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006); Anthony Wild, *The East India Company: Trade and Conquest from 1600* (New York: Lyons Press, 2000).

military affairs during the eighteenth century. Notably, there were writers employed by the Company to sing its many virtues and benefits; while, conversely, there were a great number of critics, including ex-employees and other merchants, who saw, for a whole host of reasons, nothing but problems with the organization.

The debates surrounding the East India Company, and subsequently by extension, the British Empire in India, offer a remarkable window through which to view the world of eighteenth century Britain. Commercial writers, social theorists, diarists, and political observers all weighed in on many of the important Company issues, and how they affected Britain's economy and society. A number of these individuals will be presented below, to illustrate the many problems Britons perceived related to the existence of the EIC. While it is important to recognize that the period included multiple generations and significant geo-political changes, there were some notable and persistently longstanding concerns about the Company. Most important was the severe criticism that the organization enjoyed a monopoly over British trade to and from the east. Countless anti-monopoly writers argued vociferously against this privilege and perhaps even more outright defied the charter. This was to ultimately give the EIC a very powerful position, from which the British presence in India was to transition from one of commercial partner towards territorial aggressor.³ This would lead to the second major criticism of Britain's imperial policies in Asia, that against militarism and violent conquest on the Indian sub-continent, which gathered steam in the second half of the eighteenth century. It is through

³ The nature of this transition has been recently contested within the historiography. More traditionally, it was understood that the East India Company did not have the capabilities to engage in major conflict or seize Indian territories until the 1750s. This position has been illustrated in Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993); P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America c. 1750-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). However, this perspective has been notably challenged in Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Stern has suggested instead that the directors were empire-builders and that the EIC had a propensity for aggression from the very beginning.

these varying and fascinating critiques that we are offered many important examples of how eighteenth century Britons assessed their role in the world. Especially notable in the cases that follow here, however, are how many observers regarded with consternation the negative impact the EIC was inflicting on others and which was subsequently being reflected at home.

Debating the EIC Monopoly

In the first chapter the broad philosophical and economic cases against monopolies were clearly illustrated, through the works of many seventeenth and eighteenth century writers,⁴ as one of the most substantial critiques of early modern commercial policy and the establishment of formal empire. While some of the same authors also appear here, it will be to show their specific arguments against the East India Company as the quintessential imperial monopoly, and one which would prove detrimental to Britain for a variety of reasons. Attacks came from many different quarters, including individuals who did not participate in Company affairs, who felt their livelihoods threatened by its operations, and those philosophically opposed to the chartered corporation and the commercial system it fostered more broadly. Accordingly, the Company also hired writers to defend their business, and make their case throughout the press to Britons. Most prominently among these individuals were Thomas Mun, in the 1620s, and Charles Davenant, in the 1690s, who made names for themselves masterfully making the EIC case to the nation.⁵ They, along with the well-known Josiah Child, as a Company director and then governor in the late 1600s, feature significantly in English economic history in this regard.⁶ However, the chief

⁴ Most notable are Roger Coke, Sir Dudley North, Henry Martin, Adam Smith, and Arthur Young.

⁵ In this regard, the most significant publications were Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade from England unto the East-Indies* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1621); Thomas Mun, *The Petition and Remonstrance of the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading to the East Indies* (London: Printed for Nicholas Bourne, 1628); Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (London: J.G., 1664), which was published posthumously; and Charles Davenant, *An Essay on the East-India Trade* (London, 1696).

⁶ His perspectives on many economic issues of the day were most thoroughly presented in Josiah Child, *A Discourse About Trade* (London: A. Sowle, 1690).

focus here will be on prominent critics of the East India Company.

The most obvious and longstanding argument against the EIC was that the organization was constituted as a monopoly, meaning that all other private English traders were effectively excluded from trading within the Indian Ocean. This imposed, at least legally, a limitation on who could participate in sea-borne trade with the east coast of Africa, Arabia, south Asia, and the much-desired Spice Islands, or Moluccas. This would limit competition, potentially stunting the growth in English shipping and general economic development. Alongside this was the case made against the exportation of English precious metals to purchase Asian consumer goods, which would be used in Britain, but not add to the kingdom's wealth. This perspective was very much rooted in traditional economic theory, which was pro-bullion as most reflective of true national wealth and linked with early modern mercantilist perspectives on international trade and government regulation. Moreover, the Company was seen as a disruptive force toward domestic English industries and producers, particularly in clothing and its associated manufacturing processes. Indeed, there were many powerful economic critiques leveled against the EIC, even prior to its rise as a political and military power in India.⁷

One of the most thorough economic histories of the East India Company, from inception to dissolution, has come from twentieth century historian William Barber. He identified the problem of the “drain” of national treasure as being the chief concern for many Britons, especially in the formative years of Company operations.⁸ Initially, it had permission to export £30,000 worth of foreign denominated silver. This regulation was later lifted and the exportable limit was doubled in 1616, and further increased to £100,000 in 1617. By 1629, the Company

⁷ An overview of the rise of the EIC as a military power from 1688-1757 comes from Bruce P. Lenman, *Britain's Colonial Wars 1688-1783* (Harlow: UK, Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 83-110.

⁸ William J. Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 8-15.

was allowed to export £120,000 worth of gold. All restrictions were removed by 1663.⁹ So, such regulations appeared merely to hold back the tide, and then only for a time. On the other side were economic observers, traditionally labeled as bullionists, or mercantilists, who saw the outflows of gold and silver as a loss of national treasure, which would equate to a contraction in the money supply and serve as a harbinger of economic depression. While it is difficult to exactly assess the degree to which people were really engaged and concerned about this over the course of two and a half centuries, it is clear that it was an issue that was discussed periodically, particularly in periods of economic distress when an underlying tension or detente was punctuated with an outpouring of animosity for the Company. These circumstances can be seen most notably during the early 1620s, amid a severe depression and crisis in the cloth industry; the Cromwellian era; the turbulent 1680s and 1690s when aggressive Company actions in India earned them rebuke from an England in political transition; the trade crisis of the 1730s, which led to war and Walpole's downfall; and again in the fiscal crises during the era of the American Revolution, at which point criticism also turned towards the EIC as a territorial power in India and an imperial problem.

One of the earliest criticisms of gold and silver shipments as an overseas trade mechanism came in 1604 from Thomas Milles, a customs officer who had to enforce bullion regulations.¹⁰ He would likely have seen firsthand, or have helped keep track of the book entries, related to the silver moving out of the country through EIC ships. Referring to this and the fixed value of the coinage he noted that

[m]erchants to use by that meanes to serue theyr turnes of Money from one Country to another, therewith to buy wares and Merchandises: by which pollicie,

⁹ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 9.

¹⁰ Jacob Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960 [1955]), 114.

they hinder Princes and Common-wealthes, of such toles and customs as they should pay to them, vpon theyr wares and commodities that they would bring and convey into their Dominions and Countries to doe theyr feate with, if this Merchandising of Money were not: whereby also many Merchants do coullour the conueying of ready Money out of the Realme of England. And specially it is a great let, impediment & hinderance to the bringing in of Bullyon into this Realme, which all forraine Merchants were wont to doe, when the commodities of the Realme were vented & vttered at Callice, or at the Staple townes within England, before the two Societies of English Merchants began to vsupre such Liberties for the Traffick, as they pretend at this day to enjoy by lawfull Authority.¹¹

Another early critic was Robert Kayll, who, in his 1615 *The Trades Increase*, made the case that the entire structure of the trade was problematic. He argued that

[t]he East India men, not able to furnish those places they resort to, keepe out other from comming amongst them, and to looke into those parts they know not, and would giue out of their largenesse and riches entertainment to all the Marchants in the Land. Besides, how tedious and costly they, and all other Companies, make it to their owne Associates, when as out of orders, and cause of vpholding their Trade, men can neither dispose of their owne as they would, nor haue the benefite vnder a long time.¹²

Acknowledging that they enjoyed a relatively closed trade, this gave them a tremendous advantage in acquiring commodities and setting prices,

but to the buyer this is alwaies injust for that he suffereth against his will, the Common wealth being made priuate suffereth by all; this, that, the first and all the more discontentful, in that besides that al other Nations resort freely to all those places whence they keepe out their owne Country-men, the like fashion of Companies and Societies is not vsed in all Chistendome.¹³

Though there were some exceptions to this, he generally made the early case for free trade as a cure for the decline in shipping. This was a radical piece which garnered a response from Sir Dudley Digges, a Company shareholder, in *The Defence of Trade*, where he offered his support

¹¹ Thomas Milles, *The Customers Replie. Or Second Apologie* (London: James Roberts, 1604), 13.

¹² Robert Kayll, *The Trades Increase* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1615), 53.

¹³ Kayll, *The Trades Increase*, 53-4.

for their monopoly.¹⁴ Renowned historians Joyce Appleby and Miles Ogborn noted that Kayll's piece was suppressed at the time by the Archbishop of Canterbury, while the dangerous and borderline treasonous ideas he presented even earned him time in Fleet Prison.¹⁵

One of the best known debates from this period was that between Edward Misselden and Gerard de Malynes, in 1622-3, on the issue of free trade and the role of coinage. This debate took place within the context of a severe economic crisis in which joint-stock companies unusually earned the scorn of MPs in the House of Commons for their exportation of bullion.¹⁶ Coincidentally, at this time, the cloth industry was the most directly affected by the collapse of "the Cockayne project", in which English merchants attempted to bypass the Dutch in trading dyed cloths in the Baltic, and which triggered a Dutch trade embargo. Yet, and most importantly for the debate over bullion exportation, the wider depression was also tied to the lack of coin in circulation, and the Mint was having trouble acquiring silver for coinage.¹⁷ Misselden argued in his 1622 tract *Free Trade* that the East India trade was responsible for this. As a member of the Merchant Adventurers' Company he was most interested in deflecting general hostility away from monopolies and regulated organizations such as his, and towards the joint-stock ventures such as the EIC. He argued that one of the reasons for the lack of specie was the high demand for eastern goods, writing, "[t]he *speciall remote cause* of our want of money, is the great want of our *East-India stocke* here at home. Which is a matter of very great consequence, and causeth the *body* of this *Common-wealth* to be wounded sore, through the *sides* of many particular members

¹⁴ Sir Dudley Digges, *The Defence of Trade. In a Letter to Sir Thomas Smith Knight, Gouvernour of the East-India Companie, &c* (London: William Stansby, 1615).

¹⁵ Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 106. The politically sensitive case of Kayll and *The Trades Increase* was more thoroughly discussed in Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 107-116.

¹⁶ Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (New York: Verso, 2003 [1993]), 211-2.

¹⁷ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 9.

there of.”¹⁸ More generally though, “the want of money” came from “the *Trades* maintained out of *Christendome* to *Turky*, *Persia* and the *East-Indies*.”¹⁹ He carefully pointed out here that the money traded within Christendom, or in northern Europe, where his company was engaged, flowed back and forth for mutual benefit. “But,” he pointed out, “the money that is traded out of *Christendome* into the parts aforesaid, is continually issued out and neuer returneth againe.”²⁰

On this issue Malynes challenged Misselden, making the case that there were far greater factors at play. He also chided him for distinguishing between the different foreign trades as diverting English money, while only some were positive.²¹ In particular, he was concerned with the rates of exchange and the great disparities that existed, off of which merchants were able to profit. As an Assay Master at the Mint, fluctuations in the supply and value of the coins would have been a noticeable problem for Malynes. This was something he believed could be solved by royal prerogative; by re-establishing new valuations the ratios could be fixed and balances of trade would re-adjust accordingly. It was on this basis that he argued trade could best be re-established and put on a sound long-term footing. The following year saw an escalation in their debate, with Malynes’s *The Centre of the Circle of Commerce* and Misselden’s rebuttal *Circle of Commerce, or, The Ballance of Trade*. In his piece Misselden entirely reversed his position regarding the EIC, arguing that their exportation of bullion reflected the undervaluing of coins, or silver, in England relative to India. Therefore, it was beneficial for them to do so. This change of heart was likely related to the fact that he had in the months between been hired by the EIC to serve as negotiator with the Dutch. At this point, he essentially joined Mun as a writer in defending the interests of the Company, and amid the diplomatic crisis that then followed the

¹⁸ Edward Misselden, *Free Trade. Or, The Meanes to Make Trade Florish* (London: John Legatt, 1622), 13.

¹⁹ Misselden, *Free Trade*, 19.

²⁰ Misselden, *Free Trade*, 20.

²¹ Gerard de Malynes, *The Maintenance of Free Trade, According to the Three Essentiall Parts of Traffique* (London: I.L., 1622), 27-9.

Amboyna massacre of 1623. Ultimately, Misselden appears to have garnered more historical support, than Malynes, for his perspective that relative values would determine the flow of commerce, and that fixed official exchange rates were not immutable.²²

In order to preserve its status and have its charter periodically renewed the Company needed to maintain the favour of the Crown and publically make its case.²³ Writers, such as Thomas Mun, were responsible for spreading the message about the EIC's contribution to the public good. In addition to bringing much desired spices to England, the case was made that it was enhancing the wealth of the kingdom by doing so, by employing sailors, stimulating ship-building, and fueling the English economy as hub for imports and exports.²⁴ His writings were originally published in 1621 and 1628 and framed the argument in defence of the EIC for much of the century.²⁵ In part, critics were silenced by the tangible results the Company could point to, such as spices flowing in for consumption and for re-export. By mid-century the prices for goods such as pepper had collapsed.²⁶ This would prove to be a difficult period for the Company, but they were able to survive radical and republican attacks during the Civil Wars, when their royalist allies were defeated. The Cromwellian regime that followed was initially hostile to such historic Crown-sponsored and supported entities. However, the militant nationalist spirit and clear interest in new empire-building on the part of leading republicans made them dependent on its saltpetre imports and trade revenue, particularly to support the refurbished Navy, which was expected to enforce the 1651 Navigation Act and to project English strength abroad, against

²² For an assessment of the Malynes-Misselden debate see Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*, 41-9.

²³ On charter renewal, see Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 20-3.

²⁴ Thomas Mun's writings are extensively discussed in Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 10-21.

²⁵ Mun's notable writings were respectively *A Discourse of Trade from England unto the East-Indies* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1621); and *The Petition and Remonstrance of the Governor and Company of Merchants of London, Trading to the East Indies* (London: Printed for Nicholas Bourne, 1628).

²⁶ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 24-5.

rivals such as the Dutch. Despite the lapse in their charter from 1653-7, the mutual dependency between the EIC and the republican state proved enough to re-establish its monopoly.²⁷

Mun's writings remained extremely effective at defending Company interests in this period, and were re-published in 1664,²⁸ though its rise as a commercial power, into a major economic and political force, would create a more complex and contentious atmosphere in the decades that followed. From the Restoration of 1660 onwards, the Company positioned itself to profit with a new Crown partnership and by significantly diversifying its articles of trade, which would bring it into conflict with new opponents.²⁹ While many of the familiar arguments against this reconstituted monopoly would be re-iterated in slightly different forms in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, they would be associated with other, more substantial, criticisms that reflected newfound economic and political realities.

Economic historian William Barber noted that by the 1680s the East India Company was facing mounting criticism in England from many corners. Though they had long been successful at deflecting critics, they would have increasing difficulty defending their status following the Glorious Revolution.³⁰ The particularly vicious attacks in the 1690s were also highlighted by historian Philip Lawson.³¹ This was the result of many overlapping circumstances. The EIC had experienced a period of great prosperity over the preceding twenty years, even offering up to 50% dividends in some years, while enjoying the strong support of the Stuart monarchy. But, Josiah Child's costly 1686-1690 war with Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb failed disastrously to advance their military and political ambitions in India and their lack of apparent security under

²⁷ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 37-40.

²⁸ Thomas Mun, *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade* (London: J.G., 1664); published posthumously.

²⁹ One thorough history about the Company during the century following the Restoration is K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

³⁰ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 42-5.

³¹ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 42-5.

the new regime added to an air of uncertainty about the Company's future. This corresponded with a period of particular distress among the labouring population, as a result of war and the poor general economy, which especially hit hard among weavers. In England, at the time, there were perhaps just over five million people, yet estimates were that around 1,200,000 had to be supported by some measure of poor relief.³² This context proved an opportune time for EIC rivals in the Levant Company to go on the offensive, as they could fan the flames of political and general discontent. Resentful Whig financiers at the Bank of England even set up a rival Scottish East India Company in 1695, though by the end of that year the Crown forbade any English participation in this venture, at home or abroad.³³ Further, anti-monopolists, political and economic theorists, ex-employees, and outsiders all added layers of complexity towards the criticisms of EIC, alongside the persistent arguments against bullion exportations.

Most notable were concerns from many individuals whose commercial interests were threatened by the growing power of the Company. In particular, the wool manufactures, based primarily in Norwich and Canterbury feared the import of cheap textiles from India, which they believed would severely undermine their business. Yet, while these domestic producers sought protection from foreign competition, linen drapers argued for those same cheaper imports. Increasingly the Company had derived its revenues from manufactured goods such as calicoes and silks, instead of the spices that originally predominately filled the hulks of their ships. Indeed, the writings of Mun, from over two generations earlier, hardly seemed current by this time.³⁴ At the same time private traders, especially from the Levant Company, became more vocal in attempting to open up trade to Asian markets. Prohibitions in England had hurt them, as had tightening restrictions in the Ottoman Empire, and more direct EIC competition, especially

³² Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 47.

³³ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 54-5; and Stern, *The Company-State*, 159-62.

³⁴ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 30-1.

in acquiring goods such as textiles.³⁵

One prominent publication, which emerged in 1680, was *Britannia Languens*, whose authorship is ascribed to William Petyt.³⁶ A staunch critic of monopolies, Petyt strongly condemned the East India Company monopoly as being detrimental to the English economy.³⁷ He argued that such companies

must be as injurious as may be to all home-Manufactures made of our own materialls, and the vent of our other exports, because by trading on a joynt-stock they make but one buyer, and therefore have a Monopoly for all exportable goods proper only for the Forreign Nations within their Pattents, and must contract the choice of Chapmen for all other goods proper for these and other Countrys; now the confining of the Market and choice of Chapmen in any degree is dangerous and prejudiciall to Trade.³⁸

He further argued that they were particularly harmful to the manufacturing and re-export businesses that depended on foreign raw materials, for “they will sell the materialls as *dear*, and then buy the Manufacture as *cheap as they please*; which must subvert any Manufacture in a trice, especially if made of forreign materials bought cheaper by forreign Manufacturers”.³⁹ Thus, the trade was highly detrimental to domestic industries. In then assessing a trade balance sheet, and lamenting the decline of English manufactured goods for export, he noted “[t]his Cloth-Trade depending on the vent of Imported Silk at home, is already considerably checked by the continual Increase of *Imported raw Silk* from the *East-Indies*, where our *India Company* buy it with *Exported Treasure*; this year they here Imported more than ever.”⁴⁰ He explained how this severe decline in traditional English industries had adversely affected much of the country,

³⁵ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 38-40.

³⁶ Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, 11-2.

³⁷ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 51-2.

³⁸ William Petyt, *Britannia Languens, or, a Discourse of Trade* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring and S. Crouch, 1680), 129-30.

³⁹ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 130.

⁴⁰ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 185-86.

writing, “all this Manufacture of *Linnen* in *Cheshire, Lancashire*, and elsewhere, is now in a manner expired; and the Huswifley Women of England now employ themselves in making an ill sort of Lace, which serves no National or Natural Necessity; most of the rest spend their times much worse, or are idle, bringing a Scandal on themselves and their Families.”⁴¹ Within his lengthy treatise, Petyt made a strong case for why English industry was suffering and much of the country was in the doldrums. At least part of the blame rested with the EIC.

Notably, the Company was very effective at helping to cultivate the popularity of lightweight East India fabrics. They even employed English artisans to teach Indians about English design patterns.⁴² The debate between domestic producers and EIC cheap imports grew particularly fierce in the 1690s. A substantial number of publications emerged in this period opposing the Company on national and patriotic grounds, while others made the case in favour of allowing imports, or for greater economic freedom.⁴³ One such example of the protests against East India imports, and highlighting the distress of domestic manufacturing, came in the form of an anonymous pamphlet, entitled *England’s Advocate*, and directed towards the House of Commons. Written in 1699, it was framed in response to Davenant’s *Essay on the East-India-Trade*, from a few years earlier, though Davenant was not mentioned by name.

This anonymous advocate noted how Company writers were very effective at making their case, but that readers should be wary of those who “extol and magnifie *Merchandize* and *Navigation*, as the Foundation of our *Wealth* and Prosperity;”⁴⁴ for, he continued, “these eloquent Gentlemen ought to consider, that a due *improvement* of our *own Productions* by Labour and Industry, was the *Foundation* of our *Merchandize*, and still must *support* it, or it will fail in time,

⁴¹ Petyt, *Britannia Languens*, 178-9.

⁴² Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*, 166.

⁴³ Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England*, 194-7.

⁴⁴ A.N., *England’s Advocate, Europe’s Monitor* (London: George Larkin, 1699), 16.

as also our *Lands* will sink in *value*, and the *Nation* be *dispeopled*”.⁴⁵ Preserving traditional English industries was thus something he argued the nation at large needed to be concerned about, even though the Company did not appear to care, but “what better can be expected from them, who carry away our Money, and destroy our Manufactures?”⁴⁶ The Company was proving to be disruptive to established trades with the Mediterranean and Middle East as well where the English procured raw silk, which could be manufactured into final products in England. Instead, the wrought silks were displacing this previously lucrative trade. Allowing the Company to import such goods, he claimed,

is no better than Folly, if not Madness; who for the love of *India Manufactured Silks, Tinder Calico's* and *Muslins*, throw away our *Gold and Silver*, never to be recovered, when we might have good *Cambrick* and *Lawns*, and other *German Linnen*, and *Raw Silk* to employ our People, in exchange for our *Woollen Manufactures*; which because we will not, we lose both our Trade and our Money, which we might keep at home, or send abroad to better purpose.⁴⁷

Ultimately, these powerfully patriotic and emotional appeals, alongside major protests of weavers in London, would result in the Calico Acts of 1700-1 and 1720-1, which restricted the importation of finished textiles in England. Historian Jonathan Eacott has pointed out that this legislation was very much crafted as a compromise between the interests of domestic producers and the EIC.⁴⁸ These prohibitory laws were eventually repealed in 1774.

John Cary, a Bristol merchant involved in the West Indies, also produced a strong, late seventeenth century, critique of the East India Company. Though he may have been considered an advocate for empire and promoting English trading interests, particularly where they lined up with his own, he fiercely opposed this “detrimental” East-Indies trade, which he regarded as

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ A.N., *England's Advocate, Europe's Monitor*, 21-2.

⁴⁸ Jonathan P. Eacott, “Making an Imperial Compromise: The Calico Acts, the Atlantic Colonies, and the Structure of the British Empire,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (2012): 731-762.

“mischievous to the Kingdom.”⁴⁹ In making this claim, he had four criteria as to why this trade was a bad deal for England. Essentially, the EIC failed to export English products and manufactures; to import useful commodities for domestic use, either in manufacturing, or for re-export; and to encourage English navigation or sea power. So, he concluded, it “cannot be supposed to be advantageous to this Kingdom; especially when its Imports hinder the consumption of our own Manufacturers, and more especially when those Imports are chiefly the purchase of our *Bullion* or *Treasure*.”⁵⁰ According to noted economic historian Jacob Viner, Cary was perhaps the first to thoroughly discuss the concept of a trade balance, describing the significance of exports over imports, while referring positively to the “balance in our favour”.⁵¹ He did so in his assessment of all the major trade relationships England had with other nations. While most trades were considered positive, he flagged the Irish as negative and India as most unprofitable of all, as the latter was “hindring by its Silks and Calicoes the Consumption of more of our Manufactures in *Europe* than it doth take from us”.⁵²

Cary, as many writers before him, made the case that the exportation of bullion was a financial drain on England and that consumption of Indian fabrics hurt domestic manufacturing. It was a problem that he basically chalked up to vain trends in consumer fashion, which he thought could be rectified in a number of ways. One would be through the force of law, whereby the nobility would “encourage” and “promote the wearing our own Manufactures”;⁵³ in part through the discouragement of Indian silks and calicoes, arguing, “I cannot see what reason may be given against a total Prohibition of their being worn in England, which will be the quickest

⁴⁹ John Cary, *An Essay on the State of England* (Bristol: W. Bonny, 1695), 47.

⁵⁰ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 48.

⁵¹ Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, 10.

⁵² Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 130.

⁵³ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 58.

way to have them disused.”⁵⁴ On the other hand he advocated greater productivity in English manufacturing, supplied with American cotton. He suggested financial incentives for the best spinners of cotton and wool in the counties, which might “excite Industry and Ingenuity, and no doubt we might in time make Calicoes equal in their sorts with those Imported from *India*, and afford them as cheap as that Company now sells them, enough not only for our home Expence, but also for Exportation.”⁵⁵ In either case, he sought to “perswade the Gentry of *England* to be more in Love with our own Manufactures, and to encourage the wearing them by their Examples, and not of Choice to give Employments to the Poor of another Nation whilst ours starve at home.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, he showed a keen interest in attempting to corner the market in wool, through an arrangement to acquire it from Spain, and to allow the Dutch to import it, in exchange for “relinquishing to them our part of the *East-India* Trade”.⁵⁷ Thus, he set himself up as a defender of domestic industry, supported by European and Atlantic trading networks.

Among these great many commercial writers, the crucial economic debates over EIC mercantile policy in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Britain, that broke through traditional discourses, were perhaps best explored through the heterodox writings of Roger Coke and Henry Martin. Both made significant, though seldom recognized, contributions at the time towards broadening the discussions of political economy, in part by incorporating philosophy and mathematics in assessing commerce, and in so doing helped to pioneer its development as a distinct field of inquiry. Coke wrote on many different subjects, though his attacks on the EIC will be the main focus here.⁵⁸ His treatises from the Restoration period and shortly after the Glorious Revolution display a radical approach to commercial policy, which form part of a much

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 60.

⁵⁶ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 65.

⁵⁷ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 136.

⁵⁸ Coke’s more general discussions about monopolies and the Navigation Acts were considered in the first chapter.

broader and ongoing debate over mercantilism and imperial policy in early modern Britain.

Henry Martin explored many of the same issues as Coke, though through a specific discussion of the East India trade, to point out its benefits according to the new “manner of the *Political Arithmetick*”, but he conceded that his perspective was “directly contrary to the receiv’d Opinions.”⁵⁹ These two individuals presented perhaps the best economic critiques of the EIC until James Steuart and Adam Smith, in the 1760s and 1770s, in which they addressed the dual and intertwined problems of monopoly and governance of newfound territorial empire in India.

This period was of crucial importance when it came to intellectual inquiry in all economic matters, particularly with respect to domestic conditions and the relationship with the broader empire. Yet, few individuals at the time made unambiguously the case for both unlimited free trade and the abolition of monopolies, other than Coke or Martin, and continuity was generally favoured over embracing new ideas. It is also important to note that Martin’s *Considerations* was published anonymously at the time, and remained in the historical record without an author. Scholars had long been puzzled by this document, which was fairly extensive and comprehensive in nature and many actually wrote that his analysis on some issues surpassed that of Adam Smith and many of his peers, from generations later.⁶⁰ Viner had noted it as one of the most important treatises to defend free trade and placed the author in the same distinguished category as Sir Dudley North, Isaac Gervaise, and George Whatley.⁶¹ In fact, through the early twentieth century it was noted for its impressive nature though there was doubt as to whether

⁵⁹ Henry Martin [Martyn], *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade* (London: Printed for A. and J. Churchill, 1701), i of the preface. Also, a thorough assessment of Martin’s pamphlet comes from Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 57-65.

⁶⁰ Douglas A. Irwin, *Against the Tide: An Intellectual History of Free Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 56-7; Christine MacLeod notably points out that McCulloch had written that Martin’s analysis of the division of labour was unsurpassed by Smith. Additionally, she noted that Macaulay wrote that his pamphlet was far superior to Davenant’s two tracts. See Christine MacLeod, “Henry Martin and the authorship of ‘Considerations upon the East India Trade,’” *Historical Research* 56, Issue 134 (1983): 223.

⁶¹ Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, 92.

Martin had written it, as Marcus Arkin pointed out in the mid-1950s. Arkin also noted how it had even been ascribed to North for a time.⁶² Today, however, Martin is widely acknowledged as responsible for it, since the discovery of a letter from Awnsham and John Churchill to John Locke in which they sent him a draft for his perspective, while identifying Martin as the author.⁶³

Yet, despite the fact that Martin's writings may have represented a major break with more traditional economic discourse at the start of the eighteenth century, it had no visible impact. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the extent to which he actually believed what he wrote, considering his change of view, away from a radical point of view, on many of these issues.⁶⁴ The reason for this was that his articles from a decade later, for *The Spectator* and *The British Merchant; or Commerce Preserved*, reveal a notable change of heart, particularly on the issue of free trade. To what extent this was a genuine change of philosophy or simply a self-serving political move we may never know, though the evidence certainly points heavily toward the latter. While Martin may very well have changed his mind about the EIC, it seems more likely that a political appointment with a financial incentive was sufficient to at least publically change his tune. This likely also contributed to the confusion about the authorship, considering that those familiar with his later writings would have had to make a considerable intellectual leap in connecting such different perspectives to one source.

Wading into longstanding debates over EIC imports and bullion exportation, and in sharp contrast to the previous authors, Martin fiercely argued against their objections and systematically refuted them. He was firm in his belief that the East India trade was beneficial for the kingdom and so his argument was how best to expand that trade. He was writing in 1701,

⁶² Marcus Arkin, "A Neglected Forerunner of Adam Smith," *South African Journal of Economics* 23, Issue 4 (1955): 300.

⁶³ MacLeod, "Henry Martin and the authorship of 'Considerations upon the East India Trade,'" 223.

⁶⁴ Andrea Maneschi, "The Tercentenary of Henry Martyn's Considerations Upon the East-India Trade," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 24, Issue 2 (2002): 246-7.

when the Calico Acts had just come into force, which effectively prohibited the importation of manufactured clothing from the east, other than for immediate re-exportation. He rejected the idea that these prohibitions would be beneficial, making the case “That the *East-India* Trade cannot destroy any profitable Manufacture, it deprives the People of no business which is advantageous to the Kingdom...” or that “which we shou’d wish to be preserv’d.”⁶⁵ He explains the familiar argument that people should not be forced to pay artificially higher prices for goods than they would otherwise pay, and that the special protection granted to the wool manufacturers should be ended. He recognized that dislocations in employment would result, but argued that those people were inefficiently employed anyway, for “[t]o imploy to make Manufactures here, more Hands than are necessary to procure the like things from the *East-Indies*, is not only to imploy so many to no profit, it is also to lose the labour of so many Hands which might be imploy’d to the profit of the Kingdom.”⁶⁶ In order to illustrate his point he then employed the methodology of *reductio ad absurdum* arguing that the navigation of the rivers in the country had not been destroyed in order to help serve the shipping interests in the carriage industry.

Martin did note that there would be changes in the industry and while some would lose their jobs this would only be temporary and for the long-term greater good. He argued that in fact “the *East-India* Trade is the most likely way to make work for all the People, by inlarging their business in the present, by being the cause of setting on foot new imployments for the People.”⁶⁷ His argument follows that people will find new and real productive employment and be able to purchase and enjoy textiles at a lower price than ever before. Beyond that, the savings would be a benefit and allow capital formation and the development of other industries. It is also important to note that his brother, Richard, was a linen draper and was hurt by these prohibitions, since

⁶⁵ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 49-50.

⁶⁶ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 54.

⁶⁷ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 60.

people in his industry had to pay the higher prices for English manufactures.⁶⁸ So, on this issue he was sympathetic to the trade in general, but not towards the difficulty faced by the EIC.

On the related issue of the exportation of bullion to pay for the cheaper eastern products, he made a notable argument based on the premise that value is subjective. He wrote “[t]o Export Bullion for *Indian* Manufacturers, is to exchange less for greater value; it is to exchange Bullion for Manufacturers more valuable, not only to the Merchant, but also to the Kingdom.”⁶⁹ Despite the claims that English manufacturers could not compete with the cheaper imports, he believed “[t]hat the Kingdom is a gainer by this Exchange; the Manufactures return’d from *India* for Bullion, are not only better than those that might be exchange’d in *England*, or abroad, for so much Bullion; they may also themselves be exported and sold for more in Foreign Markets.”⁷⁰ While on the surface, this argument would appear to be a defence of the EIC, as writers like Child also opposed import restrictions, and, therefore, interests aligned somewhat on this issue, Martin’s case ran much deeper in defending trade, not established privileges. Additionally, his arguments related to subjective value and measuring wealth according to productivity, instead of by hordes of bullion, would later be made most prominently by classical economists.

These sorts of discussions relating to the balance of trade and the associated inflows and outflows of goods or bullion were to continue well through the eighteenth century as well, and would remain part of the discussion of the East India Company. Referring to the established ratio of fifteen times the amount of silver to gold in existence, which many argued determined their natural monetary value, Thomas Prior noted how “THIS Proportion of Gold to Silver has of late Years been considerably altered by the Trade to the *East-Indies*, which carries thither near a

⁶⁸ Maneschi, “The Tercentenary of Henry Martyn’s Considerations Upon the East-India Trade,” 247.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 12-3.

⁷⁰ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 15.

Million yearly in Silver, and thereby creates a Scarcity of it in *Europe*.”⁷¹ He then further argued that “if so much Treasure shall flow for any considerable Time in the same Channel, it may put an End to that Trade”.⁷² The logical conclusion, then, would be that with the metal supply diminished, its price would be revalued much higher, which would lead to inflows of silver to England. Though highlighting the fact that the EIC was disrupting the supply balance of the metals, they were in this case merely the acting agent, in what is called the price–specie flow mechanism, through which the pendulum of trade balances would swing from one extreme to the other, something that was more thoroughly described by David Hume.⁷³

Jacob Vanderlint, writing in the 1730s, also impressed upon readers the importance of having a favourable balance of trade. However, he cautioned that this would increase the supply of money, as gold and silver flowed into the country, and, in turn, prices, which would raise the cost of English manufactured goods. His response was that people should try to hoard their wealth, or keep it for non-monetary purposes, such as the nobility did when they adorned their clothing or houses with the precious metals.⁷⁴ In this regard, he showed admiration both for them and the Indians for their practice of burying money they earned in trade. However, he noted that he only supported this to a point, writing

I would by no means have us follow their Example of burying our Money, any further, than that every Man should be his own Banker, that is, I would have no publick Banking any ways encouraged; nor any Companies ever incorporated; because, besides many Evils that necessarily adhere to all trading Corporations, their Stock and Bonds have the same Effects as Banking, viz. operating two Ways

⁷¹ Thomas Prior, *Observations on Coin in General with some Proposals for Regulating the Value of Coin in Ireland* (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1730), 13.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Hume discussed this especially in his fifth discourse, “Of the Balance of Trade”, in David Hume, *Political Discourses*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: R. Fleming, 1752), 79–100; it was also cited in Viner, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, 84; for a more recent discussion of Hume’s political economy see Carl Wennerlind and Margaret Schabas, eds., *David Hume’s Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁷⁴ Jacob Vanderlint, *Money Answers all Things: or, an Essay to Make Money Sufficiently plentiful Amongst all Ranks of People* (London: Printed for T. Cox, 1734), 93–4.

at the same time, in their Trade, and in our Markets; so that any thing can always be bought with them, just as if such Paper were Gold and Silver; I say, I would therefore have none of these Things encouraged; and then if Property were but sufficiently diffused amongst the People in general, we might sleep very safe with large Sums under slender Fastenings; for it is Necessity which makes Thieves.⁷⁵

With further regard to the assessment of trade flows, he did not particularly blame the Indians for the distress in English commerce, but simply sought to explain the process, and asked the reader “[w]hat is it therefore, which infatuates us and other Nations to such a Degree, as to carry the *Indians* almost all our Silver?”⁷⁶ He then proceeded to explain, simply, citing the second edition of Daniel Defoe’s 1730 work,⁷⁷ that Indian and Chinese manufactured goods offered greater varieties and were cheaper; this promoted their consumption and was made possible by low wages there.⁷⁸ He also noted that it made good sense for Indians to want European silver as payment of their goods, writing, “[t]he *Indians* are so politick, as to take only or chiefly Silver, because it’s next to impossible it should ever be so plentiful, as to reduce its Value in respect of Gold, which to be sure they know to be continually growing so plentiful in Europe, as to lower its Value in respect of Silver”.⁷⁹

In this he was pointing to the central issue of the monetary system and fixed exchange rates, which had earlier been identified by Erasmus Philips, whom Vanderlint also cited. Philips, in his *State of the Nation*, from 1725, and republished in 1726, had noted the diminished stock of silver available for coining at the mint. However, he wrote “[t]he great Scarcity of this Commodity we laboured under a few Years since, was owing to the too great Value we put on Gold in Proportion to Silver, and not so much to the Exportation of that Metal for the *East-India*

⁷⁵ Vanderlint, *Money Answers all Things*, 95.

⁷⁶ Vanderlint, *Money Answers all Things*, 96.

⁷⁷ Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for Charles Rivington, 1730).

⁷⁸ Vanderlint, *Money Answers all Things*, 96.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Trade, as some have imagin'd.”⁸⁰ His perspective revealed a great deal more sympathy for the EIC than many other writers. Though he also acknowledged the other side, writing, “I shall not contend with those that say that this Commerce is not carried without a Loss of Silver to us; but then it must be considered too that we only lose in Proportion to the rest of *Europe*, every nation bearing some share in the general Loss, and ours perhaps less than any other.”⁸¹ He then continued, “[i]t is not unlikely but that of the Silver that has been brought into *Europe* since 1602, there has been above one hundred and fifty Millions buried in the East-Indies.”⁸² Yet, he qualified this concession with the arguments that such relative rises or declines in precious metals stockpiles would be reflected in prices, and that real wealth existed not in their quantity, but in the productive capacity of a society to earn them in the first place and to acquire more. So, while he agreed that much of the nation’s silver had flowed out of the country, the inflows of gold, which were greater in terms of relative value, reflected the fact that overall they ran trade surpluses. This meant that the trade deficit with India, reflected in silver outflows, should not be so concerning to observers, as it was only part of England’s much broader trade networks.

Many different factors motivated people to write pamphlets, either for, or against, the EIC and on the question of monopolies, in this period. Competitors wanted the institution broken up, and many interlopers, or private traders, some of whom had worked for and were dismissed by the Company, clearly had personal axes to grind. In response, East India Company officials, most notably Josiah Child or supporters such as Charles Davenant, wrote to defend the privileges they enjoyed. They employed the language of defending the national interest and emphasized the importance of the trade for its economic and political significance. One of the best examples of

⁸⁰ Erasmus Philips, *The State of the Nation, In Respect to her Commerce, Debts, and Money*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Woodman and D. Lyon, 1726), 56.

⁸¹ Philips, *The State of the Nation*, 2nd ed., 6-7.

⁸² Philips, *The State of the Nation*, 2nd ed., 7. He was also cited in Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944), 17.

this contentious struggle comes through in the story of the 1683-5 Thomas Sandys trial.⁸³

This was an exceptional legal battle between free traders and the might of the EIC and royal prerogative, which was specifically built around the rights to trade with foreigners and the ability of the Company to seize interloper property. Notably brothers Henry and John Pollexfen defended the interlopers in this case. The older Henry, later named a chief justice, argued that the joint-stock corporation was “[a]n invisible body, subsisting only in *intelligential legis*, a body politic without a soul or conscience,”⁸⁴ which meant that working with it was “a kind of dealing with spirits”⁸⁵. At the same time, its members possessed tremendous power as “ingrossers and monopolizers,”⁸⁶ which implied a charge of illegality under common law, but it could not really be held accountable. Ultimately, the outcome was likely never in doubt, as Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys sided with the EIC, arguing it effectively operated by permission, and as an extension, of the Crown. It was important to note though, that the organization had been justified, at least from a legal standpoint, as a public good, maintaining infrastructure and public order to facilitate trade, and as such could not be considered a monopoly.⁸⁷ While this would not stop critics from decrying the organization as such, it speaks to the fact that the concept ran counter to the sensibilities of many English commentators and jurists in that it was indefensible by law.

Despite the often parochial nature of the debate over the East India Company, broader and interconnected issues of corruption, liberty, and imperialism typically emerged in this period. Indeed, the many critiques from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries form

⁸³ An overview of the proceedings in what was called “The Great Case of Monopolies” comes from Thomas Bayly Howell, comp., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors* (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), 10:371-554. The case is also discussed in Marguerite Eyer Wilbur, *The East India Company and the British Empire in the Far East* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973 [1945]), 133-4; as well, a thorough assessment comes from Stern, *The Company-State*, 46-60.

⁸⁴ Howell, comp., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings*, 10:436.

⁸⁵ Howell, comp., *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings*, 10:431.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Stern, *The Company-State*, 57.

a significant, and enlightened, response to a gradual transformation of the Company and its affairs, as it transformed from a commercial entity into a sovereign territorial power. In particular, concerns shifted from trade restrictions and favouritism towards EIC militarization and political involvement in Asia, with the support and encouragement of the Crown and Parliament. The building of fortifications, initiated by Child, was justified on the grounds of securing English property and trade, in a precarious environment, but this also provided the means for territorial expansion.⁸⁸ As they then increasingly came into conflict with local rulers, Barber wrote, “[i]ts enemies in England charged the Company (with ample justification) with military adventurism which had stained the national honour and placed the legitimate trade in jeopardy.”⁸⁹ Indeed, many had come to see the EIC as part of a “sinister ‘military-mercantile complex’.”⁹⁰

Here is where some of Coke’s most poignant accusations are directed, at the Company directors and Child in particular. He refuted the arguments that the maintenance of EIC forts and forces in India were a necessary pre-condition to trade in the region. “This is absolutely false,” he wrote, “for then Interlopers could not Trade to the East-Indies,”⁹¹ and he further claimed that the trade had flourished much more before the time of Cromwell when it was freer. He continued to argue that in fact even “the Forts of St. *George* and *Bombay* are of no use to the Company in this Trade, and are out of the way in the *East-India* Trade, where neither the Company, nor any other have Trade, but only serve as Marks of their Principallities [*sic*], to assume a Sovereign power of making War and Peace, and Establishing a Tyranny over their Fellow Subjects.”⁹² It

⁸⁸ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 43; 46.

⁸⁹ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 44.

⁹⁰ The term was used by Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 45.

⁹¹ Roger Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation of the Coyne of England, and how the East-India Trade may be Preserved and Encreased* (London: Printed for Roger Clavel, 1696), 43.

⁹² *Ibid.*

was also noted by many that the expenses for such defence purposes had ballooned from £100,000 to £1 million between 1681 and 1698.⁹³ Yet, so long as EIC political activity stirred up animosities between local rulers in India, or they would engage in hostilities with independent traders or their other European rivals, the precarious nature of the trade would likely not improve but actually worsen, regardless of the money poured into their military. Critics would increasingly be able to make this two-pronged attack on the Company: that they inhibited trade and unnecessarily created enemies. Usually such criticisms were leveled on a specific case by case basis, though a broader and more general discussion about the nature and existence of monopolies and their connections with early modern empire-building would emerge from those.⁹⁴

Coke, among others, made the point that the Company represented England badly abroad since it was inept in diplomacy and unaccountable to the King. He recognized the importance of working relationships with Indian Princes “upon whom the *East-India* Company have made such unjust Wars, and robb’d their Subjects”.⁹⁵ Unwinding the Company would help “vindicate the *English* Nation from the Odium hereby brought upon it, for these Princes do not understand that this Company is a Faction, which have rent themselves from the Body of the *English* Nation, and of all others are their greatest Enemies.”⁹⁶ This was an important point he alluded to a number of times, that the company had become an enemy to many in India, and yet it also represented an enemy to all English outside of the organization. In his *Reflections*, he pointed out how ironically “the Company have not been pleased to make War upon any other Nation but the *English* for

⁹³ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 49.

⁹⁴ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 38-40. Also, see Stern, *The Company-State*, 83-99; and Philip J. Stern, “Companies” in *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, eds. Philip J. Stern, and Carl Wennerlind (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 177-95.

⁹⁵ Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation*, 41.

⁹⁶ Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation*, 41-2.

Trading to the *East Indies*; yet they were pleased to make War, without any Declaration, or Cause, upon the King of *Syam*, and the *Mogull*".⁹⁷ Not only had they made war in Asia, but he also saw the institution as being locked permanently at war with the rest of the English nation.

On the issue of the volume of East India trade, writers argued that it was less than it might otherwise have been, if the monopoly privileges did not exist. In fact Company directors increasingly spent resources, and perhaps an inordinate amount of time, suppressing private trading, instead of focusing their efforts on expanding their own commercial abilities. Coke identified blatant waste, fraud, and outright theft among officials, which stemmed from the very corrupt nature of the institution. "In *India* they erect Courts of Admiralty, and confiscate their fellow Subjects ships, Goods, Guns and Amunition, who are not of their Company, and imprison their persons during pleasure, to say no Worse; and assume the Royal Authority, in making War and peace".⁹⁸ Despite the growth of the Company in this period, though, the general benefits appeared to be muted. For, in much the same way the African trade had suffered, so too had Asian trade, which was reflected in the dramatic price increases on imported goods. Coke wrote

[b]efore *Cromwell* erected the New East-India Company, I appeal to all the Merchants now living in *London*, except those of the *East-India* or *African* Companies, whether when the Trade was free, the *English* Merchants did not vend double more of our Manufacturers, and at much higher prizes then since; and whether the returns of *Callicoes*, *Musling*, *Neckcloths*, *stain'd* and *striped Stuffs* and *Silk*, and other things except Pepper, were not sold for 1/5 of what the Company now sell them.⁹⁹

Here he made the familiar argument that goods supplied by monopolies will cost more than when there are competitive pressures. He did not, however, address in any great detail the volume of legal trade, black market goods, or seventeenth-century inflation.

⁹⁷ Roger Coke, *Reflections upon the East-Indy and Royal African Companies. With Animadversions, concerning the Naturalization of Foreigners* (London, 1695), 7.

⁹⁸ Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation*, 37.

⁹⁹ Coke, *A Treatise Concerning the Regulation*, 36.

John Cary also disliked the distinct structure of the trade, which he argued was organized for the benefit of a select few. He inquired into “the Wisdom of the Nation to limit this Trade to an exclusive Company...to turn it into a Monopoly by Law, a thing very contrary to the Genius of the People of *England*, and seems to barr the Freedom and Liberty of the Subject.”¹⁰⁰ He then compared the English situation with the Dutch, whom he regarded as possessing a great number of advantages, including the trade with Japan and a surplus. Furthermore, he complained of the “narrow Foundation” of Company participants, as it was “limited to one City exclusive of all others”.¹⁰¹ As the EIC was a London-based trade operation, and all others were legally excluded, this was notably a central argument from outsiders, such as Bristol-based merchants like Cary himself. Constituted as a limited joint-stock company, it also gave participants a considerable advantage in City money markets, effectively crowding out others in “[g]randeur...which must be paid by the Nation, whereon,” Cary argued, “that Monopoly to be a Tax”.¹⁰² Further, he challenged the nature of their organization and Asian operations, writing about Company

Forts Castles and Soldiers to defend their Interests in *India*, but I cannot see the use of them, for either they are thereby defended against the Natives, or the *Dutch* their Competitors; the former have no reason to quarrel with them, for bringing them a Trade so highly their Advantage as the purchasing their Product and Manufactures with Money, especially if they pay for what they buy; And as for their Competitors the *Dutch*, if they were not better defended against them by our Fleets at home, and the Protection of the Princes they trade with, than by all the Force they have there, the Trade had been but ill-secured, and must have sunk long ago; Only those great Words serve to hold us amused, whilst their Guineas in the two last Reigns were the Support of their Charter.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 61.

¹⁰¹ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 64.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Cary, *An Essay on the State of England*, 64-5.

His arguments here were similar to Coke's, on monopolies, as both viewed them as a hindrance to greater trade and investment.¹⁰⁴ However, they diverged on questions of consumption and protectionism, where Cary presented a more traditional, mercantilist, perspective.

Over half a century later, Josiah Tucker offered up a comparable perspective, in questioning the necessity of forts and military installations as a way to secure a distant trade, in his 1755 *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*. Tucker, a noted critic of monopolies and imperialism, wrote in his treatise "[i]t is not so clear a Point, that any Forts are necessary, if *National Commerce* is the only thing aimed at."¹⁰⁵ Then, he asked,

[t]o what *Commercial* Uses are these Forts to be applied? If they are in order to plant a Colony; – then the having a few Forts, without making farther Settlements, is only being at a continual Expence to answer no End. If they are to awe and bridle the Natives, It would be difficult to shew, what Advantage can accrue to Trade by insulting and disobliging the People you trade with: And sure I am, that that Shopkeeper would be deemed a strange kind of Creature, who would go and *bully* all his Customers, in order to bring Custom to his Shop.¹⁰⁶

His questions reflected the fact that the use of force, or even the threat of violence, through intimidation, was hardly a necessary part of doing business, provided the participants were willingly engaged. If, however, the forts were designed merely to showcase Company power and exclude others, rather than facilitate trade, then that was an entirely different question. In that regard, he further inquired as to their efficacy, asking

[d]o these Forts prevent any Nations whatever from trading, if they have a mind to trade? Do the *English* Forts, for Example, prevent the *French*, or the *French* the *English* from trading to *India*? Not at all. Nay, those European Nations which have not one Fort, find the Way to trade as well as others; witness the *Ostend* Company formerly; and the *Embden* and *Gottenburg* Companies at present. Moreover the *English* themselves have no Forts in *China*; – tho' the Country itself

¹⁰⁴ The broader critique of monopolies was addressed in the first chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (Bristol, 1755), 94.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Tucker was also cited in Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850*, 119.

is at a much greater Distance, and our Trade thither of more Extent and Importance; and though the same Pretence might serve against the *Mandarins of China*, as against the *Nabobs of India*.¹⁰⁷

Here, Tucker effectively challenged the longstanding economic arguments in favour of the construction and maintenance of Company forts, making the case that they were hardly necessary and were not really effective anyway. He then pointed to more plausible reasons for the existence of such forts, writing,

[b]ut indeed, the very Notion of having Forts for the Purposes of Commerce (where no Colonies are intended) is extravagant and foolish: For either these Forts must be so numerous and strong, as to oblige the Natives to submit to the Will and Pleasure of their Commanders; or else it is absurd to suppose, that on a Coast of perhaps a thousand Miles extent, half a Dozen little Forts, scattered up and down, can prevent the Natives from trading with those Customers, which will use them best. In short, the only Use of Forts is *Perquisites, Jobbs, and Salaries*; viz. *Perquisites* to the Clerks, Factors, and Supercargoes; *Jobbs* to the Directors; and *Salaries*, with all their Appendages, to the Governors, Sub-Governors, and so forth.¹⁰⁸

In Tucker's assessment, such fortifications were hardly effective at helping corner the India trade, but rather served as an unnecessary expense and likely as military provocations, of Indians and other Europeans. Indeed, forts appeared to serve as little more than a way to aggrandize Company power in the region. This issue was a persistent concern among critics of the EIC. Yet, while such arguments may not have been met with sufficient responses from Company writers and advocates, to silence such criticism, these bases of EIC operations on the subcontinent were only expanded and more heavily militarized over the course of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹

The problematic issue of EIC officials acting as rulers instead of merchants, engaging in

¹⁰⁷ Josiah Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes* (Bristol, 1755), 94-5.

¹⁰⁸ Tucker, *The Elements of Commerce, and Theory of Taxes*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ G. J. Bryant, *The Emergence of British Power in India, 1600-1784: A Grand Strategic Interpretation* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2002).

bribery, corruption, and murder, had also been explored by the radical Martin, who wrote similarly, in the early eighteenth century,

'Tis reasonable to believe, that a Company cannot trade so much to the publick Benefit; a Company of Merchants trading with a Joint-stock, is but one only Buyer, one only Seller; they manage their Trade with the pride and charge that become the State of Kings; they expect to be follow'd by the Market, and therefore never stir beyond the Warehouse, whither if Customers come, they are forc'd to wait till the Auction is ready to begin.¹¹⁰

The contrast he showed was that “in an open Trade, every Merchant is upon his good Behaviour, always afraid of being undersold at home, always seeking out for new Markets in Foreign Countries; in the mean time, Trade is carried on with less Expence.”¹¹¹ So, he pointed out that the Company may benefit from its privileged position, but customers and others clearly lost out by this arrangement, in what appears to be a case of concentrated benefits and dispersed costs.

An interesting episode in East India history played out within the decade that followed. A second organization, the English Company trading to the East Indies, was incorporated in 1698 to compete with the EIC, forming a legal oligopoly.¹¹² It was intended as a Whig alternative, supported by former financiers of the Scottish Company, tied to the Bank of England, and backed by the new government to engage in East India trade, in a deal that loaned the Crown £2 million at 8%. However, its independent existence would be short-lived, as the old Company directors bought up £380,000 worth of the new Company's £2 million stock to become the largest shareholders, allowing them to influence, or restrict, its operations.¹¹³ Martin was moderately sympathetic to this organization, since it helped to slightly break up the then Tory monopoly that had been closely aligned with the Stuart regime, but he did not see it as the

¹¹⁰ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 20-1.

¹¹¹ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 21.

¹¹² Arkin, “A Neglected Forerunner of Adam Smith,” 302-3.

¹¹³ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 54-5; and Stern, *The Company-State*, 156-8, 160-7.

ultimate solution to ongoing problems. Though it helped to increase the amount of shipping between India and Britain, it was a reflection of, and further aggravated, political and economic tensions. He rejected EIC pleas that the new Company had affected their profit margins, writing “of the two Companies Trading one against another, it must be said, That the *East-India-Trade*, the more open, and the closer driven, must needs import more Profit to the Kingdom, and less disturb the *English Manufactures*.”¹¹⁴ He continued “’Tis very probable the profit of an open Trade is a great deal less in proportion to the Stock employ’d in it, and therefore the Merchant that feels the difference, will be very ready with his Complaints,” however, “[t]his then will be the consequence of the East-India Trade, laid more open and closer driven; the profit will be less in proportion but more in quantity.”¹¹⁵ So, he argued, a more open and competitive trade would provide more opportunities, despite diminishing margins for participants.

Despite still enjoying a commanding control of the trade, EIC officials resented upstart competition, and serious concerns about both chartered companies persisted. Martin explained how “’tis every day insinuated, That the late Act of erecting a new Company, was gain’d by Violence and Injustice; that it is continu’d only for the sake of the Loan to the Government,”¹¹⁶ and how the EIC wanted to take it over or shut it down. He then more deeply explored these relationships and the rage of party of his day, for, “What Heats and Animosities have been caus’d by this Division? What Distractions in the Publick Counsels? Our Elections are not free, neither our Debates of Parliament. The Publick Business is very often at a stand; every one is engag’d on the side of the one or the other Company.”¹¹⁷ These struggles, he maintained, were not in the best interests of the kingdom, and left them vulnerable to outside attack. Further, he

¹¹⁴ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 19.

¹¹⁵ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 25.

¹¹⁷ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 26.

did not buy claims of politicians and company officials to be working in the public interest; with respect to the feuds and stock-jobbing he wrote “’Tis in vain to forbid the thing by Laws; Laws are eluded by the subtlety and cunning of Men; the thing is practis’d more than ever. To break both Companies, is not only to forbid the Corruption, but to tear it up by the very Roots.”¹¹⁸ By ridding the country of these privileged organizations, he claimed that tensions “will be remov’d, our Breaches heal’d, the Kingdom once again in peace.”¹¹⁹ On the whole, he made a convincing case that the nation would be far better off without either of these chartered organizations, as English trade would increase relative to their European rivals, thus creating new opportunities, and a severe political and economic irritant would be removed. Yet, this political experiment was not to last long as history took a different course. The smaller company was consumed by the EIC in 1709; with a renewed monopoly granted for this “new” united Company its power was thus reinforced, and later enhanced by subsequent charters, through the eighteenth century.¹²⁰

Few writers in this period would dispute, in abstract terms, the overall importance of trade. However, personal interests and rivalries often dominated the discussions. With respect to the mercantile interests, there was a broad consensus that the trade to India, in itself, was or could be positive for England. Opposition was more often directed towards the sinister nature of monopolies and particular disdain towards the East India Company, and its directors. In turn, EIC officials penned arguments espousing the great benefits of foreign trade, but far from arguing for free trade, the likes of Josiah Child and others were only interested in their own freedom to trade, without competition. On the other hand, many domestic producers and their

¹¹⁸ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 30.

¹¹⁹ Martin, *Considerations Upon the East-India Trade*, 31.

¹²⁰ As part of the deal, in 1709, the Company loaned the government £3,200,000. The charter was granted for eighteen years and was to be renewed in 1726 for another thirteen. In addition, the Company’s monopoly privileges were supported by Charter Acts in 1712, 1730, and 1744; the latter guaranteed the EIC until 1783. Charters were frequently revisited before their expiry years and dates of renewal were then often extended according to political circumstances and the government’s financial need; renewals were typically granted in exchange for loans to the government, including £200,000 in 1730. See Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 73-7.

associates proved to be staunch opponents of the EIC. Such concerns would increasingly dominate discussions in Parliament and in the press throughout the eighteenth century. Usually criticisms were still leveled on a specific case by case basis, though a broader and more general discussion about the nature and existence of monopolies and their connections with early modern empire-building would emerge. Of growing concerns too were the nature of the relationships that the individuals involved in these companies developed abroad, and subsequently the consequences of imperial expansion upon Britons and Britain itself.

Corruption, Economic Crisis, and Company Reform

Many historians have highlighted the changing nature of British society and culture as inextricably tied to Britain's imperial identity throughout the eighteenth century.¹²¹ Idealized notions about what it meant to be a Briton, domestically and in the Atlantic world, were to become increasingly convoluted in the second half of the century, as theories were confounded by reality, most notably in India and the Caribbean. In particular, the ever-broader networks of exchange that organizations such as the EIC forged and the heightened scale of international warfare had transformative effects.¹²² There, the British had become seriously entangled in a quagmire that was unlike the pan-Atlantic "imagined community" of "Protestant, commercial, maritime and free" Britons.¹²³ In addition to conquest was the dependency on collaborators and the abilities of administrators to rule distant peoples, at least in part, on their own terms. The

¹²¹ On this issue see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2005); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹²² Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage, 2006). This work provides useful insights into the socio-cultural exchange tied to imperial expansion. Jasanoff argued that there were many practical and philosophical obstacles to imperial success.

¹²³ Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2; the concept was also discussed more broadly in David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 173-4.

result was that the real empire was “only questionably ‘British’¹²⁴,” and that “cracks and insecurities” explain the many peculiarities and inconsistencies with respect to established values and identities.¹²⁵ Yet, while the projection of power and a certain image posed one set of problems, so did its costs on the return trip home, in what was undoubtedly an unintended consequence of empire-building.

Many mid to late eighteenth century social commentators voiced concerns about the degeneration of British society, noting the corrupting influences associated with expansion in Asia, which brought with it the often-cited pollutants of “luxury, effeminacy and profligacy.”¹²⁶ Thomas Parker was one, among many observers, who were concerned about individuals who made great fortunes abroad and then returned home to flaunt their wealth. He expressed apprehension about the ways in which people went about acquiring money in the many imperial theatres, often without any sense of right, and further the love of luxury that newfound fortune typically brought with it. He voiced his concern thus,

[t]he success which so many had met with, and the security with which they thought they possessed their riches, became the means of setting the minds of thousands on fire to obtain wealth by any means, that they might be able to appear with some degree of equality to those whom they remembered once to have been as low as themselves; but who were now, by the mere influence of their property, mixing and connecting themselves with our nobility and gentry.¹²⁷

He expressed a clear concern about those who were rising in status and disrupting the established hierarchies. It was here that Parker displayed a relatively traditional perspective, with respect to

¹²⁴ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, 8.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Also, see Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the Wider World 1600-1850* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 1-20.

¹²⁶ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 50.

¹²⁷ Thomas Parker, “An Enquiry,” in *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies, with An Enquiry into the General Conduct of Great Britain to Other Countries from the Peace of Paris, in 1763* (London: Printed for Charles Dilly, 1782), 10.

credit and the rise of a monetized and commercial economy, by arguing that only true land ownership could be the basis of sustainable and respectable wealth. His argument continued,

[t]housands, without either wealth, or means to obtain it, to any considerable degree, could not endure to see themselves so much below their equals. They assumed that appearance on credit, which others had done by the real acquisition of property; and from the head of the empire to its remotest borders, taking in the whole circle, new modes of expence spread, like waves of a rising flood, and luxury and sensuality kept pace with shew and appearance.¹²⁸

This was an ever-rising and worrisome trend, as something that was proving very disruptive and corrupting of British morals and sensibilities. Along with many contemporaries, who feared decadence and social ruin, Parker further noted

[t]he example of one vain or unworthy passion increasing another, and new ways of expence creating new necessities; thousands, that had insensibly, perhaps, at first been carried away by the torrent, soon found themselves so far gone from moderate ways of living, that they were out of their depth; and instead of attempting to return, they entered upon such hazardous and desperate endeavours to acquire fortunes, as have yearly ruined numbers in all ranks of life; whilst as many more, by means little more to be commended, have been labouring to save themselves from sinking beneath the rank and appearance they had taken upon themselves.¹²⁹

Here he crafted the imagery of those souls, entirely lost in their luxuries, being swept out to sea in a storm of avarice, and unable to return to the safety and security of shore, where they might have regained a basic sense of their natural community and human roots.

Of particular concern in this regard were the nabobs, the most infamous being Robert Clive. The term was thrown around loosely as a slander against the men who had made considerable fortunes in Asia and then returned home, where they would corrupt domestic life.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Many commentators at the time used the term and subsequently a good number of studies have been done on the nabobs. For more on metropolitan fears about the rise of “nabobery” in Britain and the implications of an empire of

Sentiments ranged from ridicule and disdain towards a real fear of these individuals in many stories, which informed and derided, and were brought to people extensively through the press. For instance, there was Samuel Foote's famous play, *The Nabob*, which began playing in 1768, and by 1772 was featured at Haymarket.¹³¹ It highlighted the rise of one Sir Matthew Mite, who, with ill-gotten gains, returned to Britain to marry into an ancient family and join the gentry.¹³² Most of these East India men were second sons or from lesser families, and could not have earned the wealth they did had they remained in Britain. As such they potentially presented a threat to the established hierarchies and elite from the old guard, especially in Parliament, in much the same way the West Indies returnees did. Curiously, though, the two groups of the empire were typically at odds with each other and never represented an empire-interest in politics. In fact many who supported colonial endeavours in the Atlantic typically despised the EIC, including the sugar baron William Beckford, American empire enthusiast George Johnstone, Bristol-based MPs such as Edmund Burke, or other merchants from outside of the City-EIC monopoly nexus.¹³³

Political figures also worried about the consequences of empire, in the lust for conquest and a corruption of domestic institutions. The major fear was that with their newfound wealth they would be able to peddle an undue amount of political control, buying seats in Parliament

conquest in India see Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our Execrable Banditti': Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain," *Albion* 16, no. 3 (1984): 225-241. One of the most recent and comprehensive examinations is Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 147-8. Those who made their money quickly and in questionable ways and were considered 'outsiders' and held in low regard, even among the 'moneyed interests'; P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2001), 44-5. For more on how nabobs were pictured and discussed in eighteenth century literature, see Christina Smylitopoulos, "Rewritten and Reused: Imaging the Nabob through 'Upstart Iconography'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32, Issue 2 (2008): 39-59.

¹³¹ H. V. Bowen, *Revenue & Reform: The Indian problem in British politics 1757-1773* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 96; and Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 136.

¹³² Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 131-2.

¹³³ For more on the centrality of London, particularly in trade relations and networks with Madras on the Indian Coromandel Coast, see Søren Mentz, *The English Gentleman Merchant at work: Madras and the City of London 1660-1740* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2005).

and engaging in lobbying activities in the attempt to secure and maintain preferential treatment for this organization. This influence could undermine all that supposedly made Britain exceptional. Indeed, many nabobs did so, though the extent to which this occurred should not be overstated.¹³⁴ Horace Walpole was one who, among many others, pointed out the cruelty and abuses of officials in India, which certainly undermined any claims about the “moral superiority of British imperialism.”¹³⁵ Additionally, the fears that existed about despotisms throughout the mystical, non-English world were heightened. But, to what extent were these impulses returned home? This was a major fear of noted commentators Edmund Burke and William Cowper, concerned about the spirit of military adventurism.¹³⁶ The Elder William Pitt also issued, in the Lords, a famous 1770 warning about the influx of wealth from Asia, fearing that it might also bring “Asiatic principles of government.”¹³⁷ Such perspectives, perhaps overstated, reflected the real fears of many, yet external influences were an unavoidable price of imperial pastimes.

Undoubtedly, British expansion in India was popular in many political and financial quarters, especially when the British government did not have to pay for it but enjoyed some of the proceeds. This formed the basis of the scholar Nicholas Dirks’ recent argument in *Scandal of Empire* that many interested parties, including British Parliamentarians, were complicit in the many intertwined and easily corruptible political and commercial partnerships.¹³⁸ So long as the EIC was making money and generating revenue for the government, critics of the monopoly and those who raised serious concerns about malpractice or misbehaviour had very little impact on policy-makers. It was really not until the fiscal crises of the 1760s and 1770s that the nature of

¹³⁴ Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 30-4; Lucy S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 222.

¹³⁵ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 51.

¹³⁶ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 119.

¹³⁷ Wilson, *The Island Race*, 50; Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 120.

¹³⁸ Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Notably, Dirks’ work received a critical assessment in Tony Ballantyne, “The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography,” *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 429-452.

the relationship between the state and company were to be reviewed and revised in any substantial way.¹³⁹ Even then reform was mainly aimed at how to effectively rule new territories, as the legislation of 1767, 1773, and 1784, which gradually shifted revenue and responsibility towards Parliament, rested on a tacit acceptance of the rights of conquest. Though problems of short-term Company insolvency, amid these episodes of financial crisis, offered ample opportunity to unwind the organization and potentially reverse course in India, it was considered too important an entity to the state.

In this period, EIC rule in India, as subordinates to the Mughal Emperor, brought about drastic changes to existing trade patterns in Bengal and the *diwani*, or land tax, system became a dedicated Company revenue source. Indeed, the wildly ambitious prospect offered by Clive of millions in revenue generated considerable interest in Britain, and made it hard for many to argue against temporarily assisting the Company for the long-term national interest. This money had many purposes, including paying down wartime debts; making regular payments to share and bond holders; the annual £400,000 to Parliament after 1767, which often went unpaid until 1780, but would rise to £500,000 by the 1790s;¹⁴⁰ and servicing the costs of the growing military-bureaucratic apparatus.¹⁴¹ Notably, the Company was also the chief financier of state debt with its bonds,¹⁴² and it was an important employer by 1800, with an estimated 90,000 Britons

¹³⁹ There are many notable histories about the debates on Company reform, including previously cited Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*; Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, 2nd ed.; Lawson, *The East India Company*; also, Philip Lawson, "The Missing Link: the Imperial Dimension in Understanding Hanoverian Britain," *The Historical Journal* 29 (1986): 747-751, in which he explained how such crucial imperial issues became domestic problems; additionally in P.J. Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968) many of the most crucial primary source documents have been compiled.

¹⁴⁰ C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), 120.

¹⁴¹ The increase in numbers and associated costs are discussed at different points in Bruce Collins, *War and Empire: The Expansion of Britain 1790-1830* (London: Longman, 2010), 155-8; 218-20.

¹⁴² Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 38.

dependent on its success for their livelihoods.¹⁴³

Some argued that the Company should be destroyed, so that the rest of the nation could reap the maximum financial benefit. For example, one anonymous author, self-titled as an *untainted* ENGLISHMAN, wrote to Charles Townshend, then Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1767 advocating the abolishment of the EIC, and all monopolies, using the proceeds to pay off the accumulated national debt. This “famous monopoly”, he argued, had caused “more *hurt* to this nation than most people are capable of conceiving”.¹⁴⁴ He condemned those nabobs for unduly acquiring so much wealth, but he merely advocated that the spoils, especially the wildly estimated land revenue, become the property of the state “to put itself into such a flourishing situation, as to discharge the national debt, and thereby not only *support*, but greatly increase the sinking CREDIT of the nation.”¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, the prospect of promised financial windfalls, in many respects, as well as existing intertwined and complex relationships, would be too much to resist ever voluntarily relinquishing the British position in India, with or without the Company.

On the other hand, many in Parliament were clearly not pleased by the many abuses perpetrated by aggressive officials within the Company, or the fact that wars of territorial conquest were destructive. Thus, the organization itself had to be reined in if the gains were to be consolidated and India made profitable. Within the context of the 1772 crisis, James Steuart was hired to propose economic reforms aimed improving economic conditions, while reconciling the commercial ambitions of the Company and its territorial sovereignty.¹⁴⁶ Though he did not really challenge their authority, he highlighted the many inherent inconsistencies between its

¹⁴³ H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 271. According to the 1801 census, the population of Great Britain was approximately 10.5 million. This would mean that just fewer than 1% of Britons actually depended on the EIC for direct or indirect employment, though this number does not include Crown military personnel.

¹⁴⁴ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt, By Abolishing the East-India Company of Merchants* (London: Printed for S. Bladon, 1767), 20.

¹⁴⁵ *An Attempt to Pay off the National Debt*, 27.

¹⁴⁶ Steuart’s assessment has been addressed in Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 73-85.

economic and administrative functions, further arguing that the interests of Britain, the Company, and Bengal might not be aligned. He criticized attempts at short-term economic gain, unnecessary expenditures, and the export of silver, all as hindrances on the Indian economy, and stated poignantly, “[t]he exportations made from Bengal by the East-India Company do not enrich it, any more than the importation of the spoils of the world impoverished ancient Rome.”¹⁴⁷ Additionally, by assuming the role of sovereign power, he noted that “we ought to protect the industrious inhabitants from the rapine and extortions of their Indian as well as of their European lords.”¹⁴⁸

Adam Smith’s assessment of the East India Company in the *Wealth of Nations* diverged in economic theory from Steuart and was far less sympathetic towards their objectives.¹⁴⁹ A staunch opponent of monopolies generally,¹⁵⁰ his attack was perhaps most fierce on the EIC, when he noted the harm they caused to both Britain and India. He rejected their monopoly as beneficial to the nation and his assessment regarding their ability to rule ran as follows:

[n]o two characters seem more inconsistent than those of trader and sovereign. If the trading spirit of the English East India company renders them very bad sovereigns; the spirit of sovereignty seems to have rendered them equally bad traders. While they were traders only, they managed their trade successfully, and were able to pay from their profits a moderate dividend to the proprietors of their stock. Since they became sovereigns, with a revenue which, it is said, was originally more than three millions sterling, they have been obliged to beg the extraordinary assistance of government in order to avoid immediate bankruptcy. In their former situation, their servants in India considered themselves as the

¹⁴⁷ James Steuart, *The Principles of Money Applied to the Present State of the Coin of Bengal* (London, 1772), 81. He was also quoted in Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Steuart, *The Principles of Money Applied to the Present State of the Coin of Bengal*, 64.

¹⁴⁹ Adam Smith’s assessment of the economic problems and critique of the EIC are featured in Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 86-100. The approaches and perspectives of Steuart and Smith towards British India were assessed in Robert Travers, “British India as a Problem in Political Economy: Comparing James Steuart and Adam Smith,” in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 137-60.

¹⁵⁰ Smith’s assessment of monopolies more generally were discussed in the first chapter.

clerks of merchants: In their present situation, those servants consider themselves as the ministers of sovereigns.¹⁵¹

Though the work of Steuart was notable, especially related to improving monetary policy in Bengal, his recommendations amounted to little in terms of actual policy. However, in Britain administrators gradually accepted the incompatibility of the EIC as monopoly traders and sovereigns. Moreover, Smith's views on ideas increasingly guided policy making from the 1780s on through individuals such as Henry Dundas, at the Board of Control. The EIC trade monopoly fell out of favour and trading rights were opened up by the 1813 Charter, with the exception of tea through the Chinese trade port of Canton. Ideally, encouraging peace and stability over greater settlement, expensive conflicts, and further annexations would be the new course of affairs. While this would transform Indian administration over time, it did not particularly reject British imperialism and did little more than pause the expansion of empire.

The debates surrounding the oversight and regulation of Company activities, most notably in 1771-3 and 1783-4 also revealed the major legal and intellectual problems posed by their conquests and attempts to rule in India. Much of the information that filtered back to Britain about India in this period came from Company officials.¹⁵² In particular, many ex-employees, relatives, or disgruntled directors and proprietors became very vocal in their criticism about the nature of the EIC which was channeled especially at individuals such as Clive. Most notable were the widely circulated books by William Bolts and Alexander Dow, "the first a man of bad character, the latter of a very fair one," wrote Horace Walpole on March 30th, 1772, and whose

¹⁵¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1784), 3:245.

¹⁵² With regards to the significance of information and data collection for the purposes of the construction of histories, identities, and empire see Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Also, see C. A. Bayly, *Empire & Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

works “created great clamour here”, effectively helping to shape public and political opinions.¹⁵³

Another example came from William Burke, who, likely with significant input by Edmund Burke,¹⁵⁴ wrote about the impropriety of the “system of conquest by English arms, in favour of the Nabob of Arcot”,¹⁵⁵ an Indian prince deeply indebted to the EIC. A mutual state of dependency therefore developed, between the prince and many East-Indiamen, such as John Macpherson, who lobbied for him in London and fought with him on the subcontinent. William Burke, a notable opponent of his in India, crafted a response to the state of affairs which highlighted the problems of corruption and injustice borne out of EIC conquests and collaboration with such local princes. He was highly critical of this sinister system, which

for twenty years, has brought innumerable and unspeakable calamities on all the southern part of Hindostan, and reduced so many considerable Princes, such numbers of respectable Nobility, and the industrious inhabitants of so many once flourishing and opulent countries, to the last degree of indigence and distress, to say nothing of the multitude of lives which have been lost in the extravagant enterprizes, which had their rise in this fatal design.¹⁵⁶

Many anonymous pamphleteers weighed in on the intersecting issues of charter rights, the constitution, finances, and empire as well. While we do not know for certain who wrote many of the unnamed tracts, on close inspection it typically becomes quite obvious as to whether or not such essayists were writing for or against the interests of shareholders. One anonymous author hoped “to see an end to those cruel monopolies, carried on by the Servants of the

¹⁵³ Horace Walpole, *The Last Journals of Horace Walpole during the Reign of George III from 1771-1783*, ed. A. Francis Steuart (New York: AMS Press, 1973 [1910]), 1:72. Also, see Alexander Dow, *The History of Hindostan*, 3 vols., (London: Printed for T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1768-1772) and William Bolts, *Considerations on India Affairs: Particularly Respecting the Present State of Bengal and its Dependencies* (London: Printed for J. Almon and P. Elmsley, 1772). Both works are discussed in Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, 2nd ed., 221; Bolt’s contribution is thoroughly assessed in Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 135-9.

¹⁵⁴ Edmund Burke referred to William as his cousin, but it is not known whether or not they were actually related.

¹⁵⁵ William Burke, *An Enquiry into the Policy of Making Conquests for the Mahometans in India*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1779), 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Company, in the necessities of life, and to which the wretched natives are obliged to submit, with the bayonet at their throats".¹⁵⁷ He identified the problem that such "former charters, might serve as authority for every degree of cruelty and rapine."¹⁵⁸ In effect, officials had been given license for brutality through a "*Charter of Plunder*".¹⁵⁹ He also rejected the notion "that the Company is absolutely empowered to make war and peace", by the specific terms of the charters, effectively arguing that their rights to self-defence were too broadly interpreted.¹⁶⁰ He then recommended that the government curtail their powers, so that they might act "with justice and humanity towards those they call their subjects in India; and with modesty and obedience to those whom they ought to consider as their Rulers in Great Britain."¹⁶¹ Proposals such as this had the effect of amplifying already negative sentiment toward the Company in many quarters and would encourage the push for greater regulatory oversight.

Most notable in opposition were the Rockingham Whigs, who defended the principle of EIC charter rights and typically framed the argument in constitutional terms.¹⁶² Sir George Savile was perhaps the greatest of these opponents of political involvement and rejected the acquisition of territory outright. He even refused to participate in debates or attend the meetings of Burgoyne's Select Committee on the EIC.¹⁶³ In April 1777 he famously spoke out against the Company, its Asian possessions, and the tea trade, claiming them to be "public thefts to which he

¹⁵⁷ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East-India Company* (London: Printed for Walter Shropshire and Samuel Bladon, 1772), v, in the 'Preface'.

¹⁵⁸ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East-India Company*, 18.

¹⁵⁹ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East-India Company*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East-India Company*, 24.

¹⁶¹ *An Enquiry into the Rights of the East-India Company*, 27.

¹⁶² They were perhaps the best examples, and intellectual descendants, of the old country party or 'Commonwealth' Whigs who feared the growth of executive power, in part as a consequence of territorial expansion in places such as India. See Miles Taylor, "Imperium et Libertas? Rethinking the Radical Critique of Imperialism during the Nineteenth Century," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19, no. 1 (1991): 2-3.

¹⁶³ Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics*, 2nd ed., 240. This Parliamentary Committee was formed to investigate and report on British affairs in India and was described in detail in Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 134-6.

did not wish in any way to be a party”.¹⁶⁴ George Johnstone, loosely associated with the Rockingham Whigs, had previously appeared as a moderate supporter of the EIC’s charter rights in 1771. Though he had also been a Clive supporter, he became another strong critic, his opinion no doubt shaped by Clive’s negative treatment of his brother John Johnstone at the Bengal Council. George Johnstone laid the blame solely on Clive, writing “[t]he ruinous state of the affairs of that province in three years from that time, without war or any just cause, excepting the monopolies and depredations of those committees, is now admitted by every one, while the nation sees with astonishment, the immense fortunes that have been amassed under the distresses of the inhabitants, by those very members to whom the directors had intrusted the absolute management of their affairs.”¹⁶⁵ However, he worried that in the rush to do something “we are ready to hurry our fellow subjects, and the miserable inhabitants under our protection, unto yet a higher degree of despotism.”¹⁶⁶

Sir William Meredith also famously lambasted Clive in Parliament in 1773, arguing against “mercantile avarice” as a guiding principle of English tyranny in Bengal, where “[t]hey who have lands are dispossessed; if money, it is extorted; if the mechanic has a loom, his manufacture is cut out; if he has grain, it is carried off; if he is suspected of having any secret treasure, he is put to the torture to discover it.”¹⁶⁷ Though supportive of regulating EIC affairs, he thought it absurd to send a handful of judges to enforce English laws in such a remote and vast

¹⁶⁴ Sir George Savile, *Gazette de France*, April, 1777. This English quotation was a translation that came from Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, vol. 2, *The Wheels of Commerce* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 222.

¹⁶⁵ George Johnstone, *Thoughts on Our Acquisitions in the East Indies; Particularly Respecting Bengal* (London: Printed for T. Becket and P.A. De Hondt, 1771), 24-6; he was also cited in Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 129; 132-3.

¹⁶⁶ Johnstone, *Thoughts on Our Acquisitions in the East Indies*, 26.

¹⁶⁷ Sir William Meredith, *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T.C. Hansard, 1813), XVII:858.

country.¹⁶⁸ A member of Burgoyne's Committee, Meredith had been a Rockingham ally and doubtful of the abilities of the North administration, though his allegiance was shifting in his desire for a political appointment. Despite claims to great wealth there, he ultimately viewed it as "mill-stone round the neck of this country"¹⁶⁹ and questioned "whether it is rational to make so vast an addition to the British empire, sinking already under the weight of its own greatness."¹⁷⁰ He also argued that if, however, Britain were to keep the territories, then authority should be vested in the Crown, but he warned "that acquisitions made by shedding the blood of innocent princes, and by wringing from an innocent people their substance, can never prosper."¹⁷¹

Two other significant assessments of the East India Company and the nature of British involvement on the Indian subcontinent came from John Dalrymple, the 5th Earl of Stair, and Sir William Pulteney who both expressed reservations over the push for greater Parliamentary authority over EIC affairs during the debates of 1783-4.¹⁷² Their respective publications on this topic revealed obvious political biases in that they were both independent Whigs, and clearly hostile towards the Fox-North government. They also harboured apparent sympathies for the EIC as a chartered institution, which was being battered for political gain by disgruntled ex-employees. Stair, notable as the "Cassandra of the State"¹⁷³ for his warnings about the national debt, worried that the public assuming EIC debt and responsibilities would not be in the interests of Britain or India. Similarly, Pulteney cautioned against the consolidation of power into too few

¹⁶⁸ For more on the debate surrounding the Regulating Act of 1773 see Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 169-86.

¹⁶⁹ Meredith, *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbett, XVII:861.

¹⁷⁰ Meredith, *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbett, XVII:857. Meredith is also addressed and quoted in P. J. Marshall, "Empire and Authority in the later Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15, no. 2 (1987): 113.

¹⁷¹ Meredith, *The Parliamentary History of England*, ed. William Cobbett, XVII:860.

¹⁷² Notably on the other side of the debate, as an enemy of the Company, was Edmund Burke. See Richard Bourke, "Liberty, Authority, and Trust in Burke's Idea of Empire," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no. 3 (2000): 460-1.

¹⁷³ Horace Walpole noted that he was called this for his gloomy economic forecasts. See Horace Walpole and Thomas Park, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England, Scotland, and Ireland: With Lists of Their Works* (London: Printed for J. Scott, 1806), V:166. He was also described as such in Julian Hoppit, "Checking the Leviathan, 1688-1832," in *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience 1688-1914*, eds., Donald Winch and Patrick K. O'Brien (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 286-7.

hands, by self-interested groups that would put Britain at ever-greater risk.

Stair argued that the “pretext of bankruptcy is but a flimsy disguise easily seen through: Ministers are not so eager to obtain the administration of the affairs of bankrupt”.¹⁷⁴ If, in fact, the Company were bankrupt then it should die a civil death and the trade should be opened up to all. It appeared more likely to him an opportunity for exploitation, as with the government “[h]aving forced the Company to bear a share in all the foolish wars Britain involved herself in, money must be found.”¹⁷⁵ He also acknowledged the “plea for humanity, and a wish to restore in India a better and a juster system of government, less rapacious, and less oppressive to the natives” as “a fair and generous object”; but, he asked, “how do the means correspond with the end,”¹⁷⁶ challenging the true motivations of ministers quick to pass legislation. He also questioned the motivations of many who returned to Britain, telling fantastical stories, as “Arabian Night’s Entertainments”, which were all accepted at face value. He then suggested,

[b]ut grant that wrongs and injustice prodominate [*sic*], who are to restore the golden age in India? We know the late Ministry, their habitudes, and connections; from Brooks’s, then, it is fair to suppose the daring Argonauts were to have sailed in search of the Golden Fleece: from Almack’s our bold Pizarros must have taken their course to civilize our new-acquired ministerial Peru.¹⁷⁷

He was extremely suspect toward the true intentions behind the failed Fox-North India Bill, arguing it “extremely improper for the public to make common cause with the East-India Company”.¹⁷⁸ He saw a potential disaster looming, warning

[t]he consequences of the public taking upon themselves the direction of the Company’s trade, or even of their territorial acquisitions, I apprehend would be

¹⁷⁴ John Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference with the Affairs of the East-India Company, Attempted to be Assigned*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1784), 10.

¹⁷⁵ Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference*, 3rd ed., 11-2.

¹⁷⁶ Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference*, 3rd ed., 11.

¹⁷⁷ Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference*, 3rd ed., 13.

¹⁷⁸ Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference*, 3rd ed., 16.

most ruinous. No nation has ever attempted any thing of this kind without being greatly losers by it, even where government was carried on principles infinitely more favourable to such an enterprise than the free constitution of this country admits of.¹⁷⁹

Thus, he presented a significant warning of the potential for a legal nightmare, where the forces of violence and corruption continued, even though its administrators changed.

Pulteney, though writing as a more disinterested observer, warned of many similar problems. He cautioned about the power of patronage “diverted into a different channel” which “must produce very important and serious Effects upon the future Government of this Country.”¹⁸⁰ If ministers were given the authority to appoint powerful proconsuls in India, surely this would have a profound effect on the British government, itself? His fear was that the balance of authority with the Crown would be disrupted and the constitution threatened, by governments such as Fox-North’s, or one like it in the future. He further warned

[a]fter what I have said, it is unnecessary to add another objection to the Bill, namely, that we shall involve the personal interest, or rather the personal power, of a formidable Aristocracy in this kingdom, in the preservation of our Indian Territories, at all hazards. This may be attended with the most serious consequences, and may expose this Country, not only to certain bankruptcy, but to the being left, at a critical moment, almost defenceless, and open to invasion.¹⁸¹

This was a turbulent period considering the loss of America in 1783, in a war that both men opposed; and the numerous financial crises, in which the EIC required state assistance. While greater state regulation of EIC affairs offered the promise of more benevolent rule in India, by targeting the worst abuses of plunderers such as Clive, these writers pointed out that there was no guarantee that a mere transfer of authority would yield better results, and indeed might even

¹⁷⁹ Dalrymple, *The Proper Limits of the Government’s Interference*, 3rd ed., 16-7.

¹⁸⁰ William Pulteney, *The Effects to be Expected from the East India Bill, upon the Constitution of Great Britain, if Passed into a Law*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1784), 20.

¹⁸¹ Pulteney, *The Effects to be Expected from the East India Bill*, 5th ed., 42-3.

increase the problems. Yet, their warnings cannot just simply be dismissed as being overstated or alarmist or overtly partisan. They illuminated the complexity of a situation in which all was not as it might have seemed on the surface, with regards to Britain's involvement in India and the notable concerns voiced by those calling for greater Parliamentary oversight.

Adam Smith weighed into the debate as well, expanding his criticism of Company rule in the revised third edition of the *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1784, particularly as related to the failures of the existing regulations to fix a rotten situation. He wrote,

THE regulations of 1773, accordingly, did not put an end to the disorders of the company's government in India. Notwithstanding that, during a momentary fit of good conduct, they had at one time collected, into the treasury of Calcutta, more than three millions sterling; notwithstanding that they had afterwards extended, either their dominion, or their depredations, over a vast accession of some of the richest and most fertile countries in India; all was wasted and destroyed. They found themselves altogether unprepared to stop or resist the incursion of Hyder Ali; and, in consequence of those disorders, the company is now (1784) in greater distress than ever; and, in order to prevent immediate bankruptcy, is once more reduced to supplicate the assistance of government. Different plans have been proposed by the different parties in parliament, for the better management of its affairs. And all those plans seem to agree in supposing, what was indeed always abundantly evident, that it is altogether unfit to govern its territorial possessions. Even the company itself seems to be convinced of its own incapacity so far, and seems, upon that account, willing to give them up to government.¹⁸²

Though bankruptcy was temporarily averted, the overall financial state of the Company had hardly improved and abuses were still being perpetrated by aggressive officials. The Regulating Act of 1773 had largely failed to reform EIC governance and really only set the stage for further interventions.¹⁸³ Many Parliamentarians were not pleased by the situation and despite claims to charter rights and appeals to the constitution, which helped defeat the Fox-North Bill, debate

¹⁸² Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 3rd ed., 3:142-3. For an assessment of Smith and the monopoly corporation, see Gary M. Anderson and Robert D. Tollison, "Adam Smith's Analysis of Joint-Stock Companies," *Journal of Political Economy* 90, no. 6 (1982): 1237-1256.

¹⁸³ Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 187-9.

culminated in Pitt's 1784 India Act.¹⁸⁴ This expanded the direct role of the British government, reframing the constitutional arrangement with India and giving the new Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, control over major Company decision-making and activities. The gradual reforms were largely welcomed by EIC opponent Horace Walpole, though he also raised questions about motivations, writing "the new power was to be founded on the demolition of that nest of monsters, the East [India] Company, and their spawn of nabobs etc., they took the alarm – and the secret junto at Court rejoiced that they did. The Court struck the blow at the ministers; but it was the gold of the Company that really conjured up the storm, and has diffused it all over England."¹⁸⁵

While these moves were aimed at ending the most egregious practices, they were mainly administrative reforms and did not constitute a rejection of British involvement in India. For serious reformers concerned about negative actions committed by Company agents and military officials abroad, the pernicious partnership between the EIC and the British government, or those generally opposed to monopoly rights and special privileges, the reforms of the period would not go far enough to fundamentally address these issues. Considered against the words of the fiercest critics, political arguments appeared relatively moderate, in which the many problems of conquest at such a great distance were evaluated, and where many sought to only temper the brutal spirit of acquiring dominion, or establish a regulatory framework for its governance.

Though many Company directors and proprietors, such as George Dempster, favoured commercial relations with India and did not advocate aggressive colonialization, opposition to territorial acquisitions was largely ineffectual and often met with acceptance after the fact.

¹⁸⁴ Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India 1765-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8. Also see Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 122-5.

¹⁸⁵ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937-1983 [1784]), 25:484.

Indeed, where criticisms of Company actions surfaced, from officials within the organization, they stemmed more from personal disputes or internal EIC politics. While the strong attacks on Clive, for example, that highlighted his rapacity and violent actions, from individuals such as William Bolts, Alexander Dow, Laurence Sullivan, or Dempster do reveal a sense of humanity, they were specifically targeting Clive as the problem, not the EIC or its expansionist behaviour in India. This reflected longstanding hostilities towards those in power which would then shift towards the inadequacies that existed within the new EIC administrative framework, created by Parliament in 1784. Arguments about the EIC exposed the great many problems of running an empire, but did not necessarily question empire itself.

Through the trial of Warren Hastings, which Nicholas Dirks likened to a gilded spectacle, the Burkean critique of empire was best illustrated.¹⁸⁶ Edmund Burke proved relentless in his attack on the man who was “the head, the chief, the captain-general in iniquity; one in whom all

¹⁸⁶ Burke was considered a major anti-imperial figure with respect to India and was among many contemporaries throughout Europe in arguing his case. See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4-5; others have argued that Burke presented one of the most thorough critiques of empire at the time, channeling the Enlightenment and focusing on problems of corruption and immorality in India and Ireland in particular. See Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a dedicated study of Burke and India see Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997). He was also highly regarded among later reformers, especially in British India, as well as nineteenth century critics of empire, and more conservative anti-imperialists; see Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21; Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 126. With respect to Enlightenment thought and anti-colonialism, Burke has also been recently considered in a comparative context with Denis Diderot. See Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anticolonialism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). For more on Burke, see Uday S. Mehta, “Edmund Burke on Empire, Self-Understanding, and Sympathy,” in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 155-183; as well as Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); and specifically on some of Burke’s early political thought, see Bourke’s earlier article, Richard Bourke, “Party, Parliament, and Conquest in Newly Ascribed Burke Manuscripts,” *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 619-652.

the frauds, all the peculations, all the violence, all the tyranny in India are embodied, disciplined and arrayed.”¹⁸⁷ Addressing the Lords in his opening statements, he urged them to consider that

the crimes which we charge in these Articles are not lapses and defects and errors of common human nature and frailty, such as we know and feel, and can allow for. They are crimes which have their rise in the wicked dispositions of men. They are crimes that have their rise in avarice, rapacity, pride, cruelty, ferocity, malignity of temper, haughtiness, insolence. In short, my Lords, in everything that manifests a heart blackened to the very blackest, a heart dyed deep in blackness, a heart corrupted, vitiated and gangrened to the very core.¹⁸⁸

More broadly, he also criticized the base political and economic relationship between Britain and India, which “was predicated on unequal, and unfair, terms of trade.”¹⁸⁹ On one hand, this episode produced a masterful attack on the cruelties of the EIC, specifically related to the Anglo-Maratha wars, and of the British in India more generally, against the evils of plunder and conquest, as well as poor governance. However, the trial of Hastings was very much a personal and political attack, largely induced by Philip Francis against a despised opponent, whom he had previously accused as being “exclusively responsible for the war which was undertaken at that period, for the *avowed* purpose of conquest and extension of dominion, which carried desolation with it wherever it extended, and which has ended in the ruin of the East-India Company”.¹⁹⁰ Though the trial initially caused a great sensation, exposing abuses and incompetence in Indian administration, Hastings was eventually acquitted on all charges.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Edmund Burke, “Speech on Opening of Impeachment 15 February 1788,” in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 6, *India: The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment: 1786-1788*, eds. P. J. Marshall and William B. Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 275-6; he was also partially quoted in Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 89.

¹⁸⁸ Burke, “Speech on Opening of Impeachment 15 February 1788”, 274-5.

¹⁸⁹ Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 135.

¹⁹⁰ Philip Francis, *Two Speeches in the House of Commons on the Original East-India Bill and on the Amended Bill, on the 16th and 26th of July, 1784* (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1784), 15.

¹⁹¹ This case was one excellent illustration of an anti-imperial critique within Parliament. Burke’s attack on Hastings was particularly fierce, though in many respects this was a political show trial and the former Governor-General became the target for imperial critics as well as the many opponents of EIC. The historiography on Warren Hastings’ trial is very extensive, and there are varied perspectives on the man, himself, and the trial’s outcome. For

Though Francis's critique of empire was very much rooted in his personal hatred of Hastings, he did voice a number of notable and familiar concerns. In particular, he argued "a trading company is unqualified for sovereignty, is unfit to be trusted with the government of a great kingdom; that their interests in one character are incompatible with their duties in the other".¹⁹² His position on the acquired territories was mixed in that he generally opposed military adventurism or any further annexations, along with the costs of it all, and preferred a policy of peace, while avoiding alliances with native powers, which "were, in every instance, dangerous, and tended only to lead this country into troublesome and expensive connexions." But, he also believed that the territory held in Bengal should be preserved.¹⁹³ Thus, he rejected the specific nature of the acquired empire in India, specifically how it was gained and who was running it, but did not generally argue against maintaining possession of the territory or against imperialism.

By this point significant parts of the subcontinent had been consolidated by the EIC, which was no longer just a maritime trading organization, but an India-based militarized bureaucracy.¹⁹⁴ While arguments had been levelled against Company officials and episodes of violence and mass starvation proved abhorrent to many, the decided long-term solution was to gradually reform Indian administration and not to disengage after a period of introspection. This,

instance, see Mithi Mukherjee, "Justice, War, and the Imperium: India and Britain in Edmund Burke's Prosecutorial Speeches in the Impeachment Trial of Warren Hastings," *Law and History Review* 23, no. 3 (2005): 589-630; and Anthony Carty, "The illegality of Empire: moral evasion and confusion of historians and literary critics in their reflections on the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings," in *Reading The Legal Case: Cross-Currents between Law and the Humanities*, ed. Marco Wan (New York: Routledge, 2012), 90-106. As well, questions of morality and the problems of imperial corruption may provide further insights into other anti-corruption agitation. See Brian Smith, "Edmund Burke, the Warren Hastings Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption," *Polity* 40, no. 1 (2008): 70-94.

¹⁹² Philip Francis, *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T.C. Hansard, 1817), 30:687.

¹⁹³ Philip Francis, *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, ed. William Cobbett (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), XXVIII:1183-4. Notably, Francis himself became relatively wealthy in India, though the extent of his personal fortunes was played down by friends and supporters, while exaggerated by opponents, and Hastings' supporters. See T. H. Bowyer, "India and the Personal Finances of Philip Francis," *The English Historical Review* 110, no. 435 (1995): 122-131.

¹⁹⁴ Bowen, *The Business of Empire*, 6-7.

claims political philosopher Iain Hampsher-Monk, was done according to Burke's ideal conception of empire, as an "aggregation of many states under one common head," which balanced the "local privileges and immunities" of its "subordinate parts" and where government conformed to local "character and circumstances."¹⁹⁵ There was also more engagement with the agency of local collaborators and the increasingly popular notion among Orientalist scholars of an ancient Mughal constitution, which would form the ideological basis for the more state-based imperialism in India. Ultimately, the EIC would embrace "Asiatic despotism" and govern India on its own reconstructed terms.¹⁹⁶ This framework justified ruling with and through local elites, or collaborators, in an increasingly militarized garrison state.¹⁹⁷ However, the effectiveness of the British government and its Indian administrators was limited. They struggled to reign in expenditures, and the army, and military conquests on the subcontinent continued at local discretion. Indeed the declaration, "that the pursuit of schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India is repugnant to the wish, the honour, and the policy of the nation", passed in a 1782 Parliamentary resolution and included in the 1784 and 1793 India Acts¹⁹⁸ proved little more than noble words. Even into the nineteenth century, with the new administrative structures in place, "[t]he Company's formal status and position remained a matter for debate" causing "considerable uncertainty."¹⁹⁹

Though there was certainly some strong and genuine opposition towards the East India Company and its acquired empire within the political sphere, many disputes from within the EIC and Parliament were often personal or parochial and not necessarily a rebuke of militarism or

¹⁹⁵ Iain Hampsher-Monk, "Edmund Burke and Empire," in *Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought*, ed. Duncan Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 119.

¹⁹⁶ Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India*, 19-30.

¹⁹⁷ Douglas M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu, eds., *India and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21-2.

¹⁹⁸ *The Asiatic Annual Register, or, A View of the History of Hindustan, and of the Politics, Commerce, and Literature of Asia* (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), 9:99.

¹⁹⁹ Bowen, *The Business of Empire*, 11.

imperialism. Naturally attitudes changed given time and circumstances, and such discussions have been previously addressed by many scholars.²⁰⁰ Still, the musings of some of these individuals featured here form an important part of the history, even though many may not have been avowed opponents of empire and conquest. In this case it appears to reflect the political and economic interdependency of the government and EIC. Many recognized the significance of India as a source of trade and taxation revenue, as a sort of tributary state, which if administered properly by the Company would not cost Britons anything. Given the appropriate reforms it thus seemed like a mutually beneficial and self-reinforcing relationship, except of course for the vanquished in India where the survivors would be offered merely the promise of better governance and, for some, the spoils of collaboration.²⁰¹

Radical and Religious Opposition

Two of the strongest and most passionate critics of the East India Company and, more broadly, of the nature of British conduct in Asia were Thomas Parker and James Callender. Once again these two individuals, writing in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, provide perhaps the strongest of all criticisms of British imperialism from the period itself. Parker's work, from the 1780s, which has been elaborated upon and frequently cited in this dissertation, focused primarily on British involvement in India, though he broadly criticized bad conduct committed abroad by his fellow countrymen. His criticism largely centered on the idea that EIC actors who engaged in corrupt behaviour abroad would surely earn Britons enmity from other peoples. Further, immoral actions, including the use of force and violence to plunder or murder, were clearly contrary to any divine will and would surely result in severe Godly retribution. As a

²⁰⁰ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 137-9; Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 18-20.

²⁰¹ Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire*, 162; 179. On the *diwani*, see Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 48-66. Also, see the work of Ramkrishna Mukherjee, *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1958).

lawyer and a very strong evangelical, he incorporated many extensive biblical allusions into his arguments and advocated spreading the Christian message. Callender, writing in the 1790s, presented an even more inflammatory and radical opposition to British conquests in Asia. As a noted opponent of British imperialism generally, he likened his countrymen to the Spanish conquistadors of the sixteenth century, writing, “[i]n the East and West-Indies, the conduct of the ‘United Kingdoms’ may be candidly compared with the *trial* of Atahualpa.”²⁰² His work offered a radical, republican perspective on British history and was less religiously inspired than politically motivated, though he presented an even more severe assessment of the situation. This work, which came out a decade after Parker’s treatise, reflected Callender’s strong opposition to monarchical and oligarchic rule in Britain, as well as the fact that that the situation had indeed deteriorated for many in India.²⁰³ Both, however, made it clear that the behaviour of many Company officials simply ran counter to the principles of natural justice, and their domestic support, or at least the lack of opposition, made all Britons culpable to a degree.

Parker’s publication came out in 1782 and examined British expansion in northeastern India, outside of their longtime base at Fort William, in Calcutta. In particular, he was concerned with what he viewed as the unjustifiable conquest of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, under Clive. More broadly, he examined and sought to expose British conduct there from 1757-1771, a period in which “about three millions of people were destroyed, starved, and driven away from the country acquired in the name of our India Company, and under the government of

²⁰² James Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain; or an Impartial History of Abuses in the Government of the British Empire, in Europe, Asia, and America*, 3rd ed. (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1795), 152. This was a reference to “the Black Legend” narrative, based upon histories of Spanish New World atrocities, which appeared most prevalently in Protestant Europe, where anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish sentiment was highest. See John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 404-5.

²⁰³ For more on the context of political thought at the time see Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

its servants”.²⁰⁴ Being a lawyer, he presented his case much as would have been done in a court of law, then challenged readers to consider whether or not such individuals should be rewarded upon their return to Britain, as had been the case, or if punishment might be more fitting.

For his readers, he presented a foundational history of India up to the moment of British conquest in order to provide some context as to the state of the subcontinent up to 1757. While making clear that different empires had risen and fallen over the centuries and warfare was certainly well-known throughout southern Asia, he concluded that conditions in the north were actually very good prior to the conquest. He wrote that “[t]he provinces of Bengal, Bahar, and Orissa, were in the year 1757 in a state of as great fertility and plenty as any country in Europe; and inhabited by about fifteen millions of people”.²⁰⁵ However, British expansion was to have extremely negative consequences from that moment on. He then proceeded to present extensive evidence, in the form of published correspondence of leading military officials, of the corrupt private deals which lead to the overthrow of Siraj ud-Daulah in favour of Mir Jafar, in the aftermath of the Black Hole episode.²⁰⁶ While revenge and restitution might on the surface have seemed to be the main driving forces behind the coup that took place, an examination of the numbers reveals more clearly the motivations behind the power brokering in the years that followed.

The section of Parker’s enquiry that dealt with the specific personal and Company windfall finances, through their conquests, was printed using the information provided to the House of Commons Committee that was investigating the matter. As such, the numbers functioned as public declarations and were supposed to be accurate. The evidence presented

²⁰⁴ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, iii, in the ‘Preface’.

²⁰⁵ Parker, “A Short View”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 279.

²⁰⁶ For a history of this event see Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

showed that ten officials, the six members of the council, as well as the army and navy received special compensation totaling £1,261,075 for their support of Mir Jafar against the old *nawab* in 1757. Of those, Clive was the largest single beneficiary, having received £234,000.²⁰⁷ Another eight officials specifically profited from the 1760 coup to put in place Mir Qasim, sharing £200,269, in addition to £62,500 paid out as restitution.²⁰⁸ Then, when Mir Jafar was restored to power in 1763 the Company army and navy received £437,499 with an additional £975,000 for restitution.²⁰⁹ Following his death, and the accession of Najm-ud-Daulah, two years later, nine officials received, presumably as gifts, £139,357; while around the same time the EIC also gained the considerable sum of £583,333 as part of the peace agreement with Shuja-ud-Daula, after the EIC military victory at Buxar, in October 1764.²¹⁰ At this point they also gained the *diwani* over the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Officials relished the prospect of acquiring additional vast sums through this land tax scheme, whereby intermediaries earned a cut of what was extracted from the working population, and a tribute went to the Mughal court.²¹¹

This arrangement had previously been explained by Alexander Dow, then a deceased former EIC army officer and accomplished Orientalist scholar, in his 1772 *Enquiry into the State of Bengal* which was prefixed to his broader *History of Hindostan*, as follows: “[t]he expulsion of the Nabob Cassim Ali, and the reduction of Suja-ul-Dowla, by our arms, had enabled the servants of the Company to establish peace upon their own terms. The treaty which they concluded was absurd; and had it been less exceptionable, it would not probably have pleased a man, who went not to India to be idle.”²¹² From a first-hand perspective, he was very critical of

²⁰⁷ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 269.

²⁰⁸ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 270.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 271.

²¹¹ On the *diwani*, see Bowen, *Revenue & Reform*, 48-66. Also, see Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 106-10, 114-5; and Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 71-2.

²¹² Dow, “Enquiry into the State of Bengal,” in *The History of Hindostan*, 3:lxvii.

the role that the EIC had taken on, and would long argue that its subsequent management of the acquired provinces was very poor. He then pointed out that the Company, in becoming the new territorial masters would operate in much the same way as those ruling elites who preceded them, writing,

[t]he various revolutions of Fortune, which had subjected several of the richest provinces of India to the Company's servants, threw the undoubted heir of the Mogul empire into their hands. The governor availed himself of this circumstance. Other Nabobs had converted the unfortunate prince into a tool; and it was now the turn of our governor to do the same, for the benefit of his constituents.²¹³

Dow thus provided one of the most thoroughly critical assessments of the nature of EIC involvement in northern India during the 1760s, though his aim was mainly to reform governance in the region to restore its former glory, ideally by increasing local production and output, which in turn would benefit British trading interests.

Parker then proceeded to present the total sums gained by the EIC for territorial revenues in each of the three provinces, during the ten year period, from 1761-1771.²¹⁴ He arrived at a total of £23,892,715, of which £5,402,333 was received for military charges and £18,490,382 general revenues after expenses. When he then added the £2,169,365 earned as presents and the £3,420,833 gained as restitution he calculated a final total of £29,482,913. This was the amount, which averaged around £2,100,000 per year, which the EIC and its officials received between the years 1757-1771.²¹⁵ The amounts were truly staggering and not a single pound in this case had anything to do with the trading business of the EIC; though, of course, indirectly a portion of it likely would, as land tax revenues would filter into general Company operations, which funded military, bureaucratic, and commercial expenses. Moreover, territorial control would provide

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 272-4.

²¹⁵ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 275.

officials with the ability to manage, at least to a degree, commodity production, as well as regulate imports and exports, which did affect regional commerce and corporate profitability. However, these received amounts were considered by Parker as clearly ill-gotten gains.

While these statistics provide a mere sample of all the money paid out by the *nawabs* to EIC officials, for various reasons, they are obviously limited in that they represent only officially declared income and not any other non-monetary presents or awards that might have been paid to Britons. However, despite the many limitations which may really understate the compensation earned by EIC officials and the organization as a whole, it is clear that the making and destroying of Indian princes was a highly lucrative operation in Bengal and involvement would prove a tempting proposition for anyone unconcerned with justice and eager to make a fast fortune.

Parker then provided a brief summary and assessment of the history of those initial years, which ran as follows:

[t]hose of the subjects of this country that gained most by this first revolution, retired, and left the management of our affairs in the hands of others; and notwithstanding the treaty made with the first person we advanced, was confirmed by solemn oaths, that we should support him in the government, yet he was soon deposed, and a large sum was taken of his successor; who himself was soon driven from the government, and his predecessor restored; from whom we again received another large sum. He died, and his son was appointed in his stead. Another large sum was extorted from him.²¹⁶

In his telling of the history, a clear pattern was revealed in which EIC officials were happy to play politics with Mughal elites, as it was an extremely lucrative business. Power struggles and violence had long been aspects of life on the subcontinent, among those competing for territorial control and a place at court, but by this point the EIC had become an integrated part, and motivated actor, of the broader dynamics. They were able to manipulate familial and military

²¹⁶ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 12.

disputes to their advantage and could assist in the transfer of power between competing factions, for a price at each step along the way. Parker continued on this issue: “[a]t this time we were at war with the prince of a country bordering on the provinces we had already under our power. With this prince was the emperor of India. They were reduced by our forces to the necessity of submitting to our terms; which were, the giving us a formal grant of the provinces before taken, and a farther sum of money.”²¹⁷ Considering the apparent divisions that had developed within the Mughal leadership at the time and the potential for personal gain, it is no wonder that top EIC officials on the ground were willing to exploit them. Parker made it very clear by that point that British designs on India, at least among the most interested and ruthless parties, were no longer of a benign commercial or friendly diplomatic nature; “[t]hey were, in short to enrich ourselves, at the expence of the people of that country; and this, not by commerce, but by war and conquest.”²¹⁸ It is difficult to entirely assess the degree to which the EIC was initially responsible for the existence of such an unsettled state of affairs in the region, but they certainly proved to be a considerable destabilizing force in a negatively-reinforcing war and payment cycle.²¹⁹

Though many individuals grew wealthy as a result and the EIC ascended to power in the region, the high price of extortion money and the consequences of their territorial conquest were to exact a heavy toll on the population at large. Though many were not typically affected in their daily lives by transfers of power at the highest levels of their government, those living in these newly conquered provinces would absolutely feel the effect in a number of crucial ways. This was illustrated by Dow, who argued

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Parker, “An Enquiry”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 11.

²¹⁹ Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*, 121. On the broader historiography related to the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the EIC in the eighteenth century, also see Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline: Eighteenth Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995); Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?*; C. A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

[l]et it suffice to say, that Bengal suffered from disturbances and violent measures; and that Fortune, though unfavourable, was less fatal, than the rapacity of avaricious men. Peculiarly unhappy, an unwarlike but industrious people were subdued by a society whose business was commerce. A barbarous enemy may slay a prostrate foe; but a civilized conqueror can only ruin nations without the sword. Monopolies and an exclusive trade joined issue with additional taxations; the unfortunate were deprived of the means, whilst the demands upon them were, with peculiar absurdity, increased.²²⁰

This taxation proved to be a very powerful tool for the fledgling bureaucratic apparatus that the EIC was haphazardly building.²²¹ Further, those who refused or were unable to pay the new taxes would forfeit their lands for resale. Describing a speech given by Philip Francis on June 5th, 1792 in the House of Commons, Callender noted “that the Bengal newspapers were perpetually full of advertisements, for the sale of lands, seized *for want of due payment of revenue*. He held in his hand two of these advertisements; the one announced the sale of *seventeen* villages, and the other, a sale of *forty-two*.” For him this was a totally egregious proposition and surely reflected little more than the EIC’s abuse of power in Indian land expropriation. To bring the issue closer to home for readers, he then further posited that “John Bonner may, perhaps, live to advertise Falkirk or Musselburgh for the arrears of a malt-excise.”²²² This state-like power was effectively being used to extort revenue and favour political allies. However, he also highlighted the economic consequences brought about by a legacy of violence and forced land redistribution. Referring to notes from Lord Cornwallis, he exclaimed remarkably “that one-third of the Company’s territory in Hindostan is now a JUNGLE, INHABITED BY WILD BEASTS.”²²³

Parker also highlighted the economic squeeze that was placed on these people, through the new trade patterns and the extraction of ever-higher taxes. He wrote,

²²⁰ Dow, “Enquiry into the State of Bengal,” in *The History of Hindostan*, 3:lxix.

²²¹ See the ‘Introduction’ to Bowen, *The Business of Empire*, 1-28; and Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 107-11.

²²² Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 155.

²²³ Ibid.

WHEN we had thus gotten the country entirely in our power, the few articles, which were there among the necessities of life, were taken under our management. The people who raised or made those articles, were only allowed to sell them to us: the inhabitants could buy only of those we appointed to sell: they had no choice, but to do without them, or comply with our terms; and we gave them examples of public severity to such as did not, that terror might produce the effect that was desired. As some of our people enriched themselves, and came away, others went among them from us. The people of the country were dispirited, and all industry appeared to be hopeless labour. Our wars and oppressions were then followed by scarcity: this brought the natural plenty of the country within the reach of other monopolies. A famine ensued: scores of men, women and children, that came about our houses in the evenings, to cry for food to us, who had them and all things in our power, were found dead in the mornings. The living would not, or cared not to bury the dead.²²⁴

Here he made clear the miserable plight of the Indian labourer, who had to endure warfare, the resulting taxes to pay for military expenditures, and the devastation wrought by famine. To provide a sense of perspective, he explained that the three million lives destroyed in war, famine, and including those who fled, was approximately the same as the number of inhabitants in North America, just before the revolutionary war. If this were not horrific enough, the true picture appears to be even worse, for the particular incident he was referring to was the infamous Bengal famine of the early 1770s, in which estimates actually range as high as ten million people.²²⁵

Parker's numbers appear to have come entirely from official EIC documentation, supplied to Parliament, and as such may have been on the conservative side. In comparison, Callender's numbers were considerably higher and he presented a far more inflammatory and radical critique of the Company. His publication, which appeared in multiple editions in the decade after Parker's, argued that India was in a far worse state than many had previously been

²²⁴ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 12.

²²⁵ The exact numbers were subject to a wide range of speculation at the time and subsequently many scholars have tried to estimate reasonable population statistics to determine how many people many have lived there at the time and how many may have perished. On this topic, see John R. McLane, *Land and local kingship in eighteenth-century Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 200. Another notable history of the famine comes from David Arnold, "Hunger in the Garden of Plenty," in *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Alessa Johns (London: Routledge, 2013 [1999]), 81-112.

told and further, that it had deteriorated considerably while under EIC rule. Referring to Clive's period of conquest, he claimed, "[i]n Bengal only, we destroyed or expelled, within the short period of six years, five millions of industrious and innocent people".²²⁶ This number was much higher than Parker's three million, which was also over a fifteen year period. This discrepancy is partially explained by the use of different sources for calculations and the fact that all estimates offered a range, but that no exact numbers could be pinpointed. Callender relied heavily on the information provided by Dow in his *Enquiry*, in which he had explained the period as follows:

[t]he civil wars, to which a violent desire of creating Nabobs gave rise, were attended with tragical events. The country was depopulated by every species of public distress. In the space of six years, half the great cities of an opulent kingdom were rendered desolate; the most fertile fields in the world lay waste; and five millions of harmless and industrious people were either expelled or destroyed. Want of foresight became more fatal than innate barbarism; and men found themselves wading through blood and ruin, when their object was only spoil. But this is not the time to rend the veil which covers our political transactions in Asia.²²⁷

Dow's critical assessment was particularly important in that he was able to provide an insider's perspective on EIC operations, which earned him both scorn from within and credibility with readers. Parker and Callender, however, approached the problem entirely differently. Both considered the EIC as an immoral organization that should be dismantled, though with dissimilar motivations. The former felt it was a force that, through its operations, was corrupting the greater body politic and subverting the natural hierarchical order, while potentially calling forward a divine intervention; the latter viewed the entity as an appendage of the British ruling oligarchy, which was part of a more broadly and thoroughly corrupt political and economic system that he wished entirely overturned.

²²⁶ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 9.

²²⁷ Dow, "Enquiry into the State of Bengal," in *The History of Hindostan*, 3:1xx.

In terms of the total number of victims of EIC aggression in India, Callender also arrived at a substantially higher number than Parker. Bearing in mind that Callender's assessment was published over a decade after Parker's, giving him a greater chronology, he stated "we have been sovereigns of high rank, in that country, for about thirty-five years, and there is reason to compute, that, since our elevation, we have strewed the plains of Hindostan with thirty-six millions of carcases."²²⁸ Thus, he made Parker's critique of the Company look relatively modest. But how was it that he could make such claims? Even factoring in what transpired in India through the 1780s, there still appears a huge range to consider in the total number of victims. On the surface, this stunning difference might almost lend itself towards rejecting such a figure as purely conjectural, but he continued to explain his reasoning regarding population numbers:

[i]n 1785, the British East India company governed two hundred and eighty-one thousand, four hundred and twelve square miles of territory; a space equal to twice the area of the whole republic of France, which is known to comprehend *twenty-seven millions* of people. The writers on this subject frequently remark, that large provinces of Hindostan, were *formerly* cultivated like a garden. The Hindoos themselves, are, perhaps, the most abstemious of mankind. Their subsistence requires but a trifling quantity of food, compared with that of any race of people in Europe. From the pacific temper of the natives, they had, for the most part, but few wars. Agriculture and manufacturers had arrived at a high degree of perfection. From these important and combined causes the population of India must have been prodigious. But, if we suppose that it was only in proportion to that of France, and the supposition is perfectly reasonable, the dominions of the East-India company must, before the commencement of British conquests, have contained *fifty-four millions* of inhabitants; and from various circumstances that have been stated, this computation is certainly not overcharged.²²⁹

He regarded the native inhabitants with a notable degree of respect, making the argument that the kingdom was largely peaceful and was thriving before the British arrived. While he was perhaps embellishing the reality of the situation, there was a good deal of evidence to support key aspects

²²⁸ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 9-10.

²²⁹ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 155-6.

of his argument. In particular, most seventeenth and eighteenth century observers, and subsequent economic histories, noted the great agricultural output and wealth that existed in the region.²³⁰ On the other hand, he diminished the reality that warfare had long been commonplace on the subcontinent.

While his arguments flowed very logically, with respect to demographics and the ability of a population to be supported on a certain amount of producing agricultural land, the exact number may not necessarily have been quantifiable. However, he then provided a short table to guide the reader through his calculations. He stated that the population of the EIC held territories had been 54,000,000 just prior to 1758, while at the time of his writing, in 1792, it was only 18,000,000. This decline is where he computed the massive depopulation of 36,000,000. Of that total, he deducted half to account for the inhospitable jungle territory, which amounted to one third of the land, and the other half were lost from the cultivated territories before EIC subjection.²³¹ So, his total calculations over the 35 years, from 1758-1792, seem to refer to total native inhabitants lost, not simply those killed by EIC swords and cannons, as was earlier implied. Instead, such a number would take into consideration warfare, famine, and migrations, either to escape conflict or otherwise to seek opportunities elsewhere. Given the fact that there were three major famines on the subcontinent during this period, it is actually possible to arrive at a number approximating Callender's estimations. However, it must be noted that the East India Company was neither in control of much of the sub-continent nor entirely responsible for all the deaths in these cases. For instance, while much of the blame can be placed on their mismanagement for the losses and distress in Bengal in the 1770s, the Chalisa and *Doji Bara* famines, which occurred respectively in the early 1780s and 1790s and in which an estimated

²³⁰ Barber, *British Economic Thought and India 1600-1858*, 55.

²³¹ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 156.

total of twenty-two million people died, were widespread events triggered by drought and occurred primarily outside of EIC-held territory.²³² This would put the number of dead by famine within the thirty millions and, if combined with several million vanquished and displaced by Company armies, we would be able to account for the approximately thirty six-million. So, while Callender's numbers might seem high, and he was certainly aiming to shock readers out of their sensibilities, they simply cannot be readily dismissed without deeper examination and, if placed in proper contemporary context, to include deaths by many causes, they actually seem distressingly plausible.

Parker's history of the British in India likewise presented a tale far less heroic and generous than many eighteenth century Company writers or apologists of empire would have had those in Britain believe. Having previously considered the financial benefits that many private individuals gained dishonourably, far beyond what the EIC earned in trade revenue, but rather through extortion, plunder, and aggressive taxation, at the expense of Indians living in the conquered territories, the deeds of individuals such as Clive and those close to him hardly warranted any national celebration or distinctions. His overall summary of the EIC was that

[w]e were first admitted into the East-Indies by the favour of the princes of that country, to trade with their subjects, and then to have settlements among them. We have, within these few years begun to make wars with the natives; we have possessed ourselves of the whole country into which we were so admitted; we found it like a garden for plenty, and we have made it a wilderness; it was the store-house of that part of India; under our management, in five or six years time, it became a place of wretchedness and misery; we destroyed, starved, and drove away three millions of the people of the country by our violence, rapine and oppression. Assisted by our public forces, we have allowed our people to make one revolution after another, till we have made ourselves masters of the dominion

²³² For a brief overview of these famines and others see William A. Dando, ed., *Food and Famine in the 21st Century* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 2:44. Aspects of the Chalisa famine were discussed as well in C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian society in the age of British expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 88-92; 102; 224; 292.

and of the people, said to have been fifteen millions in number when we first went among them; and after the subjects of this country had done them all the injuries which one people could well do to another; and after being told as a nation, by those we ourselves employed to make the enquiry, ‘There were accounts of crimes shocking to human nature, and transactions that were carried into execution by perfidy and murder.’ We entirely acquitted, as a nation, our people of any crime in all this.²³³

If an individual or a group unsanctioned by, or unconnected to, those in positions of power had committed such atrocities, or it had been done under another banner, surely they would have faced some logical consequences; however, he continued,

as a nation, we have neither punished, fined, or so much as blamed either all or any one of them; but on the contrary, after the repeated publication of their crimes to the whole nation, the people of this country have not only, in all the variety of distinct bodies, and corporate societies, into which our whole nation is divided, been silent under all that has been done without a single exception; but several of them have selected these very persons, in preference to any in the kingdom beside, to appear in their name, and as entrusted in their stead, to transact their part of the public business in the legislature: we have publicly divided the spoil with those that brought it to us; and we have done all a nation could do, to give those dominions and that property which were acquired by force against right, accompanied with ‘perfidy and murder,’ all the sanction of lawful dominions, and of property duly obtained; as if the whole proceedings had been strictly agreeable to all that is required of mankind in their conduct to each other, by the rules of natural justice, and consistent with our character as a christian state.²³⁴

In this case any pretense to morality, with respect to religion or a sense of ethics did not appear to even come into play, nor did any notion of humanity. Instead, many kept their plunder and some had even taken seats in Parliament. This lack of justice, or at least widespread moral concern, reflected a disturbing trend in the national consciousness which, in part, was manifesting itself through the corruption of such an important political institution, and by extension, the British constitution itself.

²³³ Parker, “An Enquiry”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 25.

²³⁴ Parker, “An Enquiry”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 25-6.

Only when the EIC was in a fledgling state as a dedicated trading organization would Parker have considered it a beneficial entity, but it had transformed into something much more sinister and powerful. While many different arguments have been made about the complexity of the geopolitical situation on the Indian subcontinent in the mid-1700s, in that there were plenty of actors engaged in private deal-making, between local *nawabs* and other Europeans, and that would-be plunderers abounded, ready to make war for personal or factional gain, Parker made clear that it was his countrymen who had done wrong. He considered the early dealings with Mughals fair and their authorization of the British and other European traders to build permanent trading posts in the first place to be reasonable; the crisis only arose when the EIC overstepped its rightful bounds. In their desire for territorial conquest and with insatiable greed, the EIC were ultimately responsible for ruining a once prosperous country. Further, in his retelling of Britain's conquests and exploits in India, with a fiercely critical eye towards those individuals involved, he also reminded readers of the nation's overall complicity in the entire affair. He chastised Britons:

WHILST all this business was going forward in India, those of our fellow-subjects that had enriched themselves with the property of this unhappy people, were, one after another, coming home among us; many of them purchased great estates, and appeared on the seats of the legislature. The managers of the company in England, made many complaints of the conduct of their servants in India; but at the time they did this, they gave pressing orders for the collection of the revenues of the country acquired in their name. Many public complaints were made against the general proceedings; but at the time they were made, we were receiving, as a nation, the payment of a large sum out of the common spoil.²³⁵

Here, he argued that the nation benefitted by taking a share of the plunder, and as such a great number of individuals, beyond those EIC officials publically identified, likely enjoyed a financial windfall and, as a result, could personally advance. Moreover, since the state was a recipient of tax revenue and a share of the spoils in India, alongside individual EIC share and bondholders,

²³⁵ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 12.

the entire British nation bore some responsibility for the imperial crimes in India. Though he pointed out there were some notable criticisms of Company officials for particularly bad behaviour, on the part of some prominent politicians, such reprimands typically amounted to little more than words. He did acknowledge that “[a]t length a public enquiry was made, by examining the principal persons,” as to what happened in Bengal, which was an absolute necessity given the mounting evidence of wrongdoing, but implied was that the public revenue gained was ultimately sufficient to silence enough would-be EIC critics. For, he continued,

[a]s a nation, we acquitted them all; no penalty was laid, no reparation was ordered to be made to the survivors of the people who had suffered under our oppressions: not a single punishment was inflicted on one of their oppressors. The whole proceedings were published among us, and after they were so, many of the names that appeared among the first authors of all that was done in India, were seated among the representatives of the people of this country. Their conduct has received all the sanction that a total acquittal, public stations, and a general welcome amongst a people can give them.²³⁶

Parker made it very clear that nobody at that point made any substantial effort to undo what was done or to punish those involved in these crimes. Yet, not only were EIC officials not punished for what was done, but they kept their wealth and enjoyed a substantial rise in their social status as well. This, according to Parker, sent absolutely the wrong message about appropriate individual and national conduct and what it took to get ahead in economic and political life in Britain. Such immorality was reflective of a truly corrupt and barbarous nation, and flew in the face of any notions of the British as a peaceful, commercial, and civil society.

Beyond the lack of action taken against these individuals, and their advancement in Parliament, Parker also was concerned by the general embrace of British territorial expansion in India. The spoils of conquest were projected to yield great revenues for the Company and

²³⁶ Parker, “An Enquiry”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 12-3.

government, which attracted many to the prospects of controlling a vast eastern empire. Further, this would open up opportunities for many in Britain to seek their own fortunes and serve as a point of pride for the nation as a whole. Parker was dismayed that

[t]he country they thus obtained, this country holds or endeavours to hold to this day. The dominions that have been taken from the princes of the country; all the means that have been used in obtaining the many millions of property that have been brought away from the people of that country, by the people of this, stands without a single censure from us as a nation. On the contrary, the whole appears, to this day, with all the approval which the society of a nation can give, to make that which has been done by the few, the act of the whole.²³⁷

Thus, in his assessment, it appeared that the nation, directly and indirectly, provided its support, and even encouragement, for what the EIC had done. All Britons were to be considered guilty by association by the lack of protest against the plundering of India. Wrongs would go unpunished and a likely result would be more, not less warfare and brutality in further imperial conquests. His hope, however, was that his own publication would serve as a wake-up call for the nation by highlighting the moral hazard that underpinned the existence of militarized corporate monopolies that enjoyed Parliamentary backing and were indirectly sanctioned by the entire community. He wanted people to recognize that these were not benign trading organizations, but violent bodies that needed to be abolished for the good of the country, and indeed all of humanity. For, these organizations have committed

[w]rongs which, by the plainest rules of justice, demand the abolishing of the very being of those trading societies, in whose names such enormities have been practiced in India and in Africa, and which, so long as they continue to exist in this nation, from the character they have obtained, cannot but place the whole community, in the esteem of a great part of the world, as in a state of avowed

²³⁷ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 13.

opposition to all the rights of other nations, whenever we have the power to deprive them of their possessions or enslave their persons.²³⁸

Members of the EIC were perhaps the worst involved in heinous criminal acts abroad and if they continued to go unpunished would constantly serve as symbols of a British desire to plunder and tyrannize others. This was sure to generate further animosity from overseas towards all Britons.

Following from this logical notion, it was only fitting that if the British did not show true leadership and a basic sense of humanity for all peoples, they were eventually bound to face retribution from other nations. Writing during the context of the American Revolution, he made clear that it was no wonder former adversaries were quick to pounce on British internal divisions. This was the obvious result of resentment towards Britain from other European countries as well as the intervention of a divine power to punish Britons for what their representatives had done to others abroad. He even suggested that many in Africa and Asia actually enjoyed temporary relief from Britain while they were distracted with their colonial conflict. However, he argued that this was merely the natural consequence of British mistreatment of others abroad, through

a conduct which, when passing with impunity in any country, or with the countenance of any state, is as expressive of a defiance of the power and justice of the DIVINE BEING, as rebellion in subjects is of contempt to the government under which they live; nothing being more consistent with reason, or more plainly declared in the revealed will of the common CREATOR of mankind, than that he himself is offended whenever any of their just and natural rights are invaded.²³⁹

One of the areas of the world where he most clearly saw these violations of any spirit of common humanity or natural rights was in India. So, while many were primarily focused on the war in the Thirteen Colonies he implored readers to put the conflict into a broader perspective and to perhaps consider it as a reaction, both human and divine, to what Britons had first done to others,

²³⁸ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, ix-x, in the 'Preface'.

²³⁹ Parker, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, x, in the 'Preface'.

with Bengal serving as a prime example. This sentiment well echoed the statements of the radical philosopher Richard Price, from several years earlier. Writing in 1776, he urged Britons to

[t]urn your eyes to *India*: There more has been done than is now attempted in *America*. There ENGLISHMEN, actuated by the love of plunder and the spirit of conquest, have depopulated whole kingdoms, and ruined millions of innocent people by the most infamous oppression and rapacity. – The justice of the nation has slept over these enormities. Will the justice of heaven sleep? – – Are we now execrated on both sides of the globe?²⁴⁰

While certainly a profound statement, it came at a time when attention in Britain focused heavily on America and concerns about India largely fell by the wayside.

Referring to the specific nature of the Indian conquests, Parker further challenged readers to consider “if in any of the events that have accompanied or followed these measures, there is any degree of resemblance betwixt what we have done, and what has befallen us?”²⁴¹ He then proceeded to link historical wrongs committed to their unintended consequences, writing,

THE community, in whose name every thing was done in India, and which is still allowed to have a name among us, by what it was made to pay on one hand, and what itself was plundered of on the other, this community became an eminent example, of what indeed no new instance was necessary to establish, that possessions gotten by wrong do little service to those that so acquire them. It was the nominal possessor of vast revenues, collected by its servants, from the dominions and subjects of the Princes of India, and as a company of merchants, it was distressed to the last degree to pay the demands that were coming against it. As a mode of relief, and as a society of subjects favoured by the state, they were allowed an exclusive right to send one of the articles of their commerce to our colonies in America. The people of that country threw it into the sea, with the same wrong, with which the possessions had been obtained, and the property taken away from the Princes and people of India. Continuing, as a nation, to give the property of this company the protection of the state, so it was, whatever causes there were beside, that this company and its property were made the means of the beginning of the violence; and when the flame of our civil war was thoroughly

²⁴⁰ Richard Price, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1776), 103.

²⁴¹ Parker, “An Enquiry”, *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 26.

kindled, the very same person who was placed at the head of the enquiry into the use we had made of our power over the people in India, was made the first public witness of the fall of our power in America; by the laying down of our national arms in that country.²⁴²

He reiterated his case that Britain would suffer so long as the EIC continued its operations and its worst offenders went unpunished. Interestingly, his mentioning of General John Burgoyne referenced one of many prominent figures who took great interest and operated in the Atlantic imperial sphere, yet abhorred what was being done in the east. Parker then made the case that the nation as a whole had hardly benefitted from the existence of the EIC; the wealth they were plundering was being squandered in another conflict of Britain's own making. He continued,

THE number of people of which we occasioned the loss in India, and the number of the inhabitants of the colonies in America, were estimated in both countries, and when the reports from each met in this country, the numbers we 'destroyed, starved, and drove away' by our oppression in the East, are the same as the number of those we have been endeavouring to prevent the loss of to ourselves in the West – the estimate of both one and the other being three millions; and the steps we have taken to get, secure, and govern a country divided into three provinces, to which we had no right, have been followed, step by step, to prevent our losing a country divided into thirteen provinces, to which we had a right. And we no sooner, effectually as we thought, secured the one, than we began to lose the other; and the hundreds of thousands which we opened our treasures to receive out of the spoil of our war in India, we have, as a nation, been spoiled of by the expences of our war in America; the final amount of which is yet as little to be estimated, as the total sum taken from the princes and people of India; but standing where we are and supposing only three rupees to have been brought away from the people of India, for every one of which there has been any public account given, the total of each would be nearly the same – an hundred millions of pounds sterling taken away by the exercise of our national power over the people of India; and an hundred millions expended in endeavouring to maintain our national power over the people of America.²⁴³

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 27.

In an interesting twist of historical fate and tragic irony, Parker directly linked the distress of the British in their colonies at the time to the crimes that had previously been committed abroad, in India and elsewhere.²⁴⁴ However, to him, the similarity in numerical terms of gains and losses would not have seemed to be a mere coincidence; it was divine message being sent to the people of Britain, warning them to change their conduct towards other peoples.

Yet, while Parker's outlook appeared bleak, he did offer some glimmers of hope that if people would wake up to the injustices perpetrated and rectify the situations they could yet be saved. He closed his discussion, invoking the biblical lessons from Samuel, writing,

FEW things can at once be more pleasing and useful than to observe in the history of nations exposed to imminent [*sic*] dangers, than the progress of the spirit of that conduct, by which they were substantially reformed and saved from ruin. – Calling for the injured... doing them effectual justice, relieving the oppressed, and utterly abolishing what was contrary to the rights of others, have been among the measures by which the true public spirit hath shewn itself.²⁴⁵

Parker thereby called upon readers to better consider the consequences of their actions so that they might change course before it was too late. If Britons hoped to right their ship of state and restore a greater national harmony, they would have to work to redress those whom they had wronged. Anything short of this was surely to lead to further imperial ruin, as part of a widespread societal damnation.

Despite Parker's powerful moral case, what was actually done was pragmatic in nature and came far short of being wholly satisfactory. There were certainly attempts made by Parliament to prevent some of the worst of the abuses from happening again and some measures were taken to alleviate the suffering of Indian subjects by the close of the century. However, the

²⁴⁴ For more on the bonds and similarities between these two different areas of the British Empire in the mid to late eighteenth century, and for an assessment of the notion of First and Second British Empires, see Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires*; and Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

²⁴⁵ Parker, "An Enquiry", *Evidence of Our Transactions in the East Indies*, 34.

reforms of 1773, 1784, 1786, and 1793 were primarily administrative in nature, intended to make the Company accountable to Parliament, and while they gradually subordinated the EIC, the new bureaucratic apparatus in India proved highly autocratic and at home dependent on those appointed ministers in charge of setting policy direction. This, combined with the fact that the Company was highly indebted and their army was ever-expanding and hard to control, created a dangerous environment.²⁴⁶ It was within this context that Callender encouraged readers to seriously consider the nature of the empire Britain had acquired in India. He argued that it was perhaps the worst illustration of British behaviour abroad in the quest for imperial grandeur, and for him, mere reforms were not nearly sufficient. As a staunch opponent of empire, he would have been greatly relieved to see the EIC entirely extricated from the subcontinent. In this, he clearly stood at odds with those in power, for, “[o]ur sublime politicians exult in the victory of Seringapatam, and the butchery of the subjects of a prince, at the distance of six thousand leagues from Britain. Yet it would be an event the most auspicious both for Bengal and for ourselves, if Cornwallis, with all his myrmidons, could be at once driven out of India.”²⁴⁷ This may have been just wishful thinking on his part, though he made it clear that the corruption had to be torn out by the roots, not neatly pruned like a hedge-row.

He then sought to put the entire enterprise in context, referring to a number of notorious episodes in Britain’s history, which have been previously examined. In order to bring together, for his readers, a quick summary of abuses, he wrote that

[t]he peninsula within the Ganges, is the grand scene, where the genius of British supremacy displays its meridian splendour. Culloden, Glencoe, and Darien, the British famine of four years, Burgoyne’s tomahawks, Tarleton’s quarters, the

²⁴⁶ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 131-7; 145-9. For more on the historiographical discussions about the metropole, or core, and peripheries in British imperial history, see Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 278-81. Also, see Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*; and Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

²⁴⁷ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 152.

Jersey prison-ship, and the extirpation of six hundred and sixteen thousand Irish men, women, and children, dwindle from a comparison.²⁴⁸

These were all shocking events in which British rulers targeted their political enemies, whether Scots, Americans, Irish, or native populations; but, India was where the absolute worst occurred.²⁴⁹ Despite the countless instances of crimes and abuses which formed the basis for his clear hatred of the British ruling elites, it was here that he argued that Britons had the most to answer for. He then returned to his calculations, and concluded his entire exposé by writing

[t]hus, in thirty-five years, that is, from 1758, to 1792, inclusive, there has been an uniform waste of people, under these mercantile sovereigns, at a rate of more than *one million* per annum; in whole, THIRTY-SIX MILLIONS. The premises, on which this calculation has been founded, are explicitly placed before the reader. As to their justice, he is competent to decide for himself.²⁵⁰

This brought to a close what was probably the most comprehensive and scathing rebuke of British empire-building to that point and it was perhaps a fitting way to close out the eighteenth century. Writing in the 1790s, Callender may very well be considered the fiercest of all critics, within Britain, of the British government and its imperial ambitions, which directly and indirectly caused the deaths of millions of people around the world. While his numbers may have been exaggerated, caused by overly extrapolating from the limited data he had available, for the purposes of creating a huge sensation among readers, it is impossible to precisely determine one exact figure. However, this discussion is not meant to diminish the significance of what happened or of any human life, as it is more a matter of evaluating the degree of evil than the recognition of evil itself. Further, it is simply to point out the difficulties in determining with complete accuracy the amount of devastation caused by the East India Company throughout the Indian subcontinent during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This was a task undertaken

²⁴⁸ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 154.

²⁴⁹ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

²⁵⁰ Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain*, 3rd ed., 156.

by the many writers included here, for their audiences back in Britain, in order to illustrate the very negative consequences that their nation's imperialism had inflicted upon the vanquished.

Clearly the prospect of traveling to Asia offered excitement and potential for many Europeans in the early modern world. Many involved in commercial affairs in that part of the world made great fortunes, and a great number more lost their lives attempting to do so; later, many took up illustrious careers within the EIC bureaucracy or military, but their stories have been best told elsewhere. This chapter was devoted to acknowledging Britons who voiced their displeasure with the nature of their country's involvement in India, and south Asia more broadly, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by engaging with a number of crucial economic and political issues. Countless writers spent inordinate amounts of time and ink towards exposing and condemning the nature of the East India Company, and the actions of its many directors. Individuals such as Roger Coke and Henry Martin notably opposed the existence of such trade monopolies, which deliberately excluded other Britons from trading to India. In so doing, they were challenging pro-Company polemicists such as Josiah Child, one of the wealthiest and best connected merchant-elites in his day. Moreover, many working in traditional English manufacturing felt their livelihoods threatened by this corporate conglomerate that grew wealthy importing cheaper Indian goods. Others questioned its privileged status and deep political connections, through which it enjoyed the right to export bullion from the kingdom, and its mysterious joint-stock structure which allowed further license in its members' dealings with others. In different aspects these individuals were expressing concern about this disruptive force, which was shaping a new economy of a fledgling empire. Yet, despite criticisms of seemingly misguided imperial and commercial policies that favoured certain sectors of the economy and those connected within the inner circles of the City, the special relationships that existed between

the state and its monopolies were retained, and even strengthened, into the eighteenth century.²⁵¹

The notion of a British conquest of India would have seemed impossible to contemporary observers. It certainly was not the product of planning or universal design at the outset of the Augustan Age.²⁵² However, by the end of the century great swaths of territory were under British control or were ruled by political or military allies. The East India Company, which controlled much of the legal trade, was ultimately responsible for this piecemeal military conquest, and in this endeavour a great deal of the wealth plundered was the result of success on the battlefield and in backroom negotiations, borne out of deliberate ambitions.²⁵³ Then, as wealthy nabobs made their way back to Britain new concerns emerged about economic and political corruption, as well as societal degeneracy. In the complex and fascinating political debates which followed, Company abuses were highlighted and new laws brought about its Parliamentary subordination, as a department of state.²⁵⁴ While it was always linked in some way with the Crown or executive, the exact nature of the relationship fluctuated over time. It enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in many respects, as daily operations in India simply could not have been regulated by directors and shareholders in Britain. When the EIC was prospering, and tax revenue was flowing, it was perceived as an honourable organization and imperial partner. Yet, in periods of crisis, fingers of blame were pointed in all directions, though there was plenty of shame to go around. Ultimately, this complicated connection between Parliament and the Company reveals the intersection of government and commercial interests in the early modern period, which, when combined, wielded tremendous force and direction in the shaping of empire.²⁵⁵ Considering the power of

²⁵¹ For a recent history of the East India Company, see Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World*.

²⁵² For more on the early history and developments of the Company, when the focus was, by necessity, more on commerce and diplomacy, than conquest and dominion, see Stern, *The Company-State*, 19-60.

²⁵³ See Stern, *The Company-State*, 185-206; and Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 109-16.

²⁵⁴ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 144.

²⁵⁵ Bowen, *The Business of Empire*, 43; and the 'Conclusion' of Stern, *The Company-State*, 207-14.

the individuals who benefited, it is little wonder that vocal opponents of such imperial designs had minimal impact at the time and the best any of them could hope for was the intervention of Parliament and administrative reforms which sought to manage Company expansionism.

CONCLUSION

The debates surrounding empire in the eighteenth century were clearly as varied as they were extensive. There were arguments against imperial misadventures and strong critiques of systems, institutions, and people who constituted and symbolized the empire, at home and abroad. This dissertation has assessed a wide variety of individuals and their dissenting ideas towards eighteenth century empire-building, and imperialism more generally.¹ They shaped and engaged with streams of contrarian discourse amid historical trends in intellectual, economic, and political thought; it was within this context that the British Empire emerged most profoundly, according to theoretical ideals and practical realities, and the composite networks most familiar to us today were crafted. While many historians have done crucial work in examining the intricacies of British imperialism, this was an area in which many stones have still been left unturned. As such, this assessment of the many contentious questions of empire and anti-imperial sentiments helps to clearly develop what have been relatively limited areas of historical inquiry, while engaging with a number of broader aspects of British imperial historiography and offering themes for future scholarship.² Indeed, this study has considered many fascinating and vital historical debates regarding the nature and consequences of British involvement with much of the rest of the world during the early modern period, a moment of

¹ For more on eighteenth century metropolitan perspectives towards empire, see Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

² For instance, see P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006). On ideologies of empire and imperialism, see David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also, for a recent assessment of British Empire historiography, see Tony Ballantyne, "The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and its Historiography," *The Historical Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 429-452; and John M. MacKenzie, "The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 1 (2015): 99-124.

critical global integration within human history.

Initially, this dissertation examined the overarching economic criticisms of early modern imperialism. Though these arguments were not necessarily anti-imperial or particularly enlightened, they formed the basis of debates over empire within more traditional histories of the eighteenth century.³ In assessing the varied commercial treatises from the Restoration period through to the era of the Napoleonic Wars, the discord towards the emergent fiscal-military state and empire was clearly evident.⁴ Notably, many commentators and theorists criticized the Navigation Acts, as well as the broader system of protectionism and regulations which were designed to provide order to the economic relationships of empire and to enhance the power of the British state. In a similar vein, many prominent established monopoly corporations were also condemned as operating counter to the national interest.⁵ Moreover, the high costs of waging war and maintaining overseas bases to support imperial ventures came under increasing scrutiny. Such criticisms were present throughout the period and only escalated over time, eventually influencing major imperial reform in the nineteenth century.⁶ While these eighteenth century writers may never have seen their recommendations acted upon in their lifetimes, it is clear that aspects of their critiques had a long-lasting influence upon later generations. In particular, the promotion of free trade and the gradual dismantling of the so-called ‘Old Colonial System’,

³ For some of the earliest studies of British anti-imperialism, see Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Climax of Anti-Imperialism in England,” *Political Science Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1921): 537-560; Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire,” *The American Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1920): 18-36; and Robert Livingston Schuyler, “The Rise of Anti-Imperialism in England,” *Political Science Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1922): 440-471. For an early assessment of arguments in favour and against colonization, see Klaus E. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944).

⁴ On the development of the English/British fiscal-military state, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). Regarding costs and militarization see Bruce Collins, *War and Empire: The Expansion of Britain 1790-1830* (London: Longman, 2010).

⁵ Issues concerning the “national interest” have been most thoroughly addressed in Peter N. Miller, *Defining the Common Good: Empire, Religion and Philosophy in Eighteenth Century Britain, Ideas in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶ For more on imperial ideologies, particularly within the context of British India, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

alongside an emphasis on fiscal retrenchment, would be major features of the nineteenth century informal empire.⁷ In the twentieth century, notions about voluntary associations or federations would form the basis for the Commonwealth. However, in certain respects, such reforms were limited and did little to address the negative aspects of empire-building, including militarism and aggressive territorial expansion, which remained integral parts of imperial history.⁸

The Caribbean sugar islands presented an area of unique complexities and challenges for opponents of empire in the eighteenth century. As the nexus of the intertwined sugar and slave industries, these islands best represented the sharp contrast between staggeringly wealthy individuals alongside the cruel realities of the slave world, and illustrated British gains at the expense of West Africa.⁹ Yet, while the sugar islands were widely viewed as beneficial to Britain, the situation was, in fact, far more complicated.¹⁰ Critics such as Joseph Massie pointed out that average Britons were hardly beneficiaries, as the system of colonial protectionism effectively forced consumers to pay artificially high prices for sugar, subsidizing the incomes of the planters, while taxpayers also supported the defence of the islands. This criticism of the systemic inefficiencies that existed within the plantation societies would be built upon by later

⁷ See Robert Livingston Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: A Study in British Free Trade* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1966 [1945]); and Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). For more on British anti-imperialism in later periods, see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, 2nd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

⁸ On the economic history of empire, see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2001). For more on the broader European anti-imperial and Enlightenment contexts, see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). While these works mainly examined periods after the Napoleonic Wars, with a particular focus upon the Victorian era, they were important starting points for this dissertation.

⁹ The historiography on this issue is expansive. For example, see Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins, eds., *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Lodge Hill, Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1974), 11. Also, see Alison Gilbert Olson, *Making the Empire Work: London and American Interest Groups, 1690-1790* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Michael Kammen, *Empire and Interest: The American Colonies and the Politics of Mercantilism* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970).

writers, including Adam Smith and Arthur Young, into a well-established evaluation by the end of the eighteenth century. By that time, such attacks would appear alongside condemnation from humanitarian and evangelical reformers, such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, who argued that the entire slave system was immoral and must end.¹¹ Ultimately, these two aspects of the critique against the entangled sugar and slave industries exposed the unjust nature of the system, as well as the inhumanity of those involved and, more broadly, the significant ethical deficiencies within the empire of the eighteenth century. It was perhaps in these islands that such inherent contradictions were best illustrated, as the idealized nature of the British character met the ugly truths of imperialism.¹² These powerful cases made against the sugar plantation complex would force Britons to confront many evil realities, including the corrupting nature of the relationship between powerful commercial interests and the government, as well as their own complicity and participation in willingly profiting from human misery.¹³

There were many eighteenth century commentators who notably questioned the nature and morality of the European colonization of the New World. It was perhaps within this context that the strongest Enlightenment critiques of empire were presented. Many were particularly concerned that Britain was irrationally following the example of Spain, a country which had most cruelly taken possession of the greatest dominion within the Americas, yet had collapsed

¹¹ For examples of the extensive literature on British anti-slavery, see Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and David Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹² On issues regarding British identities and empire see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 2nd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 2005); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the Wider World 1600-1850* (London: Pimlico, 2003); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹³ See both chapter five and the epilogue of Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 156-99; 341-62.

under the weight of its own grandeur.¹⁴ Such writers also offered up highly critical perspectives regarding the value of such distant dominions that had to be maintained at enormous costs, while serving only as a perpetual source of jealousy among rival powers. Furthermore, the use of ever greater force to maintain control over colonists would tend to encourage authoritarianism abroad and at home, which presented a clear threat to the constitution and would undermine ‘traditional British liberties’.¹⁵ In this regard, the American Revolution served as the greatest example of colonial rebellion during this period, and the loss of these colonies revealed the difficulty of distant governance. Had the criticisms of imperial policies, such as those offered by Josiah Tucker or Edmund Burke, been heeded, it is possible that such tumultuous events might have been avoided, or at least its worst aspects moderated. However, their perspectives upon colonial reform were not actively embraced at the time, which came at great human and economic costs.¹⁶

Many Britons also voiced their displeasure over the nature of East India Company involvement in Asia, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Writers critically engaged the Company in print, and condemned the actions of its many directors, on a number of economic and political issues. Most notable were perhaps Roger Coke and Henry Martin, who challenged powerful individuals such as Josiah Child, in arguing against privileges

¹⁴ For more on Spain, and early modern European empires in a comparative sense, see John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); and Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ For notions of liberty and exceptionalism, see Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Also, see J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty 1660-1832: Political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Such proposals for self-rule or autonomy within the empire had much greater appeal to Parliamentarians in Britain during the nineteenth century. See Schuyler, “The Climax of Anti-Imperialism in England,”; Schuyler, “The Recall of the Legions: A Phase of the Decentralization of the British Empire,”; and Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*. Also, for more on Tucker, see Robert Livingston Schuyler, *Josiah Tucker: A Selection from His Economic and Political Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); and W. George Shelton, *Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century Economic and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981); on Burke, see Sunil M. Agnani, *Hating Empire Properly: The Two Indies and the Limits of Enlightenment Anticolonialism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); and Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

and the politically connected commercial special interests. Others questioned its rights to export bullion, as well as its disruption of traditional domestic industries, and the joint-stock structure which allowed directors to act with impunity abroad. However, despite such criticisms of imperial and commercial policies, the connections between the state, the City, and the EIC monopoly were strengthened during this period.¹⁷ The result was the expansion of British territorial acquisition in India, something that would have seemed impossible at the start of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ As the plundered riches of the East then made their way back to Britain through newly wealthy nabobs, concerns emerged regarding national corruption and cultural degeneracy.¹⁹ However, it was only during periods of acute economic crisis that support for Company independence dissipated, and it was subjected to Parliamentary oversight.²⁰ Given the concentration of power and the prevailing incentives, it is not surprising that opponents of the EIC or empire-building in Asia made little headway. Even the most substantial reforms enacted at the end of the eighteenth century hardly amounted to a repudiation of empire. In fact, the ever more extensive regulations of Company activity in India, by Parliament, served as ongoing justifications for further imperial expansion, while offering the promise of administrative improvements. It was, ultimately, this tangled intersection of political and commercial interests

¹⁷ For a recent history of the East India Company, see Nick Robins, *The Corporation that Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

¹⁸ For more on the early history and developments of the Company, see Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 19-60.

¹⁹ See Stern, *The Company-State*, 185-206; as well as Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993), 109-16; and Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 120-55. On questions of socio-cultural exchanges as a result of British imperial expansion in India, see Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East 1750-1850* (New York: Vintage, 2006). Specifically regarding the nabobs, see Philip Lawson and Jim Phillips, "'Our Execrable Banditti': Perceptions of Nabobs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Britain," *Albion* 16, no. 3 (1984): 225-241; Christina Smylitopoulos, "Rewritten and Reused: Imaging the Nabob through 'Upstart Iconography'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 32, Issue 2 (2008): 39-59; and Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁰ Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, 144.

that determined the direction of imperial expansion throughout the early modern period.²¹

Despite the often impassioned arguments and sensible complaints voiced by opponents of imperial expansion in the eighteenth century, such criticisms typically had little effect on public policies at the time. This, no doubt, reflected the fact that many were either political outsiders or offered wildly exaggerated claims of Britain's demise. Indeed, successive British administrations and self-interested Britons who sought their fortunes and adventures abroad, often with little regard for the damage inflicted upon those whom they encountered, won the political debate at the time over empire-building. However, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the enlightened perspectives of many of the individuals featured throughout this dissertation appeared more justified. Their views would increasingly become widely regarded and respected as providing sound advice for the new industrial era. Notably, reformers and radicals associated with nineteenth century classical liberalism, including the Philosophical Radicals and "Little Englanders", would look back reverently to the ideas of Enlightenment figures, social commentators, political economists, and moral philosophers, such as Josiah Tucker, David Hume, and Adam Smith. Many would also draw inspiration from these ideas as constructive for how to refashion and expand the empire in order to enhance Britain's position in the world. Subsequently, these voices have also served to influence generations of advocates for more wide-scale decolonization. While the strongest anti-imperial sentiments have typically received acknowledgment and intellectual approval, political pragmatism and desires for conquests abroad, on the part of many powerful entities, have generally continued. Yet, the ideas of many eighteenth century commentators and reformers presented powerful counter-arguments to the

²¹ H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and the 'Conclusion' of Stern, *The Company-State*, 207-14.

trends then in place and have since served to inspire those, in the centuries that followed, who have sought to break the chains of often despotic colonial rule and mitigate the ravages of war and conquest.

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