

The American Revolution and Popular Loyalism in the British Atlantic World

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Abstract

My thesis explores the American Revolution and War for Independence within the broader context of the British Atlantic world. It examines how the war and the revolutionary ideology affected the ways in which Britons living throughout the Atlantic world understood and articulated their loyalty to Great Britain. The American Revolution directly challenged the legitimacy of British whig ideology and self-definition, and forced peoples and communities throughout the Empire to rethink commonplace assumptions about their rights and liberties as British subjects.

The thesis is organized and focused around five specific British Atlantic communities: London, New York City, Glasgow, Halifax (Nova Scotia) and Kingston (Jamaica). During the first half of the eighteenth century diverse peoples throughout Britain's Atlantic empire united in their allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy and expressed a Protestant whig identity that was contrasted with the perceived oppressive regime, and lack of political and religious freedoms of an alien French enemy. The American Revolution, however, presented an explicit challenge to these Protestant whig ideals, for these same beliefs had also inspired the American Patriots. For the first time, Britons were opposed in war not by the French, but rather by fellow Protestant Britons. Consequently, American resistance and eventual rebellion to British imperial rule in the 1760s and 1770s served to divide rather than unite loyal Britons throughout the Atlantic world. Britons struggled to articulate a shared empire-wide opposition to an enemy and ideology that appeared not all that different from their own Protestant whig beliefs.

The Franco-American alliance of 1778 thus assumed enormous significance for loyal Britons. Once again, they could identify the enemy as opponents of whig and Protestant beliefs. Britons were shocked by the hypocrisy of a revolutionary ideology that was supposedly based upon a superior definition of whig ideology, yet was now allied with an arbitrary empire. Britons throughout the Atlantic world were able to redefine their American foes as no longer being fellow Britons, while simultaneously celebrating their loyalty within a broader empire-wide conception of Britishness. The result of which was a more determined and defiant expression of loyalty to Great Britain that was shared by Britons throughout the Atlantic world. Thus the American Revolution not only created a new American nation, but it also created a more determined British national identity shared by Britons throughout the Atlantic world.

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Introduction

In May 1780, as the American War for Independence drew to a close, Loyalists in British-occupied New York City read in *Rivington's Gazette* about a funeral in Philadelphia for a Spanish Roman Catholic. The dead man had probably been a soldier, and had died at Morristown where he had been encamped with General George Washington and his American allies. The funeral procession in Philadelphia consisted of the leading dignitaries of the American Patriot community and their French allies. The French Ambassador Chevalier De La Luzerne was at the head of the parade, followed by representatives of the American Congress, along with the General Officers of the Continental Army, and finally a large crowd of 'American Citizens' who were said to be 'extremely numerous' on the occasion.¹

Upon arrival at the city's Roman Catholic chapel, the officiating priest 'presented the Holy Water to Mons. Lucerne, who, after sprinkling himself, presented it to Mr. Huntington, President in Congress.' Samuel Huntington, who was described as a strict Calvinist, 'paused a considerable time... but at length his affection for the great and good ally conquered all scruples of conscience, and he too besprinkled and sanctified himself with all the adroitness of a veteran Catholic.' 'Without hesitation', the rest of the congressmen 'followed the righteous example of their proselyted President.' Before those attending the ceremony departed from the chapel 'curiosity induced some persons to uncover the bier, when they were highly enraged at finding the whole a sham, there being no corpse under the cloth, the body of the Spanish gentleman having been several days before interred at Morris-Town. The bier was surrounded with wax-candles, and every member of this egregious Congress, now reconciled to the Popish communion, carried a taper in his hand.'

Within a month, this rather colourful story had travelled from New York City and found its way into British newspapers all around the Empire. News of the mock funeral procession arrived in London in the middle of June and appeared in *The London Chronicle*.² A week later the story had travelled north to Glasgow, Scotland, where merchants and mechanics alike eagerly anticipated news of events occurring in the war-

¹ 'New-York, May 20.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 20 May 1780. Rivington's newspaper went through various name changes during its existence. In order to avoid confusion, I will refer to it as *Rivington's Gazette* hereafter.

² 'From Rivington's New York Gazette', *The London Chronicle*, 20 June 1780

torn American colonies.³ In early July *The Royal Gazette* in Kingston, Jamaica had also reprinted the story.⁴ The dead Spanish officer was not a well-known figure, and Britons and Americans alike were tired of a war that was almost over. Why, then, did stories such as these circulate so effectively around the empire, and what did they mean to those who read them?

Newspapers and magazines published throughout Britain's far-flung Atlantic empire printed many pieces in the 1770s and 1780s that defined and re-defined British imperial identity against the new United States. In this case, the narrative of a Catholic funeral procession described an illegitimate alliance between a naive, impressionable and ultimately traitorous American people who had been deceived by the oppressive Catholic French and Spanish empires. Furthermore, it helped to formulate answers to larger questions of national identity and popular conceptions of Britishness that had been raised by the American colonists for over a decade. The American revolutionary leaders and citizens had recently been proud members of the Protestant British Empire. They had loyally fought alongside fellow Protestant Britons in wars against their ancient enemies, Catholic France and Spain. Thus, for example, they had joined in empire-wide celebrations of Admiral Vernon's famous victory over the Spanish at Porto-Bello in 1739.⁵ More recently, they had toasted General James Wolfe's monumental victory over the French at Quebec in 1759 that had resulted in the expulsion of the French from mainland North America, and had secured the superiority and dominance of Britain's Atlantic Empire.⁶ And they had united with the British public in widespread jubilant celebrations for the accession of George III to throne in 1760.⁷ In this proud and patriotic political culture, the American colonists had employed the language, symbols and rituals of Britain, self-consciously identifying themselves as sharing the heritage and rights of all British subjects. But now, in the midst of a long, costly and deadly war

³ *The Glasgow Mercury*, 29 June 1780

⁴ *The Royal Gazette* [Jamaica], 1 July 1780.

⁵ For instance, see: *The New-York Weekly Journal*, 16, 23, 30 June and 7 July 1740. Kathleen Wilson has examined the celebrations surrounding Vernon's victory, but only from the limited perspective of the British mainland. Kathleen Wilson, 'Empire, Trade, and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon', *Past and Present*, CXXII (1988), 74-109.

⁶ For accounts of these celebrations, see below, Chapter 1. Also see: 'NEW-LONDON, October 15, 1759', *The New-London Summary, or, the Weekly Advertiser*, 23 January 1761; 'Quebeck reduced. PORTSMOUTH.', *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 19 October 1759.

⁷ 'NEW-YORK, January 19.', *The New-York Mercury*, 19 January 1761; 'NEW-YORK, January 19.', *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 26 January 1761; 'NEW-YORK, January 19.', *The New-London Summary, or, the Weekly Advertiser*, 23 January 1761; 'BOSTON', *Boston Post Boy*, 5 January 1761; 'LONDON, September 22.', *Boston Evening Post*, 16 November 1761.

against their former British brethren, Britons around the Empire read that American political leaders and the American people had rejected British identity and political culture in favour of the rituals and beliefs of what many Britons perceived to be an arbitrary, backward, and oppressive religion and way of life.

To emphasize this departure, the author of this account dramatically described the pause that Samuel Huntington took before sprinkling himself with the holy water. Such a pause implied that Huntington momentarily considered the consequences of such actions before turning against his British heritage in favour of his new ties to France, Spain and Catholicism. He and the rest of the American congressmen present at the funeral were not simply performing a religious ritual. Rather, they were redefining their identity as a people. And the acquiescent response from the ‘extremely numerous’ crowd of onlookers suggested that Americans of all rank approved of the congressmen’s behaviour and thus had also rejected their homeland and adopted the beliefs and ideology of Britain’s eternal enemy.⁸ This small gesture of sympathy and support for their French and Spanish allies was fraught with enormous ideological consequences for the relationship between Britons and Americans. From the perspective of loyal Britons living throughout the Atlantic Empire, the actions of Huntington, the congressmen and the American citizens symbolized the treason of a people who were no longer British, and where defiant arguments for liberty and rights now sounded hollow.

* * * *

For years historians have argued that the American Revolution informed and influenced revolutionaries throughout the world. R.R. Palmer, in his pivotal work on the subject, argued that it

⁸ My interpretation of the role of “the crowd” in early modern society relies on the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas’s theory of the “public sphere.” According to Habermas, the public sphere originated in the early eighteenth century as a space in which the general public could influence the politics of the ruling elite. This space was both real and imagined, taking shape in both forms of protests and celebrations, or in a textual existence in the many newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and broadsides that emerged during this period. See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederic Lawrence (Boston: MIT Press, 1989). For histories of Early America that have applied Habermas, see: David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture of the Early American Republic*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), and Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in 18th Century Connecticut* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

inspired the sense of a new era. It added a new content to the conceptions of progress. It gave a whole new dimension to ideas of liberty and equality made familiar by the Enlightenment... It dethroned England, and set up America, as a model for those seeking a better world... Whether fantastically idealized or seen in a factual way, whether as mirage or as reality, America made Europe seem unsatisfactory to many people of the middle and lower classes, and to those of the upper classes who wished them well.⁹

To Palmer and many subsequent historians, the American Revolution had important consequences for the lives and livelihoods of peoples and places outside of the thirteen mainland colonies. They have argued that the contagion of liberty infected communities and countries throughout the western world and on occasion helped trigger other revolutionary movements. Yet, such a perspective fails to appreciate the ideological consequences of the American Revolution on those who both opposed and defined themselves against it, the loyal inhabitants of the British Empire. It fails to recognize, that for many Britons the American Revolution did not make their loyalty to the Empire seem 'unsatisfactory.' In fact, many Britons rejected the revolutionary ideology of the American Patriots in favour of a refined patriotic imperial nationalism that assumed a new shape and significance in the wake of the American Revolution.

Consequently, we must consider the response of loyal British subjects to revolutionary events and ideas in order to appreciate the broader impact of the American Revolution on the lives of those who lived within and outside the thirteen American colonies. Throughout mainland Britain, across the British West Indies, and in the mainland North American colonies, Britons were forced to confront issues of identity and loyalty in the face of an American revolutionary ideology that directly challenged what united them as Britons. As Pocock recently observed, 'we do not understand the American Revolution until we understand that American history is not its only outcome.'¹⁰ The war and the revolutionary ideology had a profound effect on the ways in which Britons living throughout the Atlantic world understood and articulated their loyalty to Great Britain. It directly challenged the legitimacy of British whig ideology and self-definition, and forced peoples and communities throughout the Empire to rethink commonplace assumptions about their rights and liberties as British subjects.

⁹ R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), I, 282.

¹⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, 'The New British History in Atlantic Perspective: An Antipodean Commentary', *The American Historical Review*, CIV (1999), 498.

My thesis repositions the American Revolution within the broader context of the British Atlantic world. I examine the ways in which the Revolution affected the growth and articulation of popular expressions of imperial identity and loyalty throughout Britain's Atlantic Empire. This process, I argue, helped strengthen unity and identity in a British nation and empire that was less than a century old, drawing together the experiences of peoples and communities throughout the Caribbean, North American and mainland Great Britain. My research offers a new and innovative approach to understanding how the events and ideas of the Revolution fit within and affected the broader history of the British Atlantic world.

In order to make such an ambitious project possible, I have organized and focused my research around five specific British Atlantic communities: London, New York City, Glasgow, Halifax (Nova Scotia) and Kingston (Jamaica). For British subjects living in each of these communities, the revolution presented an explicit challenge to the legitimacy and hegemony of the traditional British whig political ideals, for these had also inspired the American Patriots. The local histories, traditions and cultures of these diverse communities required each to confront and defend their allegiance to Great Britain in quite different ways. If the political ideals of the American Revolution created the first republic in the western hemisphere, they also helped refine and consolidate political identity and allegiance within the British Empire, as diverse and discrete communities began redefining themselves as British in new ways.

As recent historians have shown, the English – and from 1707 the British – were well used to experiencing a heightened sense of patriotism and the coalescence of a shared national identity during frequent wars with France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ Diverse peoples throughout Britain's Atlantic Empire united in their

¹¹ This argument owes its origins to ground-breaking work of Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *The Journal of British Studies*, XXXI (1992), 309-329. Her work has been further refined and challenged by a number of historians. See: J. P. Greene, 'Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century*, II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 208-30; Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650- c.1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms', *The Historical Journal*, XXXIX (1996), 361-382; Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987). The best work on anti-Catholicism and national identity in the mainland American colonies remains: Francis D. Cogliano, *No King, No Popery: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1995)

allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy. They expressed their loyalty through popular and print celebrations of the rights and freedoms of Britons, which they contrasted with the perceived oppressive regimes and lack of political and religious freedoms of alien Catholic enemies, in particular France. French absolutism and Catholicism invoked a powerful and unifying popular language and political culture of identity that helped define what united Britons living in North America, the Caribbean and the British Isles. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the British union was, however, only two generations old, and loyalty was remarkably dependent upon the presence of the familiar French enemy. The liberties and freedoms of British subjects assumed shape and significance in the crucible of the wars for empire waged against the French. In sermons, political speeches, newspapers, toasts and crowd actions, Britons constructed the French as the mortal foes of the Protestant whig beliefs and ideals that were coming to define Britain and Britons throughout the Atlantic world.

The American Revolution had profound significance for the relationship between an emerging British national identity and an oppositional French Empire and all that it ostensibly represented. For the first time, Britons were opposed in war not (at least at first) by French Catholics believed to have been reared in absolutist ignorance, but rather by fellow Britons who justified their cause with the very whig ideals and Protestant beliefs that were so fundamental to British identity. If the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-46 had challenged Britain's whig Protestant hegemony, and the Seven Years' War had renewed and reinforced the superiority of Britishness, then the American Revolution and the War for Independence represented a far greater and more profound assault on an imperial British identity. Opposed by fellow British whigs in the thirteen colonies, Britons throughout the Atlantic were forced to examine their patriotism and loyalty, a process in which ordinary and lower sort Britons played a vital role.

The British Atlantic World

In recent years, American historians have embraced the Atlantic world as a means for understanding the origins of America's history.¹² In doing so, they have more clearly

¹² Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967); David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Bernard Bailyn and Phillip D. Morgan, eds., *Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press,

elucidated the ways in which America's history was affected by and had influence on the peoples and communities that populated the Atlantic. From the trading networks that formed commercial and cultural exchanges, to the embracing of a British celebratory calendar and plebeian forms of protest, it has now become quite clear that the mainland American colonies were shaped by their interactions with peoples and places beyond their shores. To many, this seems an obvious connection. Bailyn has argued that Atlantic history 'helps one explain relationships that had not been observed before; it allows one to identify commonalities of experience in diverse circumstances; it isolates unique characteristics that become visible only in comparisons and contrasts; and it provides the outlines of a vast culture area distinctive in world history.'¹³ The Atlantic Ocean did not act as a barrier, restricting the peoples that populated its shores from communicating with one another. Rather, it served as a gateway for the passing of goods, information and people to and from all corners of the Atlantic rim. Pocock's appeal for a 'New British History' that incorporates the cultures and histories of distant and diverse British communities rests on the supreme importance the ocean played in linking these people together.¹⁴ The British subjects that inhabited these shores perceived of themselves as part of this larger British Atlantic world community.¹⁵

Atlantic Approaches to the American Revolution

Historians of the American Revolution and War for Independence have, in fact, been doing British Atlantic history for decades.¹⁶ Studies of how the Revolution and war

1991); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005); T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Paul Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Ned C. Landsman, 'Nation, Migration, and the Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800', *The American Historical Review*, CIV (1999), 463-475; Barbara Clark Smith, 'Food Rioters and the American Revolution', *William and Mary Quarterly*, LI (1994), 3-38.

¹³ Bernard Bailyn, 'Preface', in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World*, xix.

¹⁴ J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *New Zealand Historical Journal*, VIII (1974), 3-21.

¹⁵ Nicholas Canny, 'Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America', *The Journal of American History*, LXXXVI (1999), 1113.

¹⁶ David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History', in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World*, 11.

affected the lives of people in the Caribbean and mainland Great Britain are relatively common in American Revolutionary historiography.¹⁷ As such, we have grown increasingly aware of the impact of the American Revolution in communities and regions beyond the shores of the thirteen mainland colonies. We now know that West Indian sugar planters played an important role in the repeal of the Stamp Act and that West Indian interests affected the British loss at Yorktown. Scottish historians have also shown how the loss of the colonial American trade forced Scottish merchants to develop more substantial trading links with the West Indies and thus diversify and strengthen their burgeoning local economies. Studies of British Canada have illustrated the limits to which the revolutionary ideology could take hold in communities and colonies outside the thirteen colonies and how the emigration of large numbers of American Loyalists after the war affected the region and its inhabitants. Numerous studies of mainland Britain, particularly England, have shown that there was widespread support for the American Patriots amongst the ordinary British population, which resulted in a tense political atmosphere throughout most of the 1760s, 1770s and into the 1780s.¹⁸

¹⁷ British historians, on the other hand, have been much more reluctant to explore mainland British history in this broader Atlantic context.

¹⁸ For the West Indies see: Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); 'The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, LI (1994), 203-226; 'The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution', *The Historical Journal*, XL (1997), 71-95; Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Bridgetown: Caribbean University Press, 1974); 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution', *The Journal of Negro History*, III (1976); Selwyn H. H. Carrington, *The British West Indies During the American Revolution* (Dordrecht and Providence: Foris Publications, 1988).

For British Canada see: J.B. Brebner, *Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1937); George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630-1784* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973); George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Revolution Rejected, 1775-1776* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1968); Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God. The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972); W.B. Kerr, *The Maritime provinces of British North America and the American revolution* (Sackville: Busy East Press, 1942); M. Louise English Anderson, *Crowd activity in Nova Scotia during the American Revolution* (Masters Thesis, Queen's University, 1987).

For Scotland see: Thomas Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c. 1740-1790* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1975); 'A Glasgow Tobacco Merchant During the American War of Independence: Alexander Speirs of Elderslie, 1775-1781', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXIII (1976), 501-513; Dalphy I. Fagerstrom 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XI (1954); D.B. Swinfen, 'The American Revolution in the Scottish Press', in Owen Dudley Edwards and George Shepperson, eds., *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution* (Edinburgh: Lindsay & Co. Ltd., 1976); Robert Kent Donovan, 'Evangelical Civic Humanism in Glasgow: The American War Sermons of William Thom' in Andrew Hook and Richard B. Sher, eds., *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997); 'The popular party of the church of Scotland

However, there are clear limits to the Atlantic perspective of this historiography, which are addressed in my thesis. First and foremost, these studies remain quite regional in nature, neglecting to explore how the Revolution and war functioned in a broader circum-Atlantic context. Historians have instead drawn imaginary lines that linked the events occurring in the mainland American colonies with the community, region or country that they are researching. My thesis, on the other hand, draws together the histories of five diverse and different British Atlantic communities, allowing us to envision the ways in which the events and ideas of the American Revolutionary Era affected the lives of Britons living throughout the Atlantic world. It draws together, and builds upon, this regional historiography so that we can begin to understand the broader Atlantic context of this critical period in both British and American history.

Thus, my thesis is both a trans- and circum-Atlantic study of the American Revolution.¹⁹ It is trans-Atlantic because I compare and contrast the ways in which the revolution affected the lives of Britons living in each of these five different communities. For example, I look at how residents of Kingston understood the consequences of the colonial non-importation agreements in rather different ways than Londoners, and how threats of crowd violence challenged the loyalty of New Yorkers in very similar ways to those living in Halifax. However, I also explore the consequences of the revolution and war in a broader circum-Atlantic context, showing how it redefined the ways in which members of these five communities saw themselves as part of a larger British national polity. As such, these two approaches compliment

and the American Revolution', in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten, eds., *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Edinburgh, 1995), 81-99.

For England see: James Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution* (Macon: University of Georgia Press, 1986); John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, University of Georgia Press, 1987); 'The Pro-Americans of London, 1769-1782', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXV (1978), 423-454; Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*; Colin Bonwick, *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Paul Langford, 'London and the American Revolution' in John Stevenson, ed., *London in the Age of Reform* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), 55-78; H.T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (London and New York: Longman, 1998); Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1972); Conway, *The British Isles*; 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past: The American War, Britishness, and the Celebration of Rodney's Victory at the Saints', *History*, LXXXVI (2001), 180-99; 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, LIX (2002), 65-100; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁹ For an explanation of the different methodological approaches to Atlantic history, see: Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History' in Armitage and Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World*, 15-25.

one another. They allow us to visualize both the distinct local context of the revolution and the broader Atlantic world connections that it produced.

My thesis also draws together the divergent historiographies of the eighteenth century British Empire and the American Revolution. First, it adds to the work of historians who have examined how the popular political culture of loyalty and patriotism in both mainland Britain and the American colonies was affected by the American Revolution. American historians have recently illuminated the ways that the Revolution created a new, American national political culture, which found expression in popular protest, speeches, crowd actions, songs and toasts.²⁰ Similarly, British historians have explored how the Revolution affected mainland British (or particularly English) popular political culture, presenting new opportunities for ordinary Britons to redefine and articulate their loyalty to Great Britain.²¹ Yet, neither British nor American historians have investigated how the American Revolution challenged popular conceptions of loyalty and identity in a broader British Atlantic world context.

To this point, historians of Loyalism have tended to focus on the political ideology of and the price paid by prominent American colonists who remained loyal to the Crown. Additionally, their work has centered primarily on specific communities or prominent loyalists, failing to recognize the broader effect of the American Revolution on communities of people throughout the whole of the empire.²² My thesis confronts this

²⁰ Newman, *Parades and the Politics*; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 'Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent: Celebrations, Print Culture, and the Origins of American Nationalism', *The Journal of American History*, LXXXII (1995), 37-61; Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997)

²¹ Bradley, *Popular Politics and the American Revolution*; 'The British Public and the American Revolution: Ideology, Interest and Opinion' in H.T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 124-154; Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*; 'The Pro-Americans of London'; Conway, 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past'; 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners'; Wilson, *The Sense of the People*; Bonwick, *English Radicalism*.

²² Bailyn's sympathetic account of the life of Thomas Hutchinson is perhaps the most famous example of Loyalist history. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1974). Also see: Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Leslie F. Upton, *The Loyal Whig: William Smith of New York and Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969); Eugene R. Fingerhut, *Survivor, Cadwallader Colden II in Revolutionary America* (Washington: University Press of America, 1983). There are numerous studies of the Loyalist community in the America colonies, but they tend to be geographically narrow in scope, or they focus only on prominent, elite members of the community. These include: William Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961); Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973); Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Loyalists and community in North America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994); Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalists Claimants* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965); Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). There are at least two studies of Loyalist political culture, but

gap in the Loyalist historiography by drawing the experiences of the American Loyalists out of the thirteen mainland colonies and placing them in a wider British Atlantic context. This allows us to integrate the often discarded history of Loyalist popular political culture with the ideology of loyal Britons elsewhere in the Atlantic empire.

Lastly, historians addressing British identity and patriotism have explored the development of a uniquely British identity in the latter-half of the eighteenth century in various regions of the Empire.²³ Yet they have paid relatively little attention to the impact of the American war on this emerging identity. The war and the revolutionary ideology presented a direct challenge to the very Protestant whig ideals that popular conceptions of eighteenth century Britishness rested upon. As such, it is essential that we address this critical period on the formation of British loyalty and patriotism by examining the ways in which loyal Britons understood and articulated their support for Great Britain during the American Revolution and War for Independence.

Chapter Outline

This thesis is a political history of the British Atlantic World's American Revolution. It concerns itself with the ways in which the Revolution and War for Independence challenged British popular political culture, and forced ordinary Britons throughout the British Atlantic world to rethink popular conceptions of loyalty and identity. I have approached this subject through a chronological examination of the period. For the most part, I focus on specific, well-known events and how Britons living in each of these five communities reacted to and were affected by them. Such events as the Stamp

they too tend to only emphasize the views and ideologies of elite American colonists. See: Janice Potter and Robert M. Calhoon, 'The Character and Coherence of the Loyalist Press', in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 229-271; Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). There are many studies that deal with the experiences of loyalists who immigrated to other areas of the Empire during and after the revolution. Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1972); Ann Gorman Condon, *The Loyalist Dream for New Brunswick: The Envy of the American States* (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1984); Esther Clark Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick* (Wolfville: E.C. Wright, 1955); Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); 'The Changing Attitudes of the Nova Scotia Loyalists Towards the United States, 1783-1791', *Acadiensis*, II (1973), 43-54; Christopher Moore, *The Loyalists: Revolution, Exile, Settlement* (Toronto: Macmillan Press, 1984); James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (New York: Africana Pub. Co., 1976); Wilbur H. Siebert, 'Loyalist Exodus to the West Indies: Legacy of the Revolution', in Charles W. Toth, ed., *The American Revolution and the West Indies* (London: Kennikat Press, 1975), 210-225.

²³ Colley, *Britons*, 'Britishness and Otherness', 309-329; Claydon and McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity*; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, 'North Britishness', 361-382; Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*.

Act crisis of 1765, the Boston Tea Party in 1773, and the British losses at Saratoga in 1777 and Yorktown in 1781 forced inhabitants of the wider British Atlantic to confront and respond to events occurring in the American colonies, and the explicit challenges they presented to popular conceptions of British loyalty and patriotism.

However, I also consider how specific local events and circumstances played into and affected the inhabitant's response to these larger empire-wide incidents. On numerous occasions, such as the Sugar and Free Port Act Riot in Kingston in 1766, the Liberty Pole Riots in New York during the late 1760s and early in 1770, or the Gordon Riots in London in 1780, specific local events affected or were influenced by news of events occurring in the mainland American colonies. These moments offer extraordinary opportunities to examine how the convergence of local and national events shaped the popular political culture of loyalty and patriotism amongst the local inhabitants. Additionally, it is important to consider that Britons living in New York City, Halifax, Glasgow, London and Kingston experienced the war at different times and in very different ways. Consequently, it is not my intention to explain how these Britons responded to each and every event of the revolutionary era, but rather to identify those critical moments in which the war assumed centre stage in the local popular political culture of these five communities.

Chapter One examines the origins and growth of a shared British national identity in each of these five diverse communities up until the beginning of a breakdown in colonial-British relations in 1765. I begin the chapter first by exploring the complexities and diversities of the First British Empire. Over a period of a century, the Empire had been shaped and defined through intense periods of conquest and union that resulted in a population of British Atlantic subjects that differed in considerable ways from one another. Local histories, customs and circumstances played an important role in determining the ways in which local inhabitants understood and articulated their place in the Empire. Such issues as population size, demographic and religious diversity, local politics, slavery, economic interests and the geographic proximity to Britain's European rivals forced British subjects living in each community to understand and express their loyalty to the Empire in ways both similar to and very different from one another.

After establishing the many dissimilarities of the Britain's Atlantic empire, I spend the remainder of the chapter examining how these same Britons were beginning to envision themselves as part of a larger British nation. It was during the eighteenth century that there emerged a broadly-constructed British national identity that found expression in opposition to the Catholic Empires of France, and to a lesser extent Spain. The language and symbols of loyalty thus rested upon the supremacy of Britain's Protestant whig heritage, which was contrasted with the oppressive and arbitrary French political and religious way of life. The universality of this narrative enabled Britons living in each of these five very different communities to come together in a common understanding of what united them as Britons. The successful spread of these beliefs was made possible by the unprecedented expansion of an accessible and consumable popular print culture of newspapers. Newspapers and magazines, whether in Halifax, Glasgow, New York City, Kingston or in London, reprinted news of events occurring both locally and abroad so that inhabitants of the British Atlantic could begin to conceive of their own loyalty and patriotism within the broader context of a shared empire-wide British identity.

In Chapter Two I examine how a decade of imperial crises, from the Sugar Act in 1763 to the Boston Tea Party in 1773, began to reshape popular conceptions of British identity and loyalty in the British Atlantic world. For nearly a century, constant warfare with Britain's eternal enemy France, coupled with an emerging and prosperous Atlantic trade economy and an equally flourishing popular print culture had encouraged ordinary Britons throughout the Empire to adopt a shared rhetoric of loyalty that emphasized the superiority of Britain's Protestant whig heritage. However, Colonial American resistance to imperial policies was also based upon a traditional whig definition of British rights and liberties, and as such required ordinary Britons throughout the Empire to rethink their own definitions of British loyalty and patriotism. A series of events that began with protests and rioting in response to the Stamp Act, became progressively more organized and united, ultimately redefining the relationship of the American colonists with the Empire.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that imperial crises of the 1760s and 1770s, and the explicit challenges they presented to popular conceptions of Britishness, occurred during a lull in the European wars that had dominated the first half of the

eighteenth century. As such, Britons were required to express their loyalty to Great Britain in opposition to an enemy that was not Catholic or French, but rather fellow Protestant Britons. Without this common, shared enemy, ordinary Britons struggled to make sense of an imperial crisis that challenged the very Protestant whig beliefs they had come to define themselves by.

Chapter Three covers the period when colonial American resistance quickly moved toward rebellion, and the ways in which this affected popular conceptions of loyalty in the British Atlantic world. The chapter spans the three year period from the passing of the Coercive Acts in 1774, until the British defeat at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777. As the British government attempted to exert even greater control over the American colonies, the colonists responded by presenting a more unified and defiant resistance. The passage of non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreements, and the formation of extra-legal committees and associations to enforce them, encouraged many mainland American colonists to break from their attachment to the empire in favour of a new American national identity.

However, for loyal Britons in the Caribbean, North American and mainland Great Britain the actions of the rebellious American colonists defied comprehension. As resistance turned to rebellion, Britons throughout the Atlantic struggled with defining an enemy who professed their opposition in a traditional British whig context of personal rights and liberties. As such, Britons in each of these five communities were unable to express a united and loyal response to an emerging revolutionary ideology. Instead, Britons understood the war and its attack on popular conceptions of British loyalty and patriotism from the vantage point of distinct local circumstances as much as from a shared empire-wide ideology. The situation was further compounded – at least at first – by Britain's embarrassing defeat at the Battle of Saratoga in the autumn of 1777. This event, which allowed France to join the war, had enormous consequences on the popular political culture of loyalty and patriotism in the British Atlantic world.

Chapter Four considers how France's entrance into the war affected popular conceptions of loyalty and identity amongst the broader British population. With Britain's ancient enemy now allied with the Americans, Britons throughout the Atlantic world were finally able to make sense of their American enemies. British popular

political culture began to define and decry the hypocrisy and illegitimacy of an American revolutionary ideology that was supposedly based upon a superior definition of whig rights and liberties, yet was now allied with an arbitrary and oppressive empire. The American opposition thus became increasingly less British and more French, or at least non-whig, in the minds of many loyal Britons. Furthermore, the alliance allowed Britons living in the Caribbean, North American and mainland Britain to again unite in a shared empire-wide definition of Britishness that had been conspicuously absent for the previous decade.

However, the combination of the previous years of political turmoil in the empire caused by the crisis in the American colonies, along with the presence of France in the war, resulted in an intense and occasionally violent rearticulation of Britishness amongst ordinary Britons in several British Atlantic communities. In Glasgow's No Popery Riots of 1779 and the more violent Gordon Riots in London in the summer of 1780, local circumstances and the backdrop of the war and the Franco-American alliance encouraged ordinary Britons to reassess and defend popular definitions of British rights and liberties in the face of an increasingly unpopular and apparently un-British government, which appeared to be in favour of legalising Catholicism.

The alliance also turned a colonial conflict into a major European war, with battles being fought throughout the British Atlantic Empire. Threats of invasions or attacks by French and American fleets and privateers became commonplace in Kingston, New York City, London, Glasgow and Halifax throughout the remainder of the wartime period. However unrealistic such fears may have been, Britons felt themselves to be in real danger, and this encouraged them to think further about their attachment to Great Britain. In 1781, 'the world was turned upside down' when Lord Cornwallis's army was forced to surrender to the American and French forces at Yorktown. This defeat effectively ended the war in the mainland American colonies and thus required British popular political culture to begin to accept American independence, and a new and different British Empire and identity.

The thesis concludes with an examination of the ways in which British popular political culture made sense of the final years of the American war in an effort to reassert the superiority of Britain's Protestant whig identity. A united and loyal British public in

each of these five communities continued to use the Franco-American alliance to illustrate the incapability of the newly independent American people to establish a form of government superior to that of Britain's. Reports of excessive taxation at the hands of an arbitrary American government and of violent attacks on loyal Britons still living in the colonies, coupled with rumours of French influence on American political affairs allowed Britons to see the hypocrisy of a revolution supposedly based upon a whig definition of rights and liberties.

More importantly, American independence receded in significance for many Britons, who instead saw the more important battle being fought against their European rivals, France and Spain. British popular political culture had so blurred the distinctions between the Americans and their Catholic allies that British subjects increasingly saw them as one and the same. Thus while the Americans interpreted the victory at Yorktown as the climax of their move toward independence, Britons believed that the more important war was still being fought. Consequently, less than a year after their loss at Yorktown and while peace talks with the Americans were beginning in Paris, a British fleet under the command of George Rodney defeated François De Grasse's superior French fleet in the Battle of the Saintes, a significant victory celebrated throughout Britain's Atlantic empire.

Britons throughout the Atlantic world celebrated this victory as if they had won the war, for many of them believed they had. Rodney's triumph over De Grasse assumed legendary status as one of the great British military victories of the modern era. Not only did it save Jamaica from a planned French invasion, but it allowed Britons to retain their beliefs in the authority and superiority of Britain's Protestant whig heritage. And it allowed them to continue to envision themselves as Europe's leading defence against the threats of arbitrary Catholic French and Spanish imperialism. More importantly, it enabled the broader British Atlantic public to accept America's independence without having to sacrifice their own beliefs and identities. In a long struggle over the legitimacy of Britain's whig identity that had covered two decades, the Americans and their French allies had failed to destroy Britain's valuable Atlantic empire. In fact, the American Revolution had played a vital role in the creation of a new, more resilient and ultimately more defiant, shared empire-wide loyalty to Great Britain.

Chapter 1

Britishness and the Atlantic World to 1765

I. Introduction

By the middle of the eighteenth century the First British Empire extended further than ever before, with peoples and communities scattered across the British Isles, the Caribbean, North America, the Canadian provinces, West Africa, and India. The inhabitants of this immense Empire were not just British, but also Scottish, Welsh, English, Irish, German, Dutch, French, Caribbean and Native American, to name just a few. There were Puritans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Jews, Catholics, and many more, some of whom found these European denominations unsatisfactory. Some lived in thriving Atlantic port cities, with their lives and livelihoods dependent upon peoples and communities scattered across the Atlantic and throughout Continental Europe. Others lived far more humble lives on small farms and in rural villages, reliant upon local circumstances for their survival. Still more lived on the waters of the Atlantic, shipping goods and supplies to and from communities scattered across the Empire and beyond. Of course, most British subjects were white, and many lived in communities that were predominately white. However, many others found themselves living in regions that were disproportionately black or Native American. Some lived in communities that had only recently joined the Empire, while others had been British, or English, for generations.

Despite such differences, many British subjects were beginning to look beyond older identities and identify themselves as Britons, and as such, to see themselves as part of a larger British nation and empire. In more ways than one, trade played a significant role in linking together communities and peoples throughout the British Atlantic Ocean that defined their first Empire. It brought diverse customs and cultures in close contact with one another, carried news, both orally and in print, to and from places geographically far apart, and served as a catalyst for the spread of an 'empire of goods'.¹ The emerging and accessible eighteenth-century British Atlantic print culture of

¹ Breen, 'An Empire of Goods', 467-499; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*; Jacob M. Price, 'The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776', in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century*, II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78-104; Greene, 'Empire and Identity', 208-230

newspapers, pamphlets, magazines and broadsides also played an important role in securing a shared sense of identity amongst the broader British population.²

Together, trade and popular print culture were important agents for linking together British communities across the Atlantic, but it was the ideas expressed in printed works that proved decisive in bringing the broader British nation together. The language and symbols of a shared identity that came to define Britishness celebrated a Protestant whig heritage that identified itself in opposition to the Catholic empires of Continental Europe, most notably France and to a lesser extent, Spain. Such rhetoric functioned as a grand narrative and achieved widespread support and popularity during the first half of the eighteenth century when Britain found itself in a state of almost constant war with these empires. The regular presence of the enemy enabled diverse peoples throughout Britain's Atlantic Empire to unite in an allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchy. This allegiance was expressed in terms of popular and print celebrations of the rights and freedoms of Britons as contrasted with the oppressive regime and lack of political and religious freedoms of an alien French enemy.³ French absolutism and Catholicism invoked a powerful and unifying popular image, language and political culture of identity that helped define what united and identified Britons living throughout the Atlantic World of North America, the Caribbean and the British Isles.

² The available sources and literature on the eighteenth-century print culture reflect some of the difficulties associated with doing Atlantic history. Despite communities in the Caribbean and British Canada having a developed print culture by at least the middle of the eighteenth century, very few copies exist today, and consequently even less has been written on the subject. Whereas English, Scottish and American archives have rich collections of eighteenth century newspapers, pamphlets and broadsides, and an equally strong collection of secondary literature on the subject. For England, see: Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society: 1695-1855* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 2000); Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987); Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London: Routledge, 1996); *A Patriot Press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). For Scotland, see: Mary Elizabeth Craig, *The Scottish Periodical Press, 1750-1789* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931). For America, see: Readex, *Early American Newspapers, 1690 -1820* (avail. online and on microfilm) and *Evans Early American Imprints, Series 1, 1639-1800* (also avail. online and on microfilm); Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America* (reprinted: New York: Weathervane Books, 1970); Clarence Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976); Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958); Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1980). The sources for Nova Scotia and Jamaica are much less. For Nova Scotia, see: Lynn Murphy, Brenda Hicks, and Anjali Vohra, eds., *Nova Scotia Newspapers: A Directory and Union List, 1752-1988* (Halifax: School of Library and Information Studies, Dalhousie University, 1990). For Jamaica, see Douglas C. McMurtrie, *The first printing in Jamaica ... : with a discussion of the date of the first establishment of a press on the island...* (Evanston: Privately Printed, 1942); Frank Cundall, *History of Printing in Jamaica from 1717 to 1834* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1935).

³ Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness', 309-329, esp. 316; Colley, *Britons*, 11-54.

The following chapter will explore these ideas through the examination of the British Atlantic communities of Halifax, New York City, Kingston, London and Glasgow, focusing on the various ways in which they joined, experienced and contributed to the growth of the Empire in the first half of the eighteenth century. In doing so, I will argue that despite the great diversity that existed in each of these communities, the inhabitants were increasingly able to define and articulate a shared sense of identity through a grand narrative that blurred ethnic, religious, political and economic divisions within the emerging British Empire. However, while these popular conceptions of Britishness were accessible to and influential among the broader British public, there still existed quite distinct differences between regions of the Empire. These differences continued to have important consequences on how members of each expressed their attachment to Great Britain. Local politics, economic interests, the religious and ethnic diversity of the population and geographical proximities all affected the ways in which loyalty to the Empire was constructed in each of these communities. How these local differences worked within the broader construct of a national identity affected how loyal Britons reacted to colonial American resistance, rebellion and revolution in the 1760s and 1770s, the first great challenge to the internal coherence of this new British Empire. Forced to consider what it meant to be British, loyal Britons all around the Atlantic world contributed to a new articulation and celebration of British identity.

II. Origins of the British Atlantic Empire

The origins of membership in the British Empire for each of these five communities were quite different, and thus requires closer examination. Londoners, for example, were a part of an exceptionally diverse population, located at the political and economic centre of the British Empire, and the English one that preceded it. Glaswegians, on the other hand, joined the Empire at the turn of the eighteenth century through a political union with England that eventually served to legitimize their stake in the Empire. The colonial Atlantic port communities of Halifax, Kingston and New York City were forcibly integrated into the Empire through English, and then British, imperial conquest. Before we are able to understand how these communities found commonality in their shared loyalty to Great Britain, we must first take account of their differences.

London

London was the capital of the British Empire, and arguably 'the greatest Emporium in the known world.'⁴ By the early 1760s, an incredible 700,000 inhabitants lived in and around the metropolis, totalling nearly ten per cent of the population of both England and Wales, and making it the largest city in the western world.⁵ The city attracted people from all over England, Scotland, Ireland and across Europe hoping to find work in the commercial and manufacturing metropolis. The sheer vastness of the city meant that it was experienced and interpreted very differently by its many inhabitants.

Boswell, on his second visit to London in 1762, remarked,

A politician thinks of it merely as the seat of government in its different departments; a grazier, as a vast market for cattle; a mercantile man, as a place where a prodigious deal of business is done upon 'Change; a dramattick enthusiast, as the grand scene of theatrical entertainments; a man of pleasure, as an assemblage of taverns, and the great emporium for ladies of easy virtue. But the intellectual man is struck with it, as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible.⁶

Such a sizeable population ensured that the city would be as diverse as it was large, and it was far from integrated. In a 1712 copy of the *Spectator*, Joseph Addison referred to London as 'an Aggregate of various Nations distinguished from each other by their respective Customs, Manners, and Interests... the Inhabitants of St James's... are a distinct people from those of Cheapside, who are likewise removed from those of the Temple on the one side, and those of Smithfield on the other by several Climates and Degrees in their way of Thinking and Conversing together.'⁷ Of course, the city was not so neatly divided as Addison suggested, but by the middle of the eighteenth century areas within the city had clearly taken on certain demographic characteristics that separated them from the rest.⁸ By then, many of the wealthy merchants and politicians had already made their way to the West End of town. There they built stately manors

⁴ George Rudé, *Hanoverian London, 1714-1808*, 2nd Edition (Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003), 20.

⁵ This number includes the surrounding parishes of Marylebone, St. Pancras, Paddington, Kensington and Chelsea, and the borough of Southwark. M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*, Fourth Edition (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), 24. See fn. 5 for chart of population growth in London over the eighteenth century. Rudé notes that the population of London in relation to the rest of the England far exceeded Paris, where the population only accounted for one in forty or fifty of the French population. Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 5. Similar comparisons are made in: E.A. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, XXXVII (1967), 44-45.

⁶ James Boswell, *London Journal*, F.A. Pottle, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 261.

⁷ *Spectator*, 12 June 1712, quoted in Stephen Inwood, *The History of London* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 262.

⁸ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994) 94-96.

and town houses amid well-planned squares and public parks, distancing themselves from the more squalid and densely populated neighbourhoods located in the eastern part of the city that William Hogarth so often depicted.⁹

Where people came from before settling there is difficult to determine. One contemporary observer commented that 'Not above one in twenty of shop and alehouse keepers, journeymen and labourers... were either born or served their apprenticeship in town.'¹⁰ There were roughly twenty thousand Irish-born inhabitants in London by the 1780s, many of which had settled in St. Giles-in-the-Fields, and perhaps the same number of Jewish immigrants who lived mainly in Whitechapel and the Petticoat Lane area.¹¹ French Protestant Huguenots who had fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 also made up a sizeable portion of the population, with one estimate suggesting that nearly thirty thousand had arrived by 1700. Blacks, free and enslaved, also constituted a visible proportion of the city's population, with estimates ranging from ten to thirty thousand by the 1760s. Some worked as footmen or servants for wealthy residents in the city, while most lived in the rundown dockland parish of St George in the East where they worked as sailors, bargeman, haulers or carters.¹² Of course, English men and women made up the highest percentage of the population, but they too came from diverse backgrounds, whether in terms of wealth, religion, or geography. The Scots were also migrating to London in large numbers by the middle of the eighteenth century. During the Gordon Riots in 1780 as many as ten thousand were reported to have gathered in the city to support Lord Gordon and his Protestant cause.

With such an ethnically diverse population came an equally diverse religious community. Anglicans were of course in the majority, but there was a general laxity toward their religion by the middle of the eighteenth century. Few new churches had been erected since the 1711 Act had called for fifty new churches to be built in the city, and church

⁹ The growing division between the rich and poor in London was the focus of Thomas Legge's popular pamphlet, *Low Life: Or One Half of the World Knows Not How the Other Half Live* (London, 1752), portions of which are printed in John Mullan and Christopher Reid, eds., *Eighteenth Century Popular Political Culture: A Selection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 48-50.

¹⁰ Roy Porter, 'The Wonderful Extent and Variety of London', in Sheila O'Connell, *London: 1753* (London: British Museum Press, 2003), 12.

¹¹ Porter, *London: A Social History*, 132.

¹² Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 1-29; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (London: BBC Books, 2005), 31; James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1986), 46; *Britain's Slave Empire* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2000), 57-60.

attendance had stagnated and may even have been in decline. John Wesley's Methodist revival attracted many of the poorer Londoners in the 1740s, when he began preaching in open fields throughout the city. There was also a sizeable population of Presbyterians, Quakers and Baptists in the city. As would be expected, there were also many smaller sects, which had broken from the more orthodox religions for a variety of reasons. Lastly, roughly fourteen thousand Catholics lived in London by the late 1760s, most of whom were probably Irish.¹³ They were legally barred from actively recruiting new members, nor could they practice their faith in public, but many still met in private meeting places or at the chapels of foreign embassies.

These religious divisions caused occasional tension in the city, which exploded in such incidents as the High Church riots around the trial of Dr. Henry Sacheverell in 1709; in 1715 during the accession of George I and the first Jacobite Rebellion; and in 1780 when violent riots in opposition to Catholic relief brought the city to a standstill. There were also more sporadic instances, such as in 1766 when a group of Irishmen attending a traditional Catholic burial ceremony were attacked by drunken Englishmen. Afterwards, the Irishmen, who were upset with the way they had been treated, proceeded to smash the windows of the public house where the Englishmen had been drinking.¹⁴

The size, diversity and position as the capital of the Empire contributed to a diverse and quite intense political sphere in London. The city and its surroundings had a long history of radical politics. Since the early seventeenth century, London politicians had regularly petitioned for more equal representation, wider voting rights and parliamentary reform, and they grew accustomed to calling on the general public to support their cause.¹⁵ This democratic spirit, not just within the government, but more broadly among the London populace, illustrated a level of political sophistication that was

¹³ Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 7.

¹⁴ The report of the incident concluded with the following remark, emphasizing the intolerant attitude many Londoners held toward the Catholics in the city. 'As disturbances have frequently happened at these Irish burials going to Pancras, it would be a matter worthy the magistrates and the parish of Pancras's consideration, to restrain these numerous assemblies of the lower class of Irish Papists on these occasions.' *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1766.

¹⁵ Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 162-163; Lucy S. Sutherland, *The City of London and the Opposition to Government, 1768-1774: A Study in the Rise of Metropolitan Radicalism* (London: Athlone Press, 1959). For contemporary prints of middling sort political participation, see: John Brewer, ed., *The common people and politics, 1750-1790* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1985).

unparalleled among the largest urban centres in Europe.¹⁶ As we shall see, the high-level of political intelligence amongst even the lowest ranks in the city was due in part to an increasingly diverse and accessible popular print culture. An abundance of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and broadsides regularly challenged the actions of the government and called into question the perceived rights and liberties of British subjects.¹⁷ On his visit to London in the 1780s the German traveller, J. W. von Archenholz, remarked that ‘In general nothing is more difficult than to make an Englishman speak... he answers to everything by *yes* or *no*; address him, however, on some political subject and he is suddenly animated; he opens his mouth and becomes eloquent; for this seems to be connected from his infancy with his very existence.’¹⁸ With a population numbering in the hundreds of thousands, popular crowd activity, in the form of riots, protests and celebrations, was not only more common in London, but almost always more elaborate and more confrontational.¹⁹

Political events and ideas discussed and debated in the metropolis also influenced British subjects living elsewhere in the Empire. To be sure, by the middle of the eighteenth century the broader British public was increasingly made aware of events and ideas occurring outside of London through an emerging and influential empire-wide popular print culture. Yet London politics remained enormously influential given the simple fact that the city was home to the national government and thus was the political capital of the Empire. As such, politically-motivated protests and celebrations often occurred on a scale unparalleled elsewhere in the Empire, and were reported upon in a local popular press that far exceeded that of other British communities.

Such was the case with the Wilkes and Liberty movement in the 1760s and 1770s. This widespread and popular movement had important consequences on the political ideology of Britons living in London, and equally important, but not always similar consequences for Britons living throughout the Atlantic world. Through his own

¹⁶ John Brewer, ‘The Misfortunes of Lord Bute: A Case-Study in Eighteenth-Century Political Argument and Public Opinion’, *The Historical Journal*, XVI (1973), 18-19.

¹⁷ Already in 1737 there were 207 inns, 447 taverns, 531 coffee houses and 5995 alehouses in London, which served as meeting places for both poor and rich alike to deliberate over the latest news from home and abroad. Robert B. Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hambledon, 2004), 7.

¹⁸ Quoted in Porter, *London: A Social History*, 157.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive survey of rioting in eighteenth century London, see: Shoemaker, *The London Mob*, esp. 111-152; ‘The London “Mob” in the Early Eighteenth Century’, *The Journal of British Studies*, XXVI (1987), 273-304.

devices Wilkes was able to link himself and his actions to the very rhetoric and symbol of British liberty, which attracted the attention and support of ordinary Britons living in London, throughout England, and more importantly, in the American colonies. Widespread celebrations of his release from prison in 1770, along with annual gatherings to commemorate his birthday and the symbolic use of the number forty-five, brought communities throughout the British Atlantic world together through a shared language and symbolic vernacular of British rights and liberties.²⁰ Wilkes and his followers employed an enemy in order to give meaning to their cause, and they focused their attitudes on the Scottish-born politician Charles Stuart, Lord Bute.²¹ Wilkes' attacks on Bute and the Scottish population more generally, as the tyrannical oppressors of the rights and liberties of ordinary Britons, made it all but impossible for Scots to share in and employ the Wilkite empire-wide language of liberty. Thus Wilkes and the cause he supported meant something completely different to Scots. While Britons in England and North America burnt effigies of Lord Bute to demonstrate their support for British rights and liberties, Britons living in Scotland did the same by burning effigies of Wilkes.²² Such incidents illustrate both the importance of London politics in the broader British Atlantic world and the ways in which different local cultures and traditions affected the response of inhabitants to larger empire-wide events.

London was primarily a trading city and its own economy had far-reaching influence on communities across the British Atlantic world. The city was not just the political capital of the Empire, but was also strategically located to import goods coming from British ports around the Atlantic, and to re-export many of these colonial goods to communities across mainland Europe. By 1700, London was handling roughly seventy-five percent of all of England's foreign trade. The growth of such provincial ports of Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow meant that figure had dropped to just under seventy

²⁰ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George the Third* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 163-200; 'The No. 45: A Wilkite Political Symbol', in Stephen B. Baxter, ed., *England's Rise to Greatness, 1660-1763* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1983), 349-380. For the social composition of the Wilkes crowd, see George Rudé, 'Wilkes and Liberty', *History Today*, IX (1957), 571-579. For connections between Wilkes and America, see: Pauline Maier, 'John Wilkes and American Disillusionment with Britain', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XX (1963), 373-395; Jack P. Greene, 'Bridge to Revolution: The Wilkes Fund Controversy in South Carolina, 1769-1775', *The Journal of Southern History*, XXIX (1963), 19-52; Sainsbury, 'The Pro-Americans of London'; Phillip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 182.

²¹ John Brewer, 'The Misfortunes of Lord Bute', 19-23.

²² 'Edinburgh', *Glasgow Journal*, 9 June 1763. Popular Scottish opposition toward the Wilkite cause was also reported upon in newspapers elsewhere in the Empire. *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 30 June 1768; *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 28 July 1768; *Boston Evening Post*, 18 July 1763; *The Providence Gazette; And Country Journal*, 17 September 1763; *The Newport Mercury*, 19 September 1763.

percent by 1770, but London was still clearly the centre of commercial activity in the Empire.²³ Londoners were not only exporting manufactured goods and raw materials, for they were also exporting a British culture and a way of life. Britons living throughout the Empire imported the latest fashionable clothes, household goods and reading material from ships that had recently departed from the River Thames, and they devoured the beliefs and ideas (as we shall see later on) that originated on the streets, in the coffee houses and clubs, and in the minds of London's diverse population.²⁴ Of course, by the middle of the eighteenth century London was not the only city in the Empire that defined this emerging British culture. Britons living in the Caribbean, North America and throughout the British mainland were importing and exporting goods from all corners of the Empire: an intellectual economy of exchange that rivalled its commercial counterpart and contributed to a shared empire-wide culture of Britishness. But London, as the political capital of the Empire, continued to play a vitally important role in this process.

London relied upon such a substantial trade in order to maintain such a large and diverse population. Daniel Defoe, in his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, remarked on several occasions, 'this whole Kingdom, as well as the people, as the land, and even the sea, in every party of it, are employ'd to furnish something, and I may add the best of every thing, to supply the city of London with provisions.'²⁵ In fact, the growth of London over this period was made possible with both the expansion and technological advancement of agricultural practices and trading methods throughout the rest of the country.²⁶ In 1725 alone Londoners consumed an astonishing amount of foodstuffs, which included 369,000 quarters of flour, 60,000 calves, 70,000 sheep and lambs, 187,000 swine, 115,000 bushels of oysters, over sixteen million pounds of butter and over twenty-one million pounds of cheese, and they washed it all down with almost two million barrels of beer, thirty thousand tons of wine and over eleven million gallons of spirits.²⁷ Additionally, the importation of coal from the northern regions of Tyneside and Wearside had doubled from a century earlier to nearly 650,000 tons by 1750.²⁸ In

²³ Inwood, *The History of London*, 317.

²⁴ Porter, *London: A Social History*, 134.

²⁵ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, I (London: no publisher, 1769), 12.

²⁶ Wrigley argues that immense growth of London in the first half of the eighteenth century, and its economic reliance on regions outside the city, led to the emergence of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance', 55-70.

²⁷ Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 20.

²⁸ Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance', 58.

London, goods travelled to and from nearly every corner of mainland Britain, and from across the British Atlantic and throughout mainland Europe, increasingly linking the culture and identity of Londoners with British subjects living throughout the Empire.

Kingston

The Spanish were the first European settlers in Jamaica, and ruled the island for one-hundred and fifty years before being overtaken by the English in 1655 as part of Cromwell's failed Western Design.²⁹ From its beginnings, the island notoriously served as the base for buccaneering expeditions against the Spanish trade going on throughout the Caribbean. Port towns, such as Port Royal, emerged as prosperous and dangerous enclaves for lawless seamen and ruthless merchants, trading and buying goods taken from their Spanish counterparts.³⁰ At the turn of the eighteenth century, one observer referred to the island as the 'Dunghill of the Universe.'³¹

The early governors of the island ruled autonomously and often corruptly. Political divisions quickly developed between the economic interests of the buccaneers and the small, but growing presence of a sugar plantation gentry. With Parliament unable to exert much influence, it was often the local authorities who effectively governed the colony.³² Perhaps the most famous, and certainly the first to push for a plantation-based economy was Sir Thomas Modyford, who governed Jamaica from 1664 to 1670. A Barbadian immigrant, Modyford understood that it took time and money to organize a lucrative sugar economy, so he instructed newly settled immigrants to plant other inexpensive yet profitable crops such as cacao, indigo, pimento and cotton, until they had enough capital to venture into the sugar trade. A 1670 census reveals the early diversity of trade on the island, where there were fifty-seven sugar works, forty-seven cocoa works, and forty-nine indigo works, alongside of which many other small crops were being grown.³³ However, by the early 1690s the promise of high profits meant

²⁹ Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Wealth of Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, XVIII (1965), 294; S.A.G. Taylor, *The Western Design: An Account of Cromwell's Expedition to the Caribbean*, 2nd Edition (London: Solstice Productions, 1969).

³⁰ Nuala Zahedieh, 'Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-1689', *The Economic History Review*, XXXIX (1986), 215-222.

³¹ Edward Ward, *A Trip to Jamaica: With a True Character of the People and Island* (London, 1700), 13, 15-16, quoted in Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713*, 2nd Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 149.

³² Nuala Zahedieh, 'The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XLIII (1986), 570-593.

³³ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Bridgetown: Caribbean University Press, 1974), 211-212.

that the sugar economy was beginning to take off. As a result, the emerging wealthy planter class in Jamaica began to acquire more political influence, both locally and back in London, where many of them lived for most of the year. In London, they organized a West Indian lobby that would become hugely influential in shaping British colonial economic policies throughout much of the eighteenth century, and certainly during the American Revolution.

Kingston, located on the southeast corner of the island of Jamaica, was founded in 1693 when the nearly eight thousand residents living at nearby Port Royal were forced to relocate after a major earthquake struck the area. Initially, the city struggled to develop, as many of the former residents of Port Royal opted to redevelop that town, rather than begin anew in Kingston. However, ten years later a devastating fire struck Port Royal, burning down every building, except the two forts, and finally convincing many of the inhabitants to move.³⁴ During the first decades of the eighteenth century, Kingston quickly emerged as the commercial centre of Jamaica—if not for all of the British West Indian islands – while neighbouring Spanish Town, located just over ten miles west of the city, remained the political capital.

The layout of the town resembled that of many other provincial port communities. The streets were arranged in a grid-like plan and were named after the first politicians in the town, perhaps symbolizing the city's and colony's autonomous spirit.³⁵ The well-guarded entrance to the harbour allowed merchants and shop-keepers settled along the water's edge to develop more openly, without fear of exposing themselves to a possible invasion.³⁶ The Parade Square was located in the centre of town and contained the city's most important public buildings. Along the north-side stood the local barracks, constructed of brick, which housed the various regiments regularly stationed in the city. Along the south-side of the Parade stood the Anglican church, which was described as 'a large, elegant building, of four aisles, which has a fine organ, a tower and spire, with a large clock. The tower is well-constructed, and a very great ornament to the town.'³⁷

³⁴ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 177-187.

³⁵ Dunn mentions the peculiarity of Kingston's street names for a separate reason. *Ibid.*, 298. For comparison, street names in mid- to late-eighteenth century Glasgow included Hanover, Queen, and Pitt, along with others, such as Virginia, Buchanan, and Jamaica that were illustrative of the city's Atlantic world connections.

³⁶ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 297; Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change, 1692-1962* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 8.

³⁷ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, in Fleet-Street, 1774), II, 106.

While Anglicanism was unquestionably the dominant religion throughout the British West Indies, Kingston also had a substantial Jewish population who had built a synagogue in 1751 that was described as a 'handsome, spacious building.'³⁸ Besides the Anglican church and Jewish synagogue, another resident recorded the presence of a Quaker's meeting house. There were, he said, 'no other places of Public Worship, though there are grounds to believe some Roman Catholics or disguised Papists and Priests privately meet and assemble together.'³⁹ All together, religion does not seem to have been a major factor in the lives of Kingston residents. Some feared that the spread of religion among the slave population could inspire notions of independence, while others were more attracted to the hard-living, economically-driven secular lifestyle the British Caribbean was known for.

Throughout much of the eighteenth century the population growth of Jamaica, and Kingston more particularly, continued to be affected by the severity of the local climate. Tropical diseases, particularly yellow fever and malaria, were especially rampant in and around Kingston where swamps and marshes combined with high temperatures and the regular arrival of ships whose crews and passengers spread diseases. In each year from 1730-1770, between one in eight and one and twelve white inhabitants died on the island, and in the second quarter of the eighteenth century life expectancy at birth was under ten: a full third of infants born in Kingston died before the age of one and another third died before the age of five.⁴⁰ Additionally, hurricanes, earthquakes, tropical storms and excessive flooding made it increasingly difficult to develop the necessary infrastructure and to ensure the growth of the town.⁴¹

Despite this, by the early 1770s there were nearly twelve thousand people living in the city, of whom only five thousand were white, another five thousand were slaves and the

³⁸ By the 1770s there were perhaps as many as one thousand Jews living on the island. Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II, 28; Trevor Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica, 1655-1780', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., IV (1996), 784; Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica*, 18.

³⁹ Frank Cundall, *Historic Jamaica* (London: Published for the Institute of Jamaica by the West India Committee, 1915), 159.

⁴⁰ Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican world* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14-17; 'The Countrie Continues Sicklie': White Mortality in Jamaica, 1655-1780', *Social History of Medicine*, XII (1999), 45-72.

⁴¹ From 1780 to 1784 there were at least three major hurricanes that destroyed parts of Jamaica. The worst damage was caused by the 1780 hurricane, which may have been the combination of three separate hurricanes over the period of a few days. Alan Burns, *History of the British West Indies*, 2nd Edition (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965), Appendix B, 759.

remainder were free blacks and mulattoes.⁴² The slave-to-white ratio in Kingston was quite atypical when compared with the rest of an island, where the slave population far exceeded the number of white inhabitants. Estimates suggest that there were only about thirteen thousand white Jamaican inhabitants at this time, compared to a massive two hundred thousand slaves.⁴³ In the century between 1673 and 1774, the white population of Jamaica grew a little more than two-fold, while the slave population increased some twenty-fold.⁴⁴ When contrasted with the slave-to-white populations in the rest of the British Empire, Jamaica clearly stood out from the rest. Roughly twenty-six per cent of all Black British Americans and forty-three per cent of all Black British West Indians lived in Jamaica by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

Not all black people on the island were enslaved. Through a variety of means, some had earned their freedom, and they struggled as poor labourers living in and around Kingston. A great many others had run away from the masters and formed semi-autonomous maroon communities in the deep woods and mountains of the island, occasionally robbing plantations and killing white Jamaicans. Two major revolts in the eighteenth century, the first from 1725 to 1740, and the second in 1760, finally forced the white inhabitants to strike a treaty with the maroons, guaranteeing them their freedom in return for their help in catching future runaway slaves on the island.⁴⁶ In many ways, the presence of a majority population of slaves, freed blacks, and maroons in Jamaica united the much smaller white population on the island. Burnard suggests that such a division actually served to incorporate the lower sort into the political and social system, more so than anywhere else in the Empire.⁴⁷ Poor labourers as well as wealthy merchants could identify with one another strictly on the basis of the colour of their skin.

United or not, the presence of a majority slave population required that the white inhabitants be on regular guard against possible insurrections or rebellions. Slave

⁴² Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II, 103.

⁴³ Carrington, *The British West Indies*, 19; Burnard provides a chart of the population growth on the island from 1662-1788 in: Burnard, 'European Migration to Jamaica', 772, table 1.

⁴⁴ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 216.

⁴⁵ Trevor Burnard and Kenneth Morgan, 'The Dynamics of the Slave Market and Slave Purchasing Patterns in Jamaica, 1655-1788', *William and Mary Quarterly*, LVIII (2001), 205-7; Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, 15.

⁴⁶ Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution', *The Journal of Negro History*, LXI (1976), 292.

⁴⁷ Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, 21.

revolts were a common occurrence in the West Indies, and particularly in Jamaica. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were attempted revolts nearly every five years in Jamaica, more than anywhere else in the island.⁴⁸ Many communities responded to the threat by forming local militias, but most were disorganized and ill-equipped, not to mention grossly outnumbered on an island where the slave-to-white ratio was nine-to-one.⁴⁹ Thus, Jamaicans developed a dependency on the British army and navy to protect them in times of slave revolt. British soldiers were a constant and pleasing presence in the eyes of Jamaica's white population throughout the eighteenth century, which would later distinguish them from their fellow British colonists in the thirteen mainland American colonies.⁵⁰

As the principal port in Britain's largest colony in the Caribbean, Kingston also had a quite substantial transient population. Merchants and sailors, benefiting from the emerging Atlantic trade, brought goods to and from the city on a regular basis, staying only for a few days or weeks at a time to settle the necessary paperwork and to unload and load their ships. Additionally, Kingston – along with Halifax and New York City – were major imperial bases for British rule in the Atlantic Empire after the Seven Years' War, which brought with it a constant military and naval presence in the city.⁵¹ In his contemporary history of Jamaica Edward Long notes the difficulty in providing accurate population statistics due to the presences of such a substantial population of transient sailors and seamen.⁵² When Lord Adam Gordon toured the island in 1764, he remarked that 'the generality of the Inhabitants look upon themselves there as passengers only.'⁵³

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Jamaica had emerged as the economic 'powerhouse of the British empire.'⁵⁴ Sugar and such by-products as rum and molasses were the lifeline of Jamaica's Atlantic economy, and brought a great deal of wealth to Kingston residents despite the fact that there were no sugar plantations located within

⁴⁸ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967), 273-74; Sheridan, 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776', 291.

⁴⁹ Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, 137-174.

⁵⁰ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 34-57; Sheridan, 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776'

⁵¹ Patricia U. Bonomi, 'New York: The Royal Colony', *New York History*, LXXXII (2001), 5.

⁵² Long, *The History of Jamaica*, II, 121.

⁵³ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 232.

⁵⁴ Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, 13.

the city.⁵⁵ Kingston had the island's largest and most accessible harbour, and as such the wealthy sugar planters depended upon it to ship out their products and to import the various goods they required. Thus, as Clarke asserts, 'the growth of Kingston's economy was therefore geared to the growth of the island's economy.'⁵⁶ And from 1731 to 1775 the island's sugar, rum and molasses trade expanded at an unprecedented rate, which brought great amounts of wealth and prosperity to residents of Kingston. Over this period, sugar production expanded by one-hundred and seventy per cent, while slave imports nearly doubled.⁵⁷ Between 1730 and 1754 the number of hogsheads of sugar shipped annually from the island increased from 25,000 to 40,000, and by 1774 the number had grown to over 68,000.⁵⁸ These three products accounted for eighty-nine per cent of Jamaica's total exports in the year 1770. The success of the sugar economy was reflected in the immense wealth of Jamaica's white inhabitants, over half of whom lived in Kingston. On the eve of the American Revolution per capita white wealth in Jamaica stood at an astonishing £2,201, contrasted to the £42.1 in England and Wales and £60.2 in the American colonies.⁵⁹

Kingston merchants also prospered significantly from the Atlantic slave trade. During the eighteenth century eighty-seven per cent of the slaves known to have arrived upon the island came via Kingston.⁶⁰ It was on the backs of those slaves that Jamaica's sugar planters acquired such wealth. The growing and harvesting of sugar cane was extremely labour intensive, requiring a substantial number of workers to toil long hours in the hot Jamaican fields in order for the planters to make a profit. Slavery, Dunn argues, 'was ruthlessly exploitative from the outset, a device to maximize sugar production as cheaply as possible.'⁶¹ However, prior to the 1740s Kingston merchants also carried on a profitable slave re-export trade with the Spanish islands in return for hard cash and tropical goods. But thereafter, with Jamaica's sugar industry surging forward, the slave

⁵⁵ Jamaicans did participate in other areas of trade, such as indigo, cotton, cocoa and livestock, but they remained secondary to sugar production throughout this period. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 59-60; Verne A. Shepherd, 'Livestock and Sugar: Aspects of Jamaica's Agricultural Development from the Late Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, XXXIV (1991), 627-643.

⁵⁶ Clarke, *Kingston, Jamaica*, 15.

⁵⁷ Sheridan 'The Wealth of Jamaica', 296-297.

⁵⁸ Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, 14-15.

⁵⁹ Trevor Burnard, "'Prodigious Riches": The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution,' *Economic History Review* LIV (2001), 517-520.

⁶⁰ Burnard and Morgan, 'The Dynamics of the Slave Market', 212.

⁶¹ Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 224.

re-export business dropped considerably as more slaves were needed to cultivate the growing number of sugar plantations.⁶²

New York City

The Dutch West India Company settlement of New Amsterdam was founded in 1625 to protect their thriving fur trade in the colony of New Netherland. The Dutch were England's main commercial competitors in the push for Atlantic supremacy, and thus found themselves at war with each other intermittently from 1652 until 1674. The English, with prospering colonies already established in the Chesapeake and New England, wanted the Dutch colony of New Netherland in order to gain access to the valuable fur trade and to remove Dutch influence in the region that divided their existing mainland colonies.⁶³ In 1664, just a decade after having successfully taken Jamaica from the Spanish, the English launched a surprise attack on New Amsterdam, capturing it from the Dutch with little opposition. Ten years later the Dutch retook the city, but only for a short period before formally surrendering it to the English in 1673, at which time it was renamed New York City.

The process of anglicizing the community was extremely slow throughout the remainder of the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth century as the Dutch language and culture continued to dominate the city's public sphere. This was partly due to the lack of English migrants to the city until the first decade of the eighteenth century and also to the lack of cohesion amongst the English-speaking population. Migrants from England, Scotland, Ireland (both Protestant and Catholic) and the British West Indies usually all spoke English, but they differed in religious, political and social customs and beliefs. Additionally, by the late 1680s large numbers of French Huguenots, escaping Louis XIV's Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), brought with them a distinct French culture that flourished in the city. The presences of these diverse cultures inhibited the ability of successive English governments in the first

⁶² Between 1736 and 1775 the number of re-exported slaves varied from 558 to 1,376, while those that were retained stood at a much higher 4,991 to 8,068. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 222.

⁶³ Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settlement of North America to 1800* (London: The Penguin Press, 2002), 259-260.

decades of the eighteenth century to incorporate them into the English, and soon to be British Empire.⁶⁴

In addition to the diverse European population of New York City, there also existed a substantial black population that continued to rise throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁵ By 1731 there were 1,577 blacks living in the city, or about eighteen per cent of the population.⁶⁶ In a 1779 census, when the British army occupied the city, there were 1,951 blacks amongst 12,408 inhabitants, meaning that blacks contributed sixteen per cent of the population.⁶⁷ Like the white inhabitants, the black population came from wide-ranging backgrounds, and as such brought with them a diversity of cultures and beliefs that contributed to distinctively black social and political culture by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁶⁸ Most blacks living in the city were slaves, but there was also a small minority who were free, and were able to find work as labourers and semi-skilled and even skilled craftsmen. By 1746, nearly thirty per cent of the labouring force in New York City was comprised of free and enslaved blacks.⁶⁹ Relations between the white and black population in the city, whether free or enslaved, was quite different than in the southern colonies or West Indies. There were no large plantations, where only a handful of white men had to control a substantially larger enslaved black work force. Rather, those New Yorkers who owned slaves seldom had more than one or two, who would work in the house or at their owner's place of business. Some black New Yorkers attempted to adjust to the English way of life, by learning the language and converting to Christianity, while others continued to retain their own particular culture and customs.

⁶⁴ Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 81-110; Thelma Willis Foote, *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 91-123.

⁶⁵ For more on slavery in New Amsterdam and colonial New York City see: Foote, *Black and White Manhattan*; Edgar J. McManus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); Thomas J. Davis, 'Slavery in Colonial New York City', (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1974); and Vivienne L. Kruger, 'Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1626-1827', (Ph.D. diss: Columbia University, 1985).

⁶⁶ Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot*, 113.

⁶⁷ Graham Russell Hodges, *Root & Branch: African Americans in New York & New Jersey, 1613-1863* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 150.

⁶⁸ White argues that by the 1760s black slaves in the Northern Colonies had come to develop their own distinctive culture and festivals that drew both on their own histories and also their interactions with white settlers in the region, particularly the Dutch in the case of Pinkster. Shane White, "'It Was a Proud Day": African Americans, Festivals, and Parades in the North, 1741-1834', *The Journal of American History*, LXXXI (1994), 13-50.

⁶⁹ Gary Nash, *Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 108.

The white inhabitants in New York City were equally diverse. English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, French and German settlers all called the city home in the mid-eighteenth century, and worshipped in churches that were equally diverse. When the Scottish traveller Patrick M'Robert came upon the city in the early 1770s he counted 'three English churches, three Presbyterian, two Dutch Lutheran [sic], two Dutch Calvinists [sic], all neat and well finished buildings, besides a French church, an Anabaptist, a Methodist, a Quaker meeting, a Moravian church, and a Jews synagogue.'⁷⁰ Similarly, an anonymous French traveller in the city in 1765 remarked that 'the Inhabitants of new York are a mixed people, mostly Decended from the Dutch planters originally, there are still two Churches in which religious worship is performed in that language... all religions are permitted here Except the roman Catholique.'⁷¹ Religious affiliation carried important political and social significance. Anglicans were the largest, and most politically and economically influential denomination in the city by the middle of the eighteenth century, having chartered the city's only university, King's College, in 1754. The Scots Presbyterians also made up a substantial portion of the population, while the Dutch Reformed church continued to hold considerable influence, though their numbers were certainly on the decline after the late-seventeenth century.

By the early 1760s, New York City's population was approaching 18,000, still well below Glasgow's 28,000 inhabitants, but much larger than either Kingston or Halifax.⁷² The city benefited from a large and accessible harbour and access to the rich, fertile lands of the Hudson Valley, making it one of Britain's most valuable Atlantic port communities, with a network of trade that extended around and even beyond the British Atlantic and throughout Continental Europe. The success of the Atlantic trade brought great wealth and political influence both to the city's Atlantic merchants and to the landed elite of the Hudson Valley, and each group battled for control of city politics throughout much of the colonial period. By the 1750s, two great families dominated the political scene. The predominantly Anglican Delancey family were atop the merchant community. The mainly Presbyterian Livingston family, holders of an enormous and valuable estate in the Hudson Valley, came to represent the interests of the landed elite. However, New York City politics was more liberally constructed than most any other city in the

⁷⁰ Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Patrick M'Robert's Tour Through Part of the North Provinces of America* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1935), 140.

⁷¹ 'Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies, 1765, II' *The American Historical Review*, XXVII (1921), 82.

⁷² Richard M. Ketchum, *Divided Loyalties: How the American Revolution Came to New York* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2002), 21.

colonies. By the middle of the eighteenth century, more middling sort merchants and craftsmen had the right the vote, and by the 1760s open-air meetings allowed people from all ranks of society to voice their political beliefs and opinions, albeit still from outside of the political system.⁷³ Thus, as tensions between the thirteen colonies and the British government mounted in the 1760s the rule and authority of New York City's elite found itself under increasing pressure from the political interests and ideology of a vocal and sometimes confrontational lower and middling sorts, who held significant influence on the local political culture.

The Atlantic trade economy in New York City rivalled that of any city in the Empire by the middle of the eighteenth century. However, the success of their trade did not depend overwhelmingly on any one commodity, like the tobacco trade in Glasgow or the sugar trade in Kingston. Rather New Yorkers traded in a wide variety of goods, exporting locally produced goods and raw materials to communities throughout the Empire and also carrying on an extensive re-exportation business between the West Indies and mainland Britain. Upon his arrival in the city, M'Robert expressed a sense of astonishment at the level of activity going on.

Here are at present upward of 300 sail of shipping. They carry on an extensive trade from this port to Britain, Ireland, Holland, France, Spain, Portugal, up the Mediterranean, the West Indies, Spanish Main, as well as to the other colonies. Their exports are chiefly wheat, flour, Indian corn, indigo, flaxseed, pot and pearl ashes, fish, oil, pork, iron, timber, lumber, wax, and live cattle to the West Indies. Their imports are from Britain all kinds of cloth, linen and woollen, wrought iron, shoes, stockings, &c. From Holland, they have European and East India goods; from France, Spain and Portugal, wines, spirits, fruits, silks, and other articles of luxury; from the Spanish Main, they have logwood, mahogany, some indigo and dollars; from the West Indies, they have sugar, rum and molasses. Another considerable article of their export is built vessels, a good many of which are now on the stocks at this port, which they generally load with their own produce, and carry to some market where they sell both ship and cargo. They have great choice of wood in their ship-yards. Their upper timbers they make all of cedar, which they prefer to oak. They are very nice in the workmanship of ship-building here, and use a great deal of ornament and painting about the vessels.⁷⁴

⁷³ Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 363-364; Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 85; Patricia U. Bonomi, 'Political Patterns in Colonial New York City: The General Assembly Election of 1768', *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXXI (1966), 432-447; Roger Champagne, 'New York's Radicals and the Coming of Independence' *The Journal of American History*, LI (1964), 21-40.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 54; Bridenbaugh, ed., 'Patrick M'Robert's Tour', 138-142.

The chief exports in New York City were bread, flour and grains, such as wheat, Indian corn, oats, rye, barley, peas and buckwheat, most of which were grown in the fertile soils of the Hudson valley. Furs, such as beaver and deer skins also brought profits to some New Yorkers, though again, not on the scale of the St. Lawrence River valley in Canada. By the late 1760s and early 1770s pig and bar iron production, carried on mostly in New Jersey, but exported through New York City's harbour, had increased to a such a level that only Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia produced more. There was also a small but established trade with merchants in Glasgow, wherein materials such as potashes, iron, flour, staves, whale fins, Madeira wine and lumber were exported in return for manufactured goods, such as carpets, tartans and other woollens. New York City's merchants also had access to large quantities of high quality lumber in the expansive forests west of the city, which was not only exported to England and the West Indies, but also used to create a substantial ship-building manufactory in the city's harbour.⁷⁵

However, many of the goods shipped from New York City were not marketable in England, where merchants could get the same products at lower prices from other areas of the Empire or mainland Europe.⁷⁶ As a result, New York merchants secured their place in a triangular trade network between the West Indies and mainland Britain that allowed them to export goods and materials not needed in Britain to communities in the West Indies. In return, they received items such as cotton, lime-juice, sugar, spices and medicines, which were highly popular in English markets. In fact, by the middle of the eighteenth century as much as forty per cent of the city's imports came from the West Indies, particularly Jamaica, where many New York merchants had established factors for carrying on their business.⁷⁷ From England, New Yorkers imported popular English manufactured goods such as clothing, furniture, brasswork, tea, sail cloth, paints, coal, malt liquors and groceries.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Virginia Harrington, *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), 164-174.

⁷⁶ By the late 1760's New York was receiving, on average, 462 vessels annually, and freighted many more. In 1769 alone, New York merchants legally exported thirty-four separate commodities to Britain, thirty-five to the West Indies, nineteen to the Mediterranean, and fifteen to Ireland. Edward Countryman, 'The Uses of Capital in Revolutionary America: The Case of the New York Loyalist Merchants', *William and Mary Quarterly*, II (1992), 10.

⁷⁷ Harrington, *The New York Merchant*, 190, 193-195.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

The mercantile success of New York City merchants also led to a burgeoning domestic manufactory by the middle of the eighteenth century. From as early as 1730, New York City led all other American colonies in the importation of sugar, with five large refineries located in the city, though their trade was not nearly as extensive as Jamaica.⁷⁹ Other manufactured items, such as hemp, salt, glass, hats, shoes, silver and cutlery also began to appear. While many of these were small, underdeveloped enterprises, it is clear that by the 1760s New York City was beginning to harness the valuable land and labour to create a domestic manufactory able to supply the necessary goods and materials for the local population.⁸⁰

Glasgow

The history of Glasgow's integration into the British Empire differed significantly from that of Halifax, Kingston or New York City. Rather than being incorporated into the Empire through conquest, the Scots actually helped to create the Empire through political union with England in 1707. To be sure, many contemporaries and subsequent historians have argued that the union was as much an English conquest of Scotland as any other region of the Empire albeit a political rather than a military one. Instead of using guns and bayonets, the English opted for bribery and political manipulation, or as Burns famously put it, Scotland was 'bought and sold for English gold.'⁸¹ The Act of Union triggered riots throughout Scotland, and in Glasgow much of the opposition centred around the perceived threat that the union posed for the authority of the Presbyterian church.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 147-148, 165. The largest was Livingston's Sugar-house, located on Liberty Street and standing four-stories tall. During the American Revolution, it received a notorious reputation as a prison for American soldiers. I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York, 1922), V, 1036, 1042, 1054; Dorothy Barck, 'Livingston's Sugar House: Introduction given at the Unveiling and Dedication of a Memorial Tablet to... mark the site of Livingston's Sugar House, May 12, 1934', MSS New-York Historical Society (NYHS), 1; John C. Travis, ed., *The Memoirs of Stephen Allen, 1767-1852* (New York City, 1927), MSS NYHS The New-York Historical Society, 18-19.

⁸⁰ Harrington, *The New York Merchant*, 145-152.

⁸¹ Robert Burns, 'Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation' (1791), in Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg, *The Canongate Burns* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), 393.

⁸² William Law Mathieson, *Scotland and the Union: A History of Scotland from 1695 to 1747* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1905), 130-135; Kenneth Logue, 'Eighteenth-century Popular Protest: Aspects of the People's Past', in Edward J. Cowan, *The People's Past: Scottish folk, Scottish history* (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1980), 110-111. For a concise account of the Union and the events surrounding it, see Christopher A. Whatley, *Bought and Sold for English Gold?: Explaining the Union of 1707* (Glasgow: Economic and Social History Society of Scotland, 1994); For the economic causes and consequences of the Union, see T. M. Devine, 'The Union of 1707 and Scottish Development', *Scottish Economic & Social History*, V (1985), 23-40.

However, in Glasgow opposition to the union appears to have been short-lived. Within a decade, when the first Jacobite rebellion (1715) threatened the stability of the newly formed union between Scotland and England, Glasgow petitioned the government for the right to raise and maintain their own regiment of five hundred soldiers in support of the British cause.⁸³ The offer was declined, but the magistrates went ahead with their plans and the Glasgow regiment later served in battle at Stirling.⁸⁴ During the second Jacobite rebellion in 1745, Glasgow continued to display its loyalty to the Hanoverian cause. On his retreat through Scotland, Charles and his depleted army occupied Glasgow for a week, where they met a frosty reception. There were no grand celebrations, so common when a person of military or political distinction arrived in a town, nor were there illuminations, bonfires or other public toasts in honour of his arrival. Glaswegians expressed their loyalty to the king and Great Britain by doing nothing in the presence of the Young Pretender.

By 1763, Glasgow was bustling with nearly 28,000 inhabitants, a rise of more than thirty per cent over the previous two decades.⁸⁵ During his tour through Scotland in the early 1770s, the Welsh traveller Thomas Pennant declared Glasgow 'the best built of any second-rate city I ever saw: the houses of stone, and in general well built, and many in a good taste, plain and unaffected... the view from the cross, where the two other great streets fall into this, has an air of vast magnificence.'⁸⁶ Over the previous three decades the city had expanded at an astonishing rate, with new manufactories, public buildings and marketplaces throughout the town.⁸⁷ The two main thoroughfares were High St., which ran north to south from the Cathedral down to the waterfront, and the Trongate, which ran east to west for the length of the city. The two streets met at the Cross, which contained the Tollbooth and adjoining City Hall, along with an equestrian statue of William III, erected in 1735. The statue was prominently displayed in one of the busiest areas of the city, referred to by Pennant as 'the finest and broadest part of the

⁸³ George MacGregor, *The History of Glasgow: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Glasgow: Thomas D. Morison, 1881), 292-293; Robert Reid, 'Senex', *Glasgow: Past and Present* (Glasgow: David Robertson and Co., 1884), I, 332.

⁸⁴ Alistair Tayler and Henrietta Tayler, *1715: The Story of the Rising* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1936), 23.

⁸⁵ James Bell and John Paton, *Glasgow: Its Municipal Organization and Administration* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1896), 3.

⁸⁶ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides*, (Chester: Printed by John Monk, 1774), I, 127.

⁸⁷ For an overview of the rapid expansion of Glasgow in the middle half of the eighteenth century, see: T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*, Sixth edition (London: Fontana Press, 1998), 355-366.

street,' and featured in many descriptions of the city in the eighteenth century. Encapsulating the loyalty of the city to the Hanoverian monarchy as well as indicating what Glaswegians expected from their monarch, an inscription along the base of the statue read: 'To Britain and Ireland purer religion, law, and liberty, were restored, maintained, and transmitted to posterity, under the just government of patriotic princes of the Brunswick line; and the yoke of slavery, intended by the French for the whole of Europe, was averted.'⁸⁸ One resident noted that during the eighteenth century the statue also served as the gathering spot for annual celebrations of the George III's birthday, from which loyal toasts were proclaimed 'amongst the assembled multitude.'⁸⁹

The population of Glasgow by the middle of the eighteenth century lacked the ethnic and racial diversity found in London, Kingston or New York City. There is evidence to suggest that some individuals in the city owned slaves and Glaswegian merchants were at least minor participants in the burgeoning Atlantic slave trade. Yet the numbers were quite small in comparison to other British port communities.⁹⁰ There were indentured servants, many of who came from the Highlands, but they were still a relatively small part of the population in the 1750s and 1760s. Irish immigration would eventually transform the demography of the city, but not until the nineteenth century. The poorer labouring residents lived mainly to the south of the Trongate and to the east of High St. where many of the city's markets and manufactories were located, while the more wealthy merchants and politicians- often one and the same – had begun to build large Georgian-style homes in the western part of town, along Princes St. and in what is now George Square.

Glasgow was a devout Presbyterian community, but by the 1750s the established church in the city was dominated by the Popular Party. The lower and middling sort dominated the Popular Party, who opposed the elitism and hierarchy of the Moderate Church and supported a more evangelical faith in which the congregation would be responsible for selecting their ministers. Not surprisingly, the evangelical minister George Whitefield made several successful visits to Glasgow in the 1740s and early

⁸⁸ John McUre, *Glasghu Facies: A View of the City of Glasgow*, (Glasgow: John Tweed, 1872) I, 431.

⁸⁹ Reid, *Glasgow: Past and Present*, I, 362.

⁹⁰ Reid, *Glasgow: Past and Present*, II, 162-170. For more on the participation of Glasgow merchants in the Atlantic slave trade, see: David Hancock, 'Scots in the Slave Trade', in Ned C. Landsman, *Nation and Province in the First British Empire: Scotland and the Americas, 1600-1800* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), 60-93; Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world, 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 99-101.

1750s, preaching to thousands in and around the city.⁹¹ These religious beliefs had important political consequences. Popular party followers were loyal supporters of the Hanoverian succession, believed strongly in the rights and liberties guaranteed to all subjects through the constitution and thus were defiant in their opposition to the Jacobite cause. By the 1760s and 1770s, the democratic, egalitarian spirit of the party's leading ministers, such as John Erskine, William Porteous and Charles Nisbet, made many of them advocates for American independence.⁹²

The widespread migration of British subjects to communities throughout the Atlantic world in the seventeenth and eighteenth century helped to weaken regional differences and thus draw together Britons living throughout the Empire.⁹³ Yet, this was less true in Glasgow or Scotland for that matter, where the population remained steadfastly Scottish and Presbyterian throughout much of the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Consequently, a transformation of the identity of many Glaswegians was required to consolidate their position within the British polity and Empire. To reinvent themselves as British required Glaswegians to relocate themselves within the traditional rhetoric of English rights and liberties.

Of course, by the middle of the eighteenth century the financial rewards of the Atlantic trade had convinced many of the benefits of membership in the British Empire, but just as important were the failures of the previous century. 'From the 1690's,' Kidd has argued, 'there had been a large element of self-doubt in Scottish political culture about the nation's collective institutional failures, and this cast of mind, which was to predate Union, was to ease the capitulation of eighteenth-century North Britons to an English political identity.'⁹⁴ The Act of Union brought Scotland from the peripheries of political and economic modernization into the progressively advanced ideas and practices of the developing British Empire. Despite the vital significance of Scottish political and economic thinkers, ideas such as representative government, individual rights and liberties, and taxation by elected representatives were all recast in a larger British context. To British enthusiasts, Scotland was trapped in a feudal, agrarian-based

⁹¹ Eyre-Todd, *History of Glasgow*, III, 169-170.

⁹² Robert Kent Donovan, 'The Popular Party of the Church of Scotland and the American Revolution', in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten, eds., *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 81-99.

⁹³ Alison Games, 'Migration', in David Armitage and Michael Braddick, eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 31-50.

⁹⁴ Kidd, 'North Britishness', 363.

communal society and it had quickly fallen behind the political, social, and economic growth of mainland Europe.

At the same time, England, which had been at best a marginal power throughout much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, had modernized and was emerging as a major international military, political and economic power.⁹⁵ Consequently, by the middle of the eighteenth century many enlightened Scottish writers, both in popular and elite print culture, had 'rendered their native country in a sense a 'historyless' nation.'⁹⁶ In their essays, correspondence, sermons and speeches, Scotland's past was reimagined within a new Anglo-British history that allowed Scots to successfully adopt the English Protestant Whig heritage as their own.

Perhaps no city within the Empire took advantage of the opportunities offered by Atlantic trade more than Glasgow. Access to English trading routes had been one of the principal motives for Scots, particularly in Atlantic trading communities such as Glasgow, to become Britons.⁹⁷ Scotland had struggled throughout the seventeenth century to compete with its English neighbours in the colonial trade, and the Scottish Parliament regularly petitioned Westminster for wider access to the English colonial markets. In the late-seventeenth century the Company of Scotland, a group of wealthy merchants who had united to cultivate the country's foreign market economy, had attempted to establish a Scottish colony at Darien, located in present-day Panama. Enormous sums of money were invested and the public was enthralled by promises from the government that the project would ignite Scotland's economy. In Glasgow, which was home to the Company's trading headquarters, the Council subscribed the considerable sum of £3,450 and the local public invested nearly four times as much.⁹⁸ Yet, amid poor planning, lack of military protection, and widespread disease, the venture ultimately collapsed.

In retrospect, the failure of the Darien venture was more than just a disastrous attempt by the Scots to expand their markets across the Atlantic. Rather, it illustrated Scottish

⁹⁵ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* (London: Unwin Hyman Inc., 1989), xiii.

⁹⁶ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of Anglo-British Identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209.

⁹⁷ Landsman, 'Nation, Migration, and the Province', 464.

⁹⁸ Gordon Jackson, 'Glasgow in transition, c. 1660- c. 1740', in T.M. Devine and Gordon Jackson, eds, *Glasgow: Volume 1: Beginnings to 1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 73-4.

determination to participate in and benefit from the Atlantic world trade, and the Scots' ability to mount such an expedition showed that at least the beginnings of an Atlantic market economy had already begun to take root in Scotland years before union with England.⁹⁹ Yet, it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that Scotland in general, and Glasgow in particular, began to develop a truly expansive trans-Atlantic trade network with the prosperous North American and Caribbean colonial markets.¹⁰⁰

The staggering growth of the Atlantic economy, based as it was on the profitable tobacco and sugar trade with the American and Caribbean colonies, positioned the city as one of the major commercial centres in the Empire, competing with the likes of Liverpool, Bristol, and even London. The city's success was to a large degree a result of Glasgow's faster, less dangerous, and more direct shipping routes across the Atlantic, as well as Glaswegian merchants' improved methods of business with the colonial tobacco and sugar planters.¹⁰¹ By 1741, for example, tobacco imports from the Colonies had risen to roughly eight million pounds, more than forty times the yearly rate imported in the 1680s. Three decades of remarkable growth ensued: by 1745, imports had jumped to thirteen million pounds, increasing to fifteen million pounds in 1755, and peaking at forty-seven million pounds by 1771.¹⁰² By the late 1750s, tobacco imports in Glasgow had surpassed those of London and all other English ports combined, and by 1765 it accounted for nearly forty per cent of all of Britain's Atlantic trade.¹⁰³ The success of the trade also spurred the growth of other industries in the city to supply goods and provisions to colonial planters, and by the 1750s and 1760s Glasgow had a complex urban economy with established connections all across the Atlantic world.¹⁰⁴ Visitors to Glasgow took note of the diverse urban economy, and the direction of trade: one recorded seeing,

⁹⁹ David Armitage, 'Making the Empire British: Scotland in the Atlantic World, 1542-1707', *Past and Present*, CLV (1997), 57-9; George Pratt Insh, *The Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies* (London: Scribner, 1932); John Prebble, *The Darien Disaster* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968); Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 307-9; T.M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2004), 40-49.

¹⁰⁰ One historian has estimated that smuggling was so excessive in the 1720s that Glasgow merchants paid duties on only one-half to two-thirds of all their imports. R. C. Nash, 'The English and Scottish Tobacco Trades in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Legal and Illegal Trade', *Economic History Review*, XXXV (1982), 354-72.

¹⁰¹ Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, 55-71; Devine, *Scotland's Empire*, 74-88.

¹⁰² Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, 73, 108; Lynch, *Scotland*, 380.

¹⁰³ T.M. Devine, 'The Golden Age of Tobacco', in Devine and Jackson, eds., *Glasgow*, 76, 140-43.

¹⁰⁴ Irene Maver, *Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 18-20; R. H. Campbell, 'The Making of the Industrial City', in Devine and Jackson, eds., *Glasgow*, 188-90.

a vast nailery, a stone-ware manufactory, and a great porter brewery: besides these are manufactures of linnens, cambricks, lawns, fustians, tapes, and striped linnens; sugar-houses and glass-houses; great roperies; vast manufactures of shoes, boots and saddles, and all sorts of horse furniture; also vast tanneries... chiefly for the use of the colonists. The magazine of saddles, and other works respecting that business, is an amazing sight: all these are destine for *America*, no port equaling this for the conveniency of situation, and speedily supplying that market.¹⁰⁵

The 'salutary neglect' of successive early-eighteenth century British governments also helped to ease tension between Scotland and England.¹⁰⁶ Parliament avoided interfering in the political or economic lives of the Scots, while the Act of the Union guaranteed that many Scottish traditions, institutions and privileges, such as the legal, education and religious institutions remained virtually independent.¹⁰⁷ The initial fears of devout Presbyterians in Glasgow that the union would undermine the Church of Scotland subsided as the century progressed. Eventually, the freedom to remain Presbyterian actually served to strengthen loyalty to Britain in Glasgow, and became a means by which Scots could express their loyalty and patriotism to Britain in a way that still preserved their own sense of a uniquely Scottish heritage. When Scots were denied the formation of a militia in the 1750s, largely due to the fears of a Jacobite revival that still persisted after the rebellion of 1745, they reacted bitterly toward the British government. This was not because they resented being a part of Britain, but rather became the absence of a militia deprived them of the means by which they could physically express their loyalty to the Crown and Empire. Furthermore, as Britons they resented being denied the right to bear arms enjoyed by Englishmen.¹⁰⁸

Halifax

Nova Scotia was officially incorporated into the British Empire in the Treaty of Utrecht with the French in 1713. The colony was predominately inhabited by the indigenous Mi'kmaq people and a French Acadian population of roughly 10,000 inhabitants, and it was not until the 1740s that Britons began settling the colony.¹⁰⁹ The Acadians were the

¹⁰⁵ Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland*, I, 131.

¹⁰⁶ James Henretta, *Salutary Neglect: Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

¹⁰⁷ Frank O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 1997), 97-99.

¹⁰⁸ Kidd, 'North Britishness', 381.

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: the British campaign against the peoples of Nova Scotia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 41-67; Sally Ross and Alphonse Deveau, *The Acadians of Nova Scotia: Past and Present* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Limited), 54-55.

first descendants of the Catholic French immigrants who had arrived in the region shortly after the explorations of Samuel de Champlain and Jean de Biencourt in the early seventeenth century in order to develop the French fur trade with the native inhabitants. They quickly settled into the new territory and established close personal ties with their Mi'kmaq neighbours, converting many to their Catholic faith. These friendly relations proved troublesome to British colonization efforts in the mid-eighteenth century when they made regular, but unsuccessful attempts both to weaken the Mi'kmaq and Acadian alliance and to encourage British settlement in the area. The situation grew worse in 1748, when the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle returned Louisbourg, the northern portion of the province, to the French, allowing them to effectively surround Nova Scotia on three sides and come in quite close contact with the more heavily populated British colonies in New England.

To counter the growing French threat, the British moved to increase their presence in the area by appointing Edward Cornwallis as governor and allocating large sums of money to encourage Protestant British settlements throughout the colony. One of these new communities was the former Acadian settlement of Chebucto, renamed Halifax in 1749.¹¹⁰ The French responded by increasing their presence in the area, particularly in the settlement at Louisbourg, and offering military supplies and financial rewards to their Mi'kmaq allies, who regularly attacked the areas recently settled by the British. The worsening situation came to a head in the mid-1750s when war broke out between Britain and France. In 1755, Nova Scotia governor Charles Lawrence was required to take a decidedly more rigid stance toward the Acadians, first by attacking settlements perceived to be a threat to the British, and then finally ordering a mass evacuation of all Acadians from the province.¹¹¹

The expulsion of the great majority of the French Acadians left the Mi'kmaq people without an ally in their fight against British colonial expansion, forcing many to reluctantly establish new relations with the English-speaking settlers.¹¹² The British

¹¹⁰ Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 121-134; Duncan Campbell, *Nova Scotia, in its historical, Mercantile and Industrial Relations* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1873), 99-100.

¹¹¹ Ross and Deveau, *The Acadians of Nova Scotia*, 61-67.

¹¹² Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest*, 162-164. In December 1764, *The Halifax Gazette* reported that five to six hundred 'French Neutrals' living in Halifax and its suburbs were departing for Cape Francois. *The Halifax Gazette*, 20 December 1764. And as late as 1767, there were still enough Acadians living in and around Halifax to require Lieutenant Governor Michael Franklin to release a proclamation demanding that they swear allegiance to the British King. 'HALIFAX, November 12, 1767.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 12

government and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) also worked tirelessly to convert the native population to the Protestant religion in order to ensure their loyalty to Great Britain.¹¹³ During this time there was also a considerable migration of as many as eight thousand New Englanders dissenters to the province, many of whom left behind overcrowded New England communities for Governor Lawrence's enticing offer of free land.¹¹⁴ Their presence, the removal of the Acadians, and Britain's ultimate victory in the Seven Years' War secured Nova Scotia's place in the British Empire, and allowed Protestant British communities to exist at relative peace with their neighbours.

Yet, despite the relative security of the region by the middle of the 1760s the population of Nova Scotia, and Halifax in particular, remained quite small in comparison to the growth occurring in other British colonies. In Halifax there were roughly one thousand inhabitants, in a colony of just over thirteen thousand.¹¹⁵ Having left New York City and made his way north to Nova Scotia in the autumn of 1774, Patrick M'Robert seemed less than impressed with Halifax, offering a rather uninteresting description of a city 'pleasantly situated on the west-side of the harbour, upon the declivity of a pretty high hill.'¹¹⁶ Like Kingston, the city was a 'government enterprise', comprised of a grid-like street plan that was intended to ensure an ordered development of the town.¹¹⁷ However, the unpredictable and often harsh weather conditions continued to inhibit the growth of the city well into the eighteenth century. 'The buildings are mostly all wood, some few of stone,' M'Robert continued, 'many [sic] of the wood seems to be going to decay, so that I suppose they will all build with stone when they come to rebuild them again.'¹¹⁸ There was religious diversity in the community, though nothing on the level of New York City or London for that matter. M'Robert acknowledged the presence of 'a neat English church, a Presbyterian meeting-house, and a Dutch meeting-house.'¹¹⁹

November 1767. In a dispatch, dated 16 December 1767, Franklin says there are 13,374 inhabitants in Nova Scotia, 11,228 of which are Protestant, and the other 2,146 French Catholics. Wilfred B. Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', *The New England Quarterly*, VI (1933), 552.

¹¹³ Peter M. Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity: Imperial Anglicanism in British North America, 1745-1795* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 35-65.

¹¹⁴ Robert McLaughlin, 'New England Planters Prior to Migration: The Case of Chatham, Massachusetts' in Margaret Conrad and Barry Moody, eds., *Planter Links: Community and Culture in Colonial Nova-Scotia* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 2001), 12.

¹¹⁵ M. Louise English Anderson, 'Crowd activity in Nova Scotia during the American Revolution' (Masters Thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1987), 1.

¹¹⁶ Bridenbaugh, ed., 'Patrick M'Robert's Tour', 153-154.

¹¹⁷ T.B. Atkins, *History of Halifax City*, 2nd edition (Belleville: Mika Publishing, 1973), 10.

¹¹⁸ Bridenbaugh, ed., 'Patrick M'Robert's Tour', 153-154.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Halifax was a 'government enterprise' in more ways than one. The city was established in order to consolidate a British presence in the region, and thus the government offered substantial financial compensation to those willing to emigrate, and more importantly, provided an annual grant to the local government to ensure the growth and stability of the community. The purpose of the grant was to fund the construction of new buildings, contribute to the growth and maintenance of the various industries in the city and region, and to make necessary improvements to ensure the prosperity of the city and its inhabitants. However, local officials ultimately used the annual grant to establish a corrupt system of trade that provided financial support and incentives only to those merchants who shared similar political and economic interests.¹²⁰

The distillery business of the 1750s and 1760s provides an example of this corruption. Local merchant Joshua Mauger had complete control of the two distilleries in the colony and had made the Lieutenant Governor, Michael Franklin, a partner so that he could assure preferential treatment from the authorities in London. The high import duties on rum in Halifax made the purchase of Mauger's rum the only choice for most people in the colony, especially during times of war when there were thousands of thirsty soldiers stationed in the area. For a brief period in the early 1760s the government lessened these import duties, but by late 1767 Mauger and Franklin were able to renew the original taxes, despite appeals from the local inhabitants of the bad effects it was having on the broader population.¹²¹

Political and economic corruption also had important political consequences for Halifax's position within the rest of the colony. Despite a colony charter that ensured balanced representation from all communities in the province, officials outside Halifax rarely had the funds or the ability to travel to the city for regular meetings.¹²² This not only centralized local political power in the hands of a select few Haligonians, but also meant that the city was politically isolated from the views and interests of the rest of the

¹²⁰ Until 1757, the annual grant was a hefty £50,000 annually. Thereafter, it dropped sharply to £6,000 by 1762, and averaged just £5,400 a year from 1762 to 1782. J.B. Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1937), 109-110.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 127-133.

¹²² By 1782 there was only one road in the colony, from Halifax to Fort Sackville, and 6 miles beyond. *Ibid.*, 123-127.

colony.¹²³ As a result, Halifax was quite distinct from the rest of the colony by the 1760s, with a local government and population more closely tied to the British mainland than to the rest of the colony. As one historian has asserted, 'it was in Nova Scotia, but not of it.'¹²⁴

Within the Halifax political establishment, power was centralized in the hands of a select few, who used the annual grant from London to maintain their control over the town. Even though he was only in Halifax for a few days, M'Robert seemed to have quickly picked up on this very point in 1774, commenting, 'Some say they [governor and council] are more arbitrary, and rather follow the law martial, than the civil law of England.'¹²⁵ Similarly, fifteen years earlier a letter from a naval officer in Halifax to a 'Noble Lord' in London was published in London, in which the officer remarked,

The parliamentary grant my Lord, may be compared to a man who tosses a few guineas among a croud, there is great scrabbling, but the luck happens to those few who catch the guineas; with this distinction that, that happens only by chance, this is distributed by direction; thus you will see my Lord in *Halifax* three or four rich men, the rest are all beggars, who would if they dare call themselves freemen.¹²⁶

John Paris, a recent immigrant from New England, remarked to the Lords of Trade in January 1758 that 'We [inhabitants of Halifax] are, the Shamefull and Contemptible By-Word of America—The Slaves of Nova Scotia, The Creatures of Military govrs; Whose Will, is our Law, & whose Person, is our God.'¹²⁷

The Atlantic trade was certainly important for the mercantile interests of many Haligonians, though to be sure, the town was still largely unsettled by the middle of the eighteenth century. Thus trade was far smaller than in the developed port communities in the American colonies, the Caribbean or the British mainland. M'Robert, clearly less impressed with the commercial activity in Halifax than he was with New York City, commented that, 'they carry on a little trade to the West Indies, Philadelphia, and New York, where they send their fish and oil, and some furr and lumber: they have also a vessel or two that trades constantly to London. They have several breweries and

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 180-211.

¹²⁴ Anderson, 'Crowd activity in Nova Scotia', 2.

¹²⁵ Bridenbaugh, ed., 'Patrick M'Robert's Tour', 156.

¹²⁶ J.B., 'An Account of the Present State of Nova-Scotia: In Two LETTERS to a Noble Lord... Made publick by his Lordship's Desire' (London, 1756), first letter, 5.

¹²⁷ 'Appendix to John Paris's Statement to the Lords of Trade', 26 January 1758, 46-47, quoted in Anderson, 'Crowd activity in Nova Scotia', 96-97.

distilleries, and are famous for tanning the best leather in America.’¹²⁸ In 1774, exports from the city totalled £53,365, while they imported just £63,000 worth of goods. Fish were the main export, with cod, haddock and herring being shipped to all parts of the Atlantic world. There was also the production of goods such as oil, whalebone and leather, all built upon the fishing of whales, walrus, porpoises and seals in the Gulf of Fundy.

Besides fishing, furs brought from the Island of St. John, were exported from the harbour in Halifax. The lack of fertile land and the harsh weather conditions hampered the development of farming. As a result, most Halifaxians, and Nova Scotians more broadly, relied heavily on imports of foodstuffs from New England in order to survive. Rum production, as we have already seen, was the source of wealth for at least a handful of merchants in the city, but most of the rum was consumed locally, rather than exported.¹²⁹ Clearly, mid- to later-eighteenth-century Halifax lagged behind the likes of New York City, London, Glasgow and Kingston in terms of a prospering Atlantic trade economy. With few inhabitants, a lack of exportable raw materials, and political and economic influence in the hands of a select few, the city, and colony for that matter, struggled to grow beyond its small beginnings.

Taken together, these five communities illustrated the religious, ethnic and political diversity of the emerging British Atlantic Empire. Local histories and circumstances helped to shape each of these communities in ways quite different from one another. Clearly, conquest, rather than union, created a different criterion for the integration of these communities into the Empire. New York City, Halifax and Kingston were forcefully taken from England’s – and then Britain’s – European rivals, and were subsequently resettled by British immigrants before the process of anglicization could occur. In contrast, Scotland negotiated, however unevenly, a union with England and was able to establish their place in the Empire through a legally-binding construct that guaranteed their rights and liberties as British subjects. Many Londoners, on the other hand, continued to see themselves at the centre of what they believed to be an English Empire, and thus were reluctant to accept the needs and demands of new members of the British state and empire.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-134.

For Britons living in Kingston, Halifax and New York City, military protection was an integral part of their attachment to the Empire. The close proximity of French and Spanish enemies required the constant presence of the British army and navy to guard against possible invasions during a period of intense and persistent warfare. However, in Kingston the need for protection was still greater, even in times of peace. With a slave population that outnumbered whites by nearly nine to one, Britons in Jamaica counted on the British army for protection from possible slave revolts and insurrections. Until the 1760s there was also a military presence in Glasgow out of concern for a possible renewal of the Jacobite cause, but as those fears subsided the British military cut back the number of regiments in all of Scotland, many of which were stationed in nearby Edinburgh.¹³⁰

The religious and ethnic pluralism of New York City and London affected the social cohesion of these communities, making it difficult for the British public to share in a common language of loyalty and patriotism. In Kingston and Halifax the white inhabitants were predominately Anglican and thus enjoyed strong cultural ties with England. However, the Anglican church in Kingston was wary of expanding its influence on the island for fear of drawing interest from the enslaved population. In Glasgow, though devoutly Presbyterian, the legal establishment of their church under the articles of the union was celebrated by the middle of the eighteenth century as one of the many benefits of membership in the British Empire.

In other ways the experiences of Britons living in each of these communities were quite similar. The Atlantic trade played a vitally important role in defining the imperial identities in each of these five communities. Access to British Atlantic trade routes and the abundance of consumer markets in British communities scattered across the Empire provided a wide range of opportunities for British communities to grow and prosper. More importantly, the Atlantic trade drew these communities together in a way previously unknown. Ships travelling to and from North America, the Caribbean and mainland Britain enabled distant peoples and communities to adopt and share in an emerging British imperial political and social culture.

¹³⁰ Ironically, many Scots were angered by the lack of a British military presence by the late 1770s, when fears of a French invasion spread throughout Scottish coastal communities. See Chapter 4.

IV. Popular Politics in the British Atlantic World

By the 1740s and 1750s, public expressions of loyalty and patriotism surrounding important events on the British calendar, such as the birthdays of the King and Queen, the anniversaries of royal accessions and coronations, along with important military victories were all widely celebrated and reported upon in local newspapers throughout the Empire. These regular and well-established events provided Britons everywhere with public opportunities to identify themselves as loyal British subjects and as part of the broader British nation.¹³¹ Local newspapers, whether in Halifax, Glasgow, New York City, Kingston or in London, began reprinting reports of celebrations elsewhere in the British Atlantic world, which helped to place the loyalty of the local populace within the broader context of a shared empire-wide British identity.

The popular print culture of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and broadsides was vital to this process of identity formation. By the middle of the eighteenth century locally printed newspapers could be found in nearly every city in the Empire, reporting upon news and events that were occurring throughout the Atlantic world. These sources constituted an accessible and consumable source of information for all of the public and played a crucial role in encouraging readers to confront issues of identity and Britishness.¹³² At home, in local taverns and coffeehouses, or even in workplaces, Britons were able to deliberate over the latest military news from abroad and contemplate Parliamentary debates and decisions, all the while reforming and reevaluating their own opinions on the state of the Empire and their place within it.¹³³

¹³¹ Lamb notes that in 1768 the custom-house and public offices were closed in New York City on the following public holidays: 'New Year's Day, the Queen's birthday, anniversary of King Charles' martyrdom, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lady Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday and Tuesday, Accession Day, St. George's Day, King Charles' Restoration, the King's birthday, Whitsun Monday and Tuesday, Prince of Wales' birthday, King Goerge 1st and 2d landed in Great Britain, Coronation Day, All Saints, Gunpowder Plot, Christmas Day, and three Christmas holidays following. Added to these are the provincial days—General Fast, Thanksgiving, General Election, and Commencement of the College—twenty-seven holidays in one year!' Martha Lamb, 'The Golden Age of Colonial New York', *Magazine of American History*, XXIV (1890), 1-30. Also see: GAINÉ's Universal Register, or, AMERICAN and BRITISH KALENDAR, FOR THE YEAR 1775 (New York), 56.

¹³² For more on the accessibility of newspapers, see Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9-42; John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular*, 139-160.

¹³³ John Money, 'Taverns, Coffee Houses and Clubs: Local Politics and Popular Articulacy in the Birmingham Area, in the Age of the American Revolution', *The Historical Journal*, XIV (1971), 15-47. In Glasgow, the 'Morning and Evening Club' met before breakfast and at 7pm each day to read over Edinburgh and Glasgow newspapers and discuss local and national events. John Strang, *Glasgow and Its Clubs* (Glasgow: Richard Griffin and Co., 1856), 120-122.

More importantly, newspapers created a 'currency of political exchange' by turning non-literary events, such as riots, protests and celebrations, into textual existence. Seemingly local political events and occurrences could now achieve national significance through an accessible and easily consumable medium of communication that allowed ordinary Britons throughout the Atlantic world to share in an emerging national political culture.¹³⁴ Describing the origins of an American nationalist ideology, Waldstreicher notes that 'Celebrations and printed accounts of them embodied and mobilized a nationalist ideology, an ideology that made consensus the basis of patriotism.'¹³⁵ The resulting flow of information around the British Atlantic helped foster an imagined community of British subjects who were able to find commonality in this shared sense of identity.¹³⁶

The accessibility and importance of newspapers to people of all ranks was certainly not lost on contemporaries. Describing London in 1726, César de Saussure remarked that 'all Englishmen are great newsmongers. Workmen habitually begin the day by going to coffee-rooms in order to read the latest news. I have often seen shoeblacks and men of that class club together to purchase a farthing paper.'¹³⁷ A writer in the *London Courant* once commented,

There are few people, of whatever sex, age, or condition, that are prepared for the conversation of the day, until they have had an opportunity of perusing the public prints. When those vehicles of information have set the reader a-going, he comes abroad a man of the world; knows every thing that is passing it, and spends the day most agreeably, in retailing out the news that he has taken in wholesale in the morning.¹³⁸

'Without newspapers,' a writer in a London newspaper once remarked, 'our Coffee-houses, Ale-houses, and Barber shops, would undergo a change next to depopulation; and our Country Villagers, the Curate, and the Blacksmith, would lose the self-satisfaction of being as wife [to] our First Minister of State.'¹³⁹ During the American War for Independence, Ambrose Serle, secretary to British Admiral Richard Howe, warned the Earl of Dartmouth of the dangerous influence the press was having on the

¹³⁴ Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 187.

¹³⁵ Waldstreicher, 'Rites of Rebellion, Rites of Assent', 38; *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 18.

¹³⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 44-5, 61, 62; Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street*, 186-87.

¹³⁷ César de Saussure, *A Foreign View of England in the Reigns of George I and George II* (London, 1902), quoted in Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion*, 31.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ 'W.C.', *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 24 July 1780, quoted in Solomon Lutnick, *The American Revolution and the British Press, 1775-1783* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1967), 1.

American colonists. 'Among other engines, which have raised the present commotions,' he wrote in November 1776, 'none has had a more extensive or stronger influence than the Newspapers of the respective colonies. One is astonished to see with what Avidity they are sought after, and how implicitly they are believed by the great Bulk of the People.'¹⁴⁰

Even those that could not read, or were too poor to afford a newspaper, often had access to the news of the day through a process known as 'bridging', by which the popular prints in a community were routinely read aloud at a certain spot in town.¹⁴¹ An early historian of Glasgow recalled how:

Old Citizens, still living, remember the "Lazy Corner" in the Bridgegate being an important one. In the days before every man was pestered to Subscribe to, or Buy, a Newspaper, the Citizens used to assemble at this Spot in great numbers, and learn the News of the day – the progress of the Rebels in 1715 and 1745; and the Events of the American War some time later, in which Glasgow was deeply interested, from the extent of her Virginian Trade.¹⁴²

In New York City during the American Revolution, a Monrovia minister highlighted this process when he vented his anger at the newspaper printer James Rivington, who had news of a British military victory proclaimed through the streets on the Sabbath. 'Our vain chief printer,' he exclaimed, 'had an account of it printed in hand-bills and cried about in the forenoon, while people were going to church—another catch-penny!'¹⁴³ It is not known whether similar places existed in communities such as Halifax or Kingston, but we can expect with some certainty that people of all rank in these communities were kept abreast of events occurring throughout the Empire through an accessible and regular-occurring popular print culture.

Historians have argued that the freedom of the press was a vitally important component of the British political system and was viewed by many Britons as a necessary counterweight to the authority of the British government.¹⁴⁴ As John Wilkes remarked in 1762,

¹⁴⁰ Ambrose Serle to the Earl of Dartmouth, 26 November 1776, in Benjamin F. Stevens, ed., *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783* (reprint Wilmington: Mellifont Press, 1970), 24, 2046.

¹⁴¹ Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics*, 155-58; Roger S. Schofield, 'The Measurement of Literacy in Pre-Industrial England', in James Goody, ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 312-13.

¹⁴² McUre, *Glasghu Facies*, I, 462.

¹⁴³ Ewald Schaukirk, 'Occupation of New York City by the British,' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, IV (1886), 440-441.

¹⁴⁴ See Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, 9-28, and Lutnick, *The American Revolution and the British Press*, 1-34.

'the liberty of the press is the birthright of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country.'¹⁴⁵ In an August 1774 issue of *Rivington's Gazette*, a New York City resident calling himself 'MERCATOR' echoed Wilkes sentiments, declaring the freedom of the press 'one of the strongest bulwarks to the liberties of a free country.'¹⁴⁶ Newspapers, along with other forms of printed matter such as pamphlets, broadsides and miscellaneous ephemera, diminished the earlier political sophistication of Londoners in relation to inhabitants of provincial towns by making the events and ideas of the political sphere accessible to the broader British public.¹⁴⁷ Reading and responding to the news printed in the daily and weekly newspapers provided opportunities for ordinary Britons to participate in the political sphere, publicly defining and articulating their own political views on a variety of local and national topics.

By the 1750s, a sophisticated popular print culture was readily accessible throughout mainland Britain, the Caribbean and in North America. In fact, even as early as the 1730s, Londoners enjoyed nearly twenty newspapers, more than Glasgow, New York, Halifax and Barbados combined.¹⁴⁸ By the early 1760s there were three daily newspapers, the *Public Advertiser*, the *Daily Advertiser*, and the *Gazetteer*, along with an assortment of tri-weeklies, including the more popular *London Evening Post*, the *General Evening Post*, and the *Westminster Evening Post*.¹⁴⁹ By 1783, the number of dailies had risen to nine, and bi- and tri-weeklies to ten.¹⁵⁰ Some of the better known newspapers, included *The Daily Advertiser*, *The General Evening Post*, *The Middlesex Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty*, *The London Evening-Post*, *The St. James's Chronicle; Or, British Evening-Post*, and *The London Chronicle*, which was the official government newspaper. Even as late as the mid-eighteenth century, more than twice as many newspapers were printed in London than in Halifax, New York City, Kingston and Glasgow combined. Home to hundreds of thousands of people, London publishers with a variety of political aims and interests had little difficulty in finding a market for their newspapers.

¹⁴⁵ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, 14.

¹⁴⁶ 'MERCATOR' *Rivington's Gazette*, 11 August 1774.

¹⁴⁷ Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics*, 139-160.

¹⁴⁸ William Speck, 'Politics and the Press', in Michael Harris and Alan Lee, eds., *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 48

¹⁴⁹ Peter D. G. Thomas, 'The Beginning of Parliamentary Printing in Newspapers, 1768-1774', *The English Historical Review*, LXXIV (1959), 623-624.

¹⁵⁰ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, 30.

Many of the London newspapers, and the reports and ideas contained within them, found their way into the fast growing print culture of the British Atlantic world.¹⁵¹ Newspapers throughout the Empire generally relied upon the London press for news of events in Britain and beyond, often publishing verbatim articles taken from newspapers such as the *Gazette* or *Evening Post*. However, the provincial press was more than a mere extension of the London press.¹⁵² Provincial newspaper publishers had a wide variety of sources to choose from, including other local and regional newspapers, letters from far and near, locally written editorial pieces, as well as newspapers and printed matter brought by ships from more distant communities. By the middle of the eighteenth century it was far from uncommon for a New Yorker to read a piece from a newspaper printed in Jamaica or Scotland, just as a Glaswegian might expect to read reports from Virginia and Maryland correspondents and newspapers. Newspapers followed established trade routes. Alexander Thomson, a recent Scottish immigrant in Pennsylvania, responded in 1774, 'That when I was at Philadelphia, I saw some Scotch news-papers.'¹⁵³ As print culture developed and expanded, shared knowledge and information helped begin the creation of an imperial Atlantic world political culture.

Although Glasgow was one of the largest provincial urban centres in the Empire, the local newspaper press was surprisingly small and underdeveloped. Successive stamp tax increases as a result of Britain's mounting war debt, in addition to a lack of competent printers and financial backers inhibited the growth of a successful popular print culture in Glasgow until well into the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the close proximity of Edinburgh and its publications appeared to negate the need for a local newspaper in Glasgow. As an intellectual centre of the Enlightenment and the political capital of Scotland, Edinburgh had nurtured a vibrant periodical press, and until 1788, despite earlier petitions from the Glasgow magistrates, most news from London first went through the capital.¹⁵⁵ The small number of newspapers that were

¹⁵¹ In the historiography of eighteenth century print culture, the 'provincial press' has usually referred only to those newspapers printed in English cities and towns outside of London. Whereas, similar studies of newspapers printed in America, or elsewhere in the empire have remained largely regional in nature, neglecting to see it as part of a large empire-wide print culture.

¹⁵² Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion*, 96-97.

¹⁵³ His letter was printed as a pamphlet and sold in Glasgow in 1774 as: 'NEWS FROM AMERICA: FROM ALEXANDER THOMSON... to A GENTLEMAN near GLASGOW' (Glasgow: Printed and Sold by John Byrce, 1774), 1.

¹⁵⁴ The first Stamp Act was introduced in 1712, followed by a tax on advertisements. It increased from 1 ½d to 2d in 1725, to 2 ½d in 1757, 3d. in 1776 and by 1780, up to 4d. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, 40.

¹⁵⁵ Craig, *The Scottish Periodical Press*, 20.

printed in Glasgow, however, did achieve wide circulation throughout much of western Scotland where there were no other communities large enough to have their own newspaper.¹⁵⁶

Glasgow's first newspaper, the *Glasgow Courant*, appeared in 1715, nearly thirty-five years after the first newspaper in Edinburgh, and it was another twenty-five years before the city's second paper, the *Glasgow Journal*, provided the first competition.¹⁵⁷ The *Courant's* run came to an end shortly after the British victory at Quebec in 1759, while the *Glasgow Journal* continued to supply its readers with a weekly issue throughout the American War for Independence. *The Glasgow Chronicle or, Weekly Intelligencer*, which may have begun its life as *The Glasgow Weekly Chronicle* in 1766, continued until at least 1778, when the last known issue appeared. In the same year *The Glasgow Mercury* first appeared.¹⁵⁸ Various weekly and monthly magazines, containing such diverse materials as articles on moral and spiritual guidance, histories of cities or countries, poems and songs about various subjects, and selections of foreign and domestic news taken directly from the newspapers, also appeared in Glasgow during the War, but none lasted longer than a year and only a few issues survive today.

The sheer volume of Edinburgh newspapers and magazines demonstrated the Scottish capital's domination of the eighteenth-century Glasgow press. Eight newspapers and twelve magazines were published during the Revolutionary War, including such internationally recognized titles as the *Caledonian Mercury*, *Edinburgh Advertiser*, *Edinburgh Evening Courant* and *Ruddiman's Weekly Mercury*. The *Scots Magazine*, modelled on the popular London periodical, *The Gentlemen's Magazine*, was unquestionably the most widely read monthly publication in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and throughout all of Scotland.¹⁵⁹

By the middle of the eighteenth century, New York City had a well-developed newspaper business. William Bradford introduced the first newspaper into New York in 1725 with his publication of *The New-York Gazette*, which lasted until 1744. However, it was the city's second paper, begun in 1733, that achieved greater notoriety. John

¹⁵⁶ Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, 21-22.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 10; MacGregor, *The History of Glasgow*, 295.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 41-4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-5.

Peter Zenger, the printer of *The New-York Weekly Journal* (1733-1751), was the first colonial printer to use his newspaper to challenge the policies of the royal government, namely the rule of New York's conservative governor, William Crosby. By 1734, Crosby had grown tired of Zenger's criticism of his government and had him arrested on charges of seditious libel. A year later Zenger was found innocent of the charges, thanks to the skilful arguments of his lawyer, Alexander Hamilton, thus setting an important precedent for the freedom of the press.¹⁶⁰ In 1743, James Parker began printing his *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Post Boy* (1743-1773), and a year later the first native born editor, Henry de Foreest, added *The New-York Evening Post* (1744-1752) to the list.¹⁶¹ In 1752, Parker also began printing another newspaper, *The Independent Reflector*, but it lasted only one year.

By the 1760s New York City's newspaper press had expanded significantly. By then, Hugh Gaine's *The New-York Mercury* (1752-1768) had become one of the best known newspapers in the American colonies. While other titles, such as William Weyman's *The New-York Gazette* (1759-1767), John Holt's *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser* (1766-1776)¹⁶² and the short-lived *The New-York Chronicle* (1769-1770) from the Scottish printers, James and Alexander Robertson, offered competition. Prior to the British arriving in the autumn of 1776, Holt and Gaine were the predominate pro-American newspaper printers in the city, along with John Anderson's short-lived *The Constitutional Gazette* (1775-1776).

However, beginning in 1773 a bookseller from London named James Rivington began printing his own gazette. Within a year, his decidedly pro-British stance on the growing imperial crisis made him the public voice of the Loyalist community in the city. By the early months of 1775 he had so greatly offended the American Patriot community with

¹⁶⁰ For more on the Zenger trial, see James Alexander, *A Brief Narrative of the Case and Trial of John Peter Zenger*, edited by Stanley N. Katz (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1963); Charles R. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers and Printing in Colonial New York* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1895), 19-28; Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factioned People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Eben Moglen, 'Considering Zenger: Partisan Politics and the Legal Profession in Provincial New York', *Columbia Law Review* (1994), 1495-1524. The most authoritative account of the 'freedom of the press' remains Leonard Levy, *Legacy of Suppression: Freedom and Speech and Press in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹⁶¹ Parker's *Post-Boy* changed names throughout its existence, and at times, operated under various partnerships and eventually under the authority of his nephew, Samuel Parker, after James passed away in 1770. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers*, 35-54.

¹⁶² Holt was forced to evacuate New York City when the British arrived in the summer of 1776, but continued on printing his newspapers, first at nearby Kingston and then finally in Poughkeepsie, New York from 1778-82. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers*, 89-94.

his pro-British reports and satires that he was forced to close his print shop and return to England.¹⁶³ He was, however, able to return in the autumn of 1777, now as the official printer to the King, and with the protection of the occupying British army he resumed printing *Rivington's Gazette* (1777-1783). During the period of British occupation (1776-1783), the Loyalist community of roughly thirty thousand inhabitants in New York City had access to as many as five locally printed newspapers, with a new issue printed every day but Sunday. *Rivington's Gazette* was the most famous and most widely read, but there was also Hugh Gainé's *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* (1776-1783), who opted for loyalty to Britain rather than continue to support the American cause, along with William Lewis's *New-York Mercury* (1779-1783) and James and Alexander Robertson's *The Royal American Gazette* (1778-1783).

Comparatively speaking, the Halifax newspaper press was slow to develop. Haligonians did not receive their first newspaper until John Bushnell's printing of the *Halifax Gazette* on 23 March 1752, three years after the British settled the community.¹⁶⁴ The gazette lasted under this title until 1765, before being renamed *The Halifax Gazette or the Weekly Advertiser* (1765-1766), under the guidance of the recently emigrated New England printers, Isaiah Thomas and Anthony Henry. Despite being the official newspaper of the government, Thomas and Henry used the gazette to express their opposition to the unpopular Stamp Act in 1765, and for that, they lost their official position. Robert Fletcher, recently arrived from London, resumed the printing of the re-titled newspaper, now *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, but he only lasted in the city until 1770. During this time, Henry began a second newspaper in Halifax, *The Nova Scotia Gazette*, and after Fletcher's departure he was reinstated as the official royal printer. His gazette was then merged with Fletcher's to create *The Nova-Scotia Gazette and the Weekly Chronicle* (1770-1789), which remained the only newspaper printed in Halifax throughout the wartime period. As such, Haligonians were often less connected to the imperial news and political culture than Britons living elsewhere in the Empire. When Nathaniel Taylor arrived in Halifax in the late spring of 1776 he wrote to his brother Joseph in London expressing his concern that he was 'now in a corner of the American world & can know but very little of what is doing in the rest of it & of what I do hear very little is to be believed.'¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 105-132.

¹⁶⁴ Campbell, *Nova Scotia, in its historical*, 113.

¹⁶⁵ Nathaniel Taylor to Joseph Taylor at the New England Coffee House (London), Halifax, 11 May 1776. MSS, The Papers of The Lovering-Taylor Families, Library of Congress

A genuine lack of periodical source material has made it difficult to unravel the history of the newspaper press in Kingston. We do know that the first proposal for a printing press in Jamaica was made on 8 December 1715 when the Jamaican Assembly thought it would be good to have their minutes printed. In October 1717, Governor Sir Nicholas Lawes added weight to this proposal, suggesting, 'I am of opinion if a press were set up in Jamaica it would be of great use, and benefit for publick intelligence, advertisements, and many other things.'¹⁶⁶ In May of the following year, Robert Baldwin printed the first issue of *The Weekly Jamaica Courant*, which was possibly the first British newspaper to be published in the West Indies, a full thirteen years before the *Barbados Gazette*.¹⁶⁷

Very little is known of the Kingston or Jamaican newspaper press until the early 1780s. *The St. Jago de la Vega Gazette*, printed in neighbouring Spanish-Town, was believed to have begun in 1755, and continued throughout the American Revolutionary Era and into the nineteenth century, but very few copies exist today.¹⁶⁸ It also appears that another newspaper in Spanish-Town, the *Weekly St. Jago Intelligencer*, began in 1756 and continued for an unknown period of time thereafter.¹⁶⁹ Montego Bay, the main port in the northwest corner of the island, began its first paper, *The Cornwall Chronicle and Country Gazette*, in 1773, and continued throughout the American Revolution.¹⁷⁰ In 1776 the *Kingston Journal and Jamaica Universal Museum* was first printed, but there are no copies that exist today.

In May 1779 Alexander Aikman and his business partner David Douglass launched a new newspaper in Kingston, entitled *The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*.¹⁷¹ Douglass had served as the manager of the American Company of Comedians prior to the war, but immigrated to Jamaica in 1776 when the American rebels closed down the theatres. Aikman, an avowed supporter of the British cause, had migrated to Kingston from Charleston, South Carolina in 1779, where he had previously served as the

¹⁶⁶ McMurtrie, *The first printing in Jamaica*, 3.

¹⁶⁷ Cundall argued that the first date of the appearance of a newspaper in Jamaica was on May 28, 1717, but he was actually off by a year, having forgotten to take into account the old-style calendar dates. Cundall, *Historic Jamaica*, 39; McMurtrie, *The first printing in Jamaica*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Cundall, *The Press and Printers of Jamaica Prior to 1820* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1916), 298.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁷¹ See the first issue, *The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 1 May 1779.

apprentice to the Loyalist, Robert Wells. Within a year of first printing *The Jamaica Mercury* Aikman was chosen as the official royal printer and thus changed his newspaper's title to *The Royal Gazette*. Aikman and Douglass were pleased with the response they received from readers in Kingston, perhaps because Kingston's residents had not had a local newspaper for some time. In the sixth issue, the publishers proclaimed, 'There is, perhaps, no instance in the world, of a Periodical Publication receiving so extensive a circulation, in so short a time, and in so small a community, as the JAMAICA MERCURY has.'¹⁷²

This growth and development of the periodical press varied to quite a degree between the five communities, but by the middle of the eighteenth century Britons living in the Caribbean, North America and throughout the British mainland had access to and avidly read and debated the events and ideas reported upon in British newspapers. Whether printed locally, or brought to town from ships travelling throughout the Atlantic, Britons living everywhere were increasingly drawn together through a print culture that linked their own local circumstances, customs and traditions with the beliefs and identities of Britons living elsewhere. In this regard, newspapers, and the reports of events and occurrences contained within them, played a vitally important role in shaping the loyalty and identity of the broader British public during the eighteenth century.

France, War and Identity

Between 1689 and 1815 England, and then Britain, found itself almost continually at war with the Catholic empire of France, and to lesser extent Spain. At first these wars were quite local and were fought in the British Isles before expanding into mainland Europe. However, this changed in the 1750s and 1760s, when France and Britain fought in a world-wide war for empire, with each nation seeking to emerge as the dominant force in the Atlantic world. The Seven Years' War lasted from 1755 to 1763 and saw battles fought throughout the American colonies, French Canada, mainland Europe, the West Indies and the oceans that connected them. With such a massive geographical reach, Britain was forced to call upon subjects living in all corners of the Atlantic world to fight for and defend Britain's Atlantic Empire.

¹⁷² *The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 5 June 1779.

War can play a vitally important role in the nation-building process. Nascent nation states employ patriotism in order to encourage subjects to define and articulate their allegiance and identity. Lepore has suggested that ‘the acts of war generate acts of narration... [which] are often joined in a common purpose: defining the geographical, political, cultural, and sometimes racial and national boundaries between peoples.’¹⁷³ War can thus enable a diverse and geographically distant populace to find a shared rhetoric of loyalty in their opposition to a common enemy. And in the case of Britain, nearly constant war with the Catholic empires of mainland Europe created an almost perpetual enemy over the span of century, enabling a language of loyalty and identity to become deeply entrenched in the minds of Britons living throughout the Empire. In short, these wars ‘allowed... [Britain’s] diverse inhabitants to focus on what they had in common, rather than on what divided them.’¹⁷⁴

Historians of eighteenth-century Britain have argued that these representations of France were of vital importance in the origins and growth of a British national identity.¹⁷⁵ Through imperial conquest, a rapidly expanding network of trade, and a rich, vibrant, and widely accessible popular print culture, the eighteenth-century British Empire fostered the development of a new, popular conception of what it meant to be British. At the heart of this identity lay a determined opposition to Britain’s familiar and constant enemy, France. French absolutism and the Catholic religion that supported it, invoked a powerful, unifying, and accessible language of identity that Protestant Britons living throughout the Empire could readily adopt and share in common.¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, by linking French absolutism with the Catholic religion British subjects were able to articulate and celebrate what they interpreted as the superiority of the British Church and State over those of their traditional enemy. The emerging popular print culture in each of the five communities in this study employed rhetoric and metaphors in which Catholic political rule was made synonymous with the perceived

¹⁷³ Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), x.

¹⁷⁴ Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 316.

¹⁷⁵ Colley, *Britons*, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 309-29; Greene, ‘Empire and Identity’, 208-30; Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*; Claydon and McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity*; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, ‘North Britishness’, 361-382; Cogliano, *No King, No Popery*, 1-21; Conway, ‘A Joy Unknown for Years Past’; ‘From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners’.

¹⁷⁶ H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1995) 266-67. For a critique of the perceived absolutist nature of the French Catholic Church in the eighteenth century, see: Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*. Also see: Chapter 3.

absolutism, tyranny, and brutality of the religion. In turn, Britons believed such rule produced a population of backward, barbaric and subordinate subjects, who lacked the ability to think, reason, and mature, both as individual, and more broadly as a nation. The pervasiveness of this rhetoric in elite and popular culture enabled Britons to identify themselves against their enemies in broad socio-political terms that helped define patriotic and nationalist political culture.¹⁷⁷

During the decisive period of the Seven Years' War, British newspapers drew upon this profound anti-Catholic sentiment in order to affirm the superiority of a British Protestant identity. In a 1755 issue of the *Glasgow Courant* a writer calling himself Decius more precisely highlighted these differences.

Our Contention is not with Protestants, but professed ROMAN CATHOLICS. – A People (however loyal, and pacific, many noble, and ancient Families in this Kingdom have on all occasions behaved themselves toward the present happy Establishment) yet our Enemies on the Continent are a People whose Religion is principally Maintained by forgery, and Falsehood: repugnant to the Laws of Nature, and Nations; composed of Human Devices, in no sort to be deduc'd, or proved out of Holy Scripture; keeping its deluded Votaries in Blindness, and ignorance of God! and real Goodness.¹⁷⁸

A few weeks later, the same writer used Britain's Protestant identity to unite the Scots, the English and their North American colonists against their common enemy:

I therefore take the Freedom in this Manner, to join every Friend, Briton, and Protestant in their Joy on the [recent] Accounts arrived from the Coast of Virginia... There is no Distinction, I hope, of Party, of Principle, or, of Northern, or Southern Country amongst us. No such Distinction, I say, can, or ought, to prevail; We are all Britains; inhabiting one island; acknowledging one God! one King, one Faith. – Let us convince our Gallic Enemies of the Unity amongst us; and every Scheme they meditate to the Prejudice of Great Britain, will certainly prove abortive."¹⁷⁹

Similarly, Glaswegians read a letter from a resident of New York City to an acquaintance in Glasgow, in which the author proclaimed, 'Let us shew that we are true sons of BRITONS, whose ANCESTORS have been famous for defending their valuable RELIGION and LIBERTIES, and are determined to

¹⁷⁷ Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, 82-96.

¹⁷⁸ 'A letter from Decius, July 5, 1755', *Glasgow Courant*, 14 July 1755.

¹⁷⁹ 'A letter from Decius, July 23, 1755', *Glasgow Courant*, 4 August 1755.

support our RELIGIOUS and CIVIL LIBERTIES, and hand them down to POSTERITY.’¹⁸⁰

The comprehensive British victory in the Seven Years’ War provided a powerful validation of these assertions of Protestant British supremacy, encouraging Britons to believe that they were members of the most advanced and successful Empire in the world. Celebrations were staged throughout the Empire in honour of the successes of the British army and navy and their eventual defeat of Catholic France. At no time was this more evident – on the streets and in print – than after General James Wolfe’s victory in 1759 at Quebec, the capital of French Canada. The victory, followed shortly thereafter by General Jeffrey Amherst’s conquest of Montreal, effectively ended the war and thus secured to Britain an Atlantic Empire unparalleled by any of its European rivals. In Glasgow, following the ‘publication of the news of the Surrender of Quebec... the music bells were set a ringing, and large bonfires made at all the public places of the city.’ During the afternoon ‘the magistrates [sic] and principal inhabitants met at the town hall to express their joy on this happy event,’ and in the evening, ‘some gentlemen contributed largely for liquor for the use of the populace round the bonfires. At night fireworks were exhibited in the green... and persons of all ranks showed an uncommon satisfaction on this valuable acquisition.’¹⁸¹

In New York City, ‘the Cannon on Fort George were fired on the Success of his Majesty’s Arms at the Battle of Quebeck the 13th of September last... At Night the City was illuminated very extraordinary; besides two large Bonfires erected on the Commons, the one by the City, the other (‘tis said) by the Company of Hatters.’¹⁸² While in the nearby town of Flushing, the inhabitants ‘assembled to express their Gratitude and Joy for the signal Success... in the Reduction of that long dreaded Sink of French Perfidy and Cruelty, Quebec.’ Toasts were given in honour of ‘our most gracious Sovereign... His Royal Family [and] the Patriotism and Integrity of Mr. Pitt’, and the ‘evening was ushered in with a large Bonfire and Illuminations.’¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *Glasgow Journal*, 28 July 1755.

¹⁸¹ ‘Glasgow, October 29.’ *Glasgow Journal* 29 October 1759. Wolfe had been stationed in Glasgow ten years earlier and had been well-liked by the townspeople for bringing rule and order to the soldiers stationed there. J.T. Findlay, *Wolfe in Scotland: In the ‘45 and from 1749 to 1753* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), 153-172.

¹⁸² *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy*, 15 October 1759. Also see: ‘New York, October 15.’ *Boston Evening Post*, 22 October 1759; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 15 November 1759.

¹⁸³ *The New-York Mercury*, 12 November 1759. Bonomi, ‘New York: The Royal Colony’, 9.

In London, news of Wolfe's victory produced widespread celebration amongst London's diverse inhabitants. At ten o'clock in the morning, the guns were fired from the Tower, 'the flags displayed from the steeples, the bells were rung' and 'in the evening there was great illuminations, bonfires, &c. in the city and suburbs.'¹⁸⁴ In Halifax, the victory was received 'with the greatest satisfaction, which found vent in bonfires, illuminations, and public and private entertainments. The Settlement had been kept in a state of chronic alarm for fear of French invasion', the report continued, 'and it was now universally felt that with Louisbourg and Quebec being in the hands of the British there was no further immediate danger.'¹⁸⁵

Despite a widely dispersed and increasingly diverse population, Britons throughout the Empire were able to find common ground in the rights and liberties secured in their constitution and defended in wars against Catholic France.¹⁸⁶ 'Anti-catholicism was an ideology which promoted national cohesion, countering, though not submerging, the kingdom's political divisions and social tensions.'¹⁸⁷ However, the pervasiveness of this rhetoric depended upon the presence of Britain's eternal enemy and British rights and liberties came into focus when framed in opposition to the Catholic empires of mainland Europe. This grand narrative, accessible and influential to so many, was, at the same time, dependent upon the presence of the French enemy.¹⁸⁸

However, this war had effectively removed the French as an immediate threat to Britons inhabiting the mainland American colonies. When the American War for Independence began just over a decade later, Britons faced not French enemies, but rather fellow British subjects, who adhered to the Protestant heritage and identity that

¹⁸⁴ 'LONDON', *The London Chronicle: or, Universal Evening Post*, 18 October 1759. Also see: 'LONDON, Oct. 18.', *The Boston Gazette, and Country Journal*, 28 January 1760; *The Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 24 January 1760.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Campbell, *Nova Scotia, in its historical*, 145. Also see: John Seccombe, 'The Diary of Rev. John Seccombe', *Report of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, For the Year 1958*, Appendix B (Halifax: Queen's Printer, 1959), 34. During the Revolution, both British and American popular political culture used Wolfe as the very symbol of true British heroism to define their political loyalties. Nicholas Rogers, 'Brave Wolfe: The Making of a Hero' in Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 239-259.

¹⁸⁶ Colin Kidd has advanced ideas about the ways in which different regional identities operated within a broader British national identity. See Kidd, 'North Britishness', 361-382.

¹⁸⁷ Colin Haydon, "I love my King and my Country, but a Roman Catholic I hate": Anti-Catholicism, Xenophobia and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century England', in Claydon and McBride, eds., *Protestantism and National Identity*, 49.

¹⁸⁸ Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness', 309-329; especially, 316; Colley, *Britons*, 11-54.

Britons throughout the Empire shared. Assisted by an equally influential and accessible print culture, the Revolutionary ideology of the American Patriots thus challenged the very nature of eighteenth-century conceptions of Britishness, and thereby drew into question the perceived superiority of the newly emerging Empire. Just as Americans began to create a new, American national identity, Britons were forced to redefine, rearticulate, and defend their own identity. This was a difficult process, made more complicated by the fact that both sides were arguing very similar cases. Furthermore, access to both British and American popular print culture throughout the Atlantic world allowed Britons everywhere to see and read both sides of the conflict, making it increasingly difficult for them to comprehend and define an enemy once considered to be a friend.¹⁸⁹ Defining oneself and one's nation in opposition to the enemy was far more difficult than in the past.

For the first time, Britons were opposed in war not (at least at first) by French Catholics, but rather by fellow Britons who justified their cause with the very whig ideals and Protestant beliefs that were so fundamental to British identity. If the Seven Years' War had renewed and reinforced the superiority of Britishness, then the American Revolution and the War for Independence represented a far greater and more profound assault on an imperial British identity. Opposed by fellow British whigs in the thirteen colonies, Britons on both sides of the Atlantic were forced to examine their patriotism and loyalty, a process in which ordinary and lower sort Britons played a vital role.

Furthermore, while the wars against France had consolidated British identity throughout the Atlantic world, the imperial crises and ensuing American War for Independence challenged, in different ways and at different times, the loyalty and identity of Britons living in each of these five communities. In Glasgow, the prospering merchant and manufacturing community depended for much of their economic success and political influence on trade with Britain's American colonies, which was directly threatened by colonial non-importation agreements and then by independence. American independence also had important economic consequences for Britons living in Kingston, who depended heavily on the American colonies for goods and raw materials that could not be produced on the island. On the other hand, threats of

¹⁸⁹ Dror Wahrman, 'The English Problem of Identity in the American Revolution', *The American Historical Review*, CVI (2001), 1-23.

violent slave revolts, first in 1760 and then again in 1776, made many Jamaicans ever more aware of the necessity of a military presence on the island, something only the British could supply. In Halifax and New York City, loyal Britons found themselves caught in the middle of the colonial disturbances, thus making their support for Britain an often dangerous choice. Local associations, committees of correspondence and the growing influence of the Sons of Liberty forced issues of identity and loyalty into the public sphere, requiring individuals to openly declare their support for, or opposition against American independence, often with violent consequences.¹⁹⁰ And in London the competing ideology of the American Revolutionaries came to the fore just as Wilkite-inspired Londoners were challenging popular definitions of Britishness, and thus contributed to an increasingly tense political atmosphere in the city. Thus the American Revolution presented a unique challenge to Britons living in each of these five communities, all of whom had vested interests in both the Empire as a whole and in the American colonies. And without the presence of the French – at least at the start – Britons found it increasingly difficult to comprehend an enemy once considered to be a friend; more significantly, Britons then found it harder to define themselves.

¹⁹⁰ Michael Kammen, 'The American Revolution as a Crise de Conscience: The Case of New York' in Jack P. Greene, Richard L. Bushman and Michael Kammen, edited by Richard M. Jellison, *Society, Freedom, and Conscience: The American Revolution in Virginia, Massachusetts, and New York* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), 125-189.

Chapter 2

Imperial Crises and Loyalty in the Atlantic World, 1763-1773

Introduction

During the decade following the end of the Seven Years' War the British government sought to reorganize and strengthen their political and financial control of the North American colonies in an effort to secure the growth and stability of the newly enlarged Empire. Nearly six decades of constant warfare between Britain and her European enemies had been made financially possible through a system of credit that had left the country deeply in debt. In 1755 the government already owed £72,289,763, but that number grew to an astonishing £122,603,336 by 1763.¹ As a result, the British Parliament, under the leadership of George Grenville, began to take a decidedly more rigid stance on colonial policy after the victory over the French. First they more strictly enforced the Navigation Acts and then imposed new taxes and duties on British colonists. From the Sugar Act of 1763 to the Tea Act a decade later, British colonists in North America, the Caribbean and in mainland Britain experienced a series of events and crises that reshaped and redefined loyalty within the British Atlantic world.

To be sure, Britons remained loyal subjects throughout this period. Despite often violent and destructive opposition toward a succession of unpopular imperial policies, people of all ranks in communities throughout the British Atlantic continued to see themselves as members of the broader British nation and they voiced their opposition to imperial policies in a rhetoric and language steeped in Britain's whig heritage. Yet by the end of 1773 the loyalty and patriotism of Britons in the American colonies and in communities throughout the Caribbean and in mainland Britain had become something quite different. A series of events that began with protests and rioting in response to the Stamp Act, became progressively more organized and united, ultimately redefining the relationship of the American colonists to the Empire. Britons living elsewhere read and responded to the events, which were reported upon in great detail in the popular press. The ideas expressed by the American colonists, and the challenges they offered to Parliamentary authority and sovereignty, required ordinary Britons throughout the Empire to reconsider and redefine their own definitions of loyalty and patriotism. The following chapter will examine how the imperial crises of the 1760s and early 1770s

¹ Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act: Prologue to Revolution*, 2nd Edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 36.

began the process of transforming popular conceptions of Britishness and redefining the nature of loyalty among ordinary Britons throughout the British Atlantic world.

This process was by no means consistent. Britons throughout the Atlantic, and especially in the mainland American colonies, responded to the events of this period as they occurred, seldom expecting that they might culminate in revolution. Moreover, local traditions and circumstances played an important role in their responses. Economic interests, local politics, geographical proximity and social, ethnic and religious diversity in each of these communities required Britons to respond to the imperial policies and colonial responses in ways both similar to and different from other communities throughout the British Atlantic.

Popular print culture continued to play an important role in defining and articulating the response of ordinary Britons to these crises. Reports of rioting and protests, and editorials that both denounced the actions of Parliament and affirmed a whig interpretation of the rights and liberties of British subjects were reported upon in newspapers throughout the Empire. At times, such reports worked to effectively link together diverse and distant British Atlantic communities. Yet at other times, local coverage of the imperial crises, and the arguments put forth by the American colonists, were received and interpreted in quite different ways by communities elsewhere in the Empire.

This chapter will focus in particular on the Stamp Act crisis. American historians have always viewed this important event in terms of the consequences it would have on the emergence of a revolutionary movement in the thirteen American colonies. The protests and riots, and the ways in which the American colonists questioned the authority and legitimacy of imperial rule have always been understood as the beginnings of what would eventually become a revolution. However, I argue that the magnitude of this event had a tremendous effect on the ways in which residents of the broader British Atlantic world understood and defined their place in the Empire. For Britons living throughout the Empire, the colonial protests and riots against threats of taxation raised questions about the role of government and the rights and liberties of British subjects that would become more intense in the following years. Furthermore, examining the Stamp Act crisis within an Atlantic world context will shed new light on the ways in

which local events and circumstances affected how ordinary Britons reimagined their place in the Empire.

The remainder of the chapter will examine the ways in which a succession of local and empire-wide events, culminating in the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, began to reshape and redefine how Britons perceived of mainland colonial Americans. During the late 1760s and into the early 1770s the American colonists became more organized and united in their response to British imperial policies, while continuing to defend themselves in a traditional whig-inspired rhetoric of British rights and liberties. And they did so in increasingly aggressive and confrontational ways, which began to significantly affect the lives and livelihoods of British subjects both within the thirteen colonies and further afield. More importantly, these events occurred at times in which Britons living elsewhere in the Empire were dealing with their own crises, and as such, challenged all Britons to respond to the events occurring not just in the American colonies, but throughout the Empire. By examining how these local and empire-wide events affected popular conceptions of identity in these five British Atlantic communities will offer new insight into the ways in which colonial American opposition to British imperial policy was understood in an Atlantic world context.

The Stamp Act Crisis (1765)

As early as the autumn of 1763 the Grenville administration began to explore the possibility of taxing the American colonies. With the Sugar Act (1763), the administration had already taken steps to shore up colonial customs in order to produce and protect revenue from the American colonies, but they had yet to offer a plan of a direct taxation. In March 1764 Grenville announced before Parliament his intention to introduce such an act, but waited until the following session to present the details in order to allow the colonies the opportunity to discuss and debate the idea and possibly come up with their own method of raising the necessary revenue. However, Grenville had no intention of allowing the colonists an opportunity to tax themselves, but only 'to refuse to tax themselves.'² In doing so, Grenville believed that the colonies would be unable to protest the eventual passing of the Stamp Act, because of their failure to produce a viable alternative. In the summer and autumn of 1764 he met with colonial representatives who urged him to reconsider his plans while colonial American

² *Ibid.*, 92.

newspapers printed letters and editorials from colonists opposing Parliamentary taxation. But without an alternative plan from the colonial representatives Grenville introduced the bill in early February 1765 and by March it had cleared all readings and was given the royal assent.³

This decision had enormous consequences for popular articulations of loyalty, not just in the thirteen American colonies, but throughout all of the British Atlantic world.⁴ In each of the five communities in this study the local popular press published letters and editorials denouncing the actions of Parliament and calling for the repeal of the Act. Britons in Glasgow, Halifax, London and Kingston read of rioting and protests occurring throughout the thirteen American colonies, while New Yorkers themselves took to the streets in opposition to the British imperial policy. On the surface, the Stamp Act crisis illustrated the shared context of loyalty and patriotism that existed amongst the broader British population in each of these communities. Opposition to the tax was expressed by Britons living throughout the Atlantic in terms of their shared whig beliefs in the rights and liberties of British subjects. In the colonial British communities of New York City, Halifax and Kingston resistance to the tax, whether through direct and aggressive actions or by a more passive approach, allowed Britons living in each to unite in their defence of the rights and liberties of British subjects. Meanwhile, in communities unaffected by the new tax, such as London and Glasgow, opposition to the Stamp Act and support for American resistance linked local residents to the interests and objectives of ordinary Britons in the colonies.

However, although opposition to the act was all but universal, the residents of these communities responded to the Stamp Act crisis in quite different ways, which thus offers a telling glimpse into the ways in which local interests and circumstances came

³ The best account of the drafting of the Stamp Act remains: Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act*, 75-98. Also see: P.D.G. Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The first phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 69-100.

⁴ The importance of the Stamp Act is reflected in the considerable amount of work on its' impact in communities throughout the Empire. Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act*; Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*; F.L. Engelman, 'Cadwallader Colden and the New York Stamp Act Riots', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, X (1953), 560-578; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 51-76; Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 44-52; Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 552-566; 'The Stamp Act in Quebec', *The English Historical Review*, XLVII (1932), 648-651; Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, 'The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, LI (1994), 203-226; Donna J. Spindel, 'The Stamp Act Crisis in the British West Indies', *Journal of American Studies*, XI (1977), 203-227.

into play. Colonial American opposition to the tax was so extensive, widespread, and at times extraordinarily violent that newspapers, magazines and journals in communities throughout the Atlantic sometimes devoted entire pages and issues to the events occurring there. Britons in each of the five communities in this study had a vested economic interest in the American colonies and became increasingly concerned with colonial American threats of non-importation and violent opposition to ships laden with British goods. While many American colonists saw the tax as threat to their rights and liberties as British subjects, Britons elsewhere could not help but view the events in terms of their own economic interests.

When the stamps that were destined for New York City arrived at the end of October 1765 residents had already begun to voice their opposition to the Act in a language and rhetoric steeped in Britain's whig heritage.⁵ In June, the New York City lawyer and John Morin Scott, writing under the name of 'Freeman' in John Holt's *New York Gazette*, questioned the constitutional right of Parliament to tax the American colonists without their consent:

The great fundamental principles of government should be common to all its parts and members, else the whole will be endangered. If, then, the interest of the mother country and her colonies cannot be made to coincide; if the same constitution may not take place in both; if the welfare of the mother country necessarily requires a sacrifice of the most natural rights of the colonies – their right of making their own laws, and disposing of their own property by representatives of their own choosing – if such is really the case between Great Britain and her colonies, then the connexion between them ought to cease; and, sooner or later, it must inevitably cease.⁶

The following month New Yorkers learned that a local merchant named James McEvers was to be appointed the stamp collector for that port. Almost immediately many of the inhabitants publicly harassed him with threats of violence and destruction to his person and property if he took up the office. Newspapers also reported these threats and used reports of similar events occurring in communities throughout the American colonies to justify the actions of New Yorkers and to place the city's own response within the broader trans-colonial opposition to the crisis. McEvers finally

⁵ Gilje offers a concise, but illuminating account of the Stamp Act rioting in New York City in: Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 44-52. Also see: Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 67-70; Joseph S. Tiedemann, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: New York City and the Road to Independence, 1763-1776* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 62-82; Engelman, 'Cadwallader Colden', 560-578.

⁶ *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 6 June 1765. Engelman, 'Cadwallader Colden', 563-564.

agreed to withdraw from the position in August for fear that 'my House would have been Pillag'd, my Person Abused and his Majestys Revenue Impair'd.'⁷

By late October, residents of New York City had become increasingly defiant about the arrival of the stamps. *The New-York Gazette* reported that 'All the Vessels in the Harbour lower'd their Colours, to signify Mourning Lamentation and Woe' on the arrival of the ships carrying the stamped paper. 'The stamps are now a Commodity no Body knows what to do with, and are more abominable, and dangerous to be meddled with, than if they were infected with Pestilence.'⁸ On the night of 31 October, the day before the Stamp Act was to go into effect, crowds of mournful New Yorkers gathered in the streets to perform a mock ceremonial, public funeral procession in which a coffin, bearing the name 'Liberty', was carried through the streets.⁹ British army officer John Montresor reported that even the 'Bag-gammon Boxes at the merchant's Coffee House [are] covered with Black and the Dice in Crape.' Afterwards, the crowd that had gathered proceeded 'thro' the streets in a mobbish manner whistling and Huzzaing' as they smashed windows and threatened to pull down the house of Major Thomas James, 'who, it was reported, was a Friend to the Stamp Act, and had been over officious in his Duty.'¹⁰

Rioting and crowd activity was not the only means by which New Yorkers opposed the imperial policy. At a general meeting the city's Atlantic merchants agreed to a resolution not to import any British goods, while the city's retailers also concluded 'not to buy any Goods, Wares, or Merchandises, of any Person or Persons whatsoever, that shall be shipped from Great-Britain... unless the Stamp Act shall be repealed.'¹¹ Social unity against the tax was demonstrated in a letter from 'a young Lady in Town' who despite her own disgust toward the idea, agreed that the women in the city 'are resolved

⁷ McEvers to Cadwallader Colden, August 1765, in *Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1923), 414. News of McEvers resigning from office was reported upon in newspapers across the Atlantic. See: *Boston Post Boy*, 2 September 1765; 'PLANTATION NEWS', *Glasgow Journal*, 24 October 1765.

⁸ *The New-York Mercury*, 28 October 1765.

⁹ Weeks earlier *The New-York Mercury* reported that 'A Coffin of exquisite Workmanship was preparing for the Internment of a young Gentleman called the STAMP ACT, who, it is said, expired soon after Lord B__e went to Scotland.' *The New-York Mercury*, 19 August 1765.

¹⁰ G. D. Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, Collections of the New-York Historical Society (New York: Printed for the Society, 1882), 336. Earlier, James had publicly threatened to ram the stamps down the throats of New Yorkers if they did not comply with the Act. John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 212.

¹¹ *The New-York Mercury*, 7 November 1765; *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy*, 31 October 1765.

to resign the charms of dress and let a horrid homespun covering (which can become none but a country wench) take place of the rich brocade, and graceful sattin.¹²

On the following night crowds assembled once again, this time aggressively targeting Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden, who had intended to distribute the stamps despite widespread popular opposition. 'A vast Number of [inhabitants] assembled... in the Commons... [and] proceeded to the Fort Walls, where they broke open the Stable of the L---t G-----r, took out his Coach, and after carrying the same thro' the principal Streets of the City, in Triumph march'd to the Commons, where a Gallows was erected, on one End of which was suspended the Effigy of the Person whose Property the Coach was.' Affixed to the effigy of Colden was a 'stamp'd Bill of La[n]ding, and on his Breast... a Paper with the following Inscription, *The Rebel Drummer in the Year 1715.*' This was in reference to the malicious rumour that he had served as a drummer in the Old Pretender's army during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. Such an inscription not only linked Colden with the equally unpopular Lord Bute, also believed to have been a Jacobite, but it also served to make a powerful statement about the perceived threat of the local government against the traditional whig rights and liberties of British subjects.

The effigy was hung at a gallows erected for the occasion and included another effigy of the Devil, 'a proper Companion for the other.' From there, the effigies, the gallows and Colden's carriage were carried 'in a grand Procession to the Gate of the Fort, where it remained for some Time, from whence it was remov'd to the Bowling Green, under the Muzzels of the Fort Guns, where a Bon-Fire was immediately made, and the Drummer, Devil, Coach, &c. were consumed amidst the Acclamations of some Thousand Spectators.' However, the crowd was not yet finished for the evening. After enjoying the sight of Colden's effigy and carriage in flames, they proceeded to the home of Major James. Once there, they proceeded to ransack his house and commit the articles to a bonfire, 'the whole was consumed in the Flames, to the great Satisfaction of every Person present; after which they dispers'd, and every Man went to his respective Habitation.'¹³

¹² *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy*, 7 November 1765.

¹³ *The New-York Mercury*, 4 November 1765; *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy*, 7 November 1765.

During the following days, as the traditional plebeian celebration of Pope's day approached, New Yorkers continued to aggressively challenge local and imperial authority.¹⁴ On 2 November rumours spread of a possible siege of the fort in which the stamps were being held on governor's island, just off the southern tip of Manhattan. In response to this real threat, Montresor was ordered to 'spike our Guns on the Battery & also the Ordnance Guns in the Artillery yard.'¹⁵ Colden reported that New Yorkers 'were the whole Day collected in Bodies throughout the Town which seemed to be in the greatest Confusion and Tumult.'¹⁶ On 5 November Montresor found placards posted throughout the city that threatened of 'the storming of the Fort this Night.'¹⁷ The ensuing crisis was averted only after Colden proclaimed that he would not distribute the stamps and would turn them over to the City Council, in order 'to prevent the Effusion of blood and the Calamities of a Civil War, which might ensue by my withholding them from you.'¹⁸

In New York City, unlike either Halifax or Kingston, the Stamp Act had brought about an organized, heavily ritualized community-wide response in which elite and common sort residents united in their opposition to the imperial policy. By now, the Sons of Liberty were exerting considerable political influence in the city by organizing, directing and unifying crowd actions and responses. They were led by middling sort merchants and artisans such as Isaac Sears, John Lamb and Alexander McDougall. These men had prospered in the wartime trade of the 1750s, but still remained as closely tied to the political interests and objectives of the common people as to the elite merchants and politicians.¹⁹ As such, they occupied an important place in the city's response to the Stamp Act crisis by offering an organized and effective challenge to the hegemony and legitimacy of the ruling Delancey and Livingston elites.²⁰

¹⁴ The association between the threat the Stamp Act riots posed toward local authority and the coming of the traditional Pope's Day celebration is discussed in: Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 47; Peter Shaw, *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 178-80. Pope's Day was often redefined during politically turbulent periods. See: David Cressy, 'The Fifth of November Remembered', in Roy Porter, ed., *Myths of the English* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 68-90.

¹⁵ Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, 337-338.

¹⁶ Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 47; Cadwallader Colden, *The Colden Letter Books* (New York: Collections of the New-York Historical Society, 1876 and 1877), II, 103-107.

¹⁷ Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, 338-339.

¹⁸ 'Colden to Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen of the Corporation, 5 November 1765', in I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909* (New York, 1922), IV, 754.

¹⁹ Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 59; Alfred F. Young, *The Democratic Republicans of New York: The Origins, 1763-1797* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 11.

²⁰ This challenge to authority presented by the Sons of Liberty is what led Becker to claim that the New York City elite were concerned as much with ideas of home rule as they were with 'who should rule at

Moreover, the New York City Sons of Liberty sought to not only organize local opposition, but they increasingly networked with similar groups forming throughout the American colonies in late 1765 and into 1766.²¹ This extra-legal form of political power and influence proved decisive in uniting the colonial response to the Stamp Act. The Sons of Liberty, or groups of similar interests and objectives, formed across the colonies, sharing information on activities occurring locally and informing one another on how and when to react in various situations. Such an organized system of communication gave an appearance of inter-colonial unity and cooperation in the face of the imperial policies. These groups had an important impact on colonial American politics, both during the Stamp Act riots and then more significantly in the events of the following decade. They effectively restructured the colonial political system by challenging the rule and authority of local assemblies.²² Thus, the imperial crises of the 1760s and early 1770s presented colonial elites with ‘the problem of maintaining their privileges against royal encroachments from above without losing them by popular encroachments from below.’²³

Despite also being subjected to the new imperial tax, Haligonians did not follow the lead of the American colonists in protesting the act and challenging local authority. This was partly due to the strict and authoritarian rule of the royal government over a much smaller community, whose interests and livelihoods were more directly tied to Great Britain. Additionally, the constant presence of the British army and navy made it more difficult for the local inhabitants to openly oppose imperial policies.²⁴ John Adams seemed to recognize this very fact when he commented on the remarkably unifying effect the eventual repeal of the tax had on the American colonies. Yet he attributed the failure of Halifax to join in the cause to it being populated by inhabitants ‘who are also kept in fear by a Fleet and an Army.’²⁵

home.’ Carl L. Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1960), 5-22.

²¹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 77-112. Also see: Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 231-262.

²² Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 85.

²³ Becker, *The History of Political Parties*, 32.

²⁴ Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), 3-23.

²⁵ Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, I, 285.

Colonial newspaper reports did suggest that Haligonians passively resisted the stamp tax. Anthony Henry and Isaiah Thomas, printers of *The Halifax Gazette*, and probably the most vocal opponents of the tax in Halifax, provided detailed coverage of events occurring in the American colonies, reprinting reports of riots and protests, and editorials that denounced the policies of the government.²⁶ In February 1766, Henry and Thomas imaginatively printed the image of the Devil, with pitchfork in hand, stabbing the stamp printed on the newspaper. Alongside the image was a warning to the readers of the threats the stamps posed to the rights and liberties of British subjects: 'Behold me the scorn and contempt of AMERICA, pitching down to Destruction. D[evi]l's clear the Way for B[ut]e and STAMPS.'²⁷ Local inhabitants also seem to have followed the lead of the American colonists in refusing to purchase cloth brought from England, albeit in a more informal boycott. In November 1765, local tailors pleaded for 'the Prayers of all good people that the Stamp Act may be repealed as most of their Customers have declared they will have no new Clothes made, until such Time as said Act is repealed.'²⁸

Though there were no protests or riots on the scale of what was occurring in the American colonies, some Haligonians did find ways of resisting the Stamp Act.²⁹ On the morning of 13 October 1765, townsmen discovered 'hanging on the gallows behind the Citadel-hill, the effigies of a *Stampman*, accompanied with a *Boot* and *Devil*, together with labels suitable to the occasion.'³⁰ The two labels contained verses that targeted both Archibald Hinshelwood, the local stamp distributor, and Lord Bute, the former Prime Minister and confidant to George III who many believed had a direct role in the passing of the Stamp Act. What is most interesting about this event, and perhaps says a great deal about the limits to which ordinary Britons living in Halifax could articulate their own political interests and ideologies, was that the effigies were hung at night and in secret. Unlike in New York City, or elsewhere in the American colonies, there were no grand processions that required the participation of the vast crowds that gathered to watch. There were no funeral processions for Liberty, nor was there crowd action

²⁶ As a result of their open opposition to the Stamp Act, the local assembly forced Henry and Thomas to resign from printing the *Gazette* in August 1766, and a new printer, Robert Fletcher, was brought in from England. Anderson, *Crowd Activity in Nova Scotia*, 100, 102.

²⁷ *The Halifax Gazette: or the Weekly Advertiser*, 13 February 1766.

²⁸ *The Halifax Gazette: or the Weekly Advertiser*, 14 November 1765.

²⁹ For a detailed account of the Stamp Act in Halifax, see: Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 552-566; Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 135-142.

³⁰ *The Newport Mercury*, 4 November 1765. The report was also printed as a broadside, famously entitled 'No Stamped Paper to be had.' in lieu of the 4 November 1765 issue of *The New-York Mercury*.

taken against Hinshelwood, his property or any of the government officials in town.³¹ Instead, there were just two effigies, quietly hung in the town on a dark night in the middle of October.

The use of effigies in regular public events such as Pope Day celebrations, and in more sporadic moments of protest and celebration, was a vital component of eighteenth century British plebeian political culture and played an important role in communicating the political identity of ordinary Britons in communities throughout the Atlantic. Yet the symbolic importance of effigies depended upon the support and participation of the local populace. Like a liberty cap or a liberty pole, effigies were most valuable when used to define the political identity of the crowd that employed them. Without a crowd to carry them through the streets, or to burn or hang them at the gallows, the effigies hung in Halifax could not symbolise a united community and thus had less political impact than those found in the Boston and New York City riots. The person or persons behind this incident may have realized that without this crowd support the actual ritual of hanging the effigies at the gallows was weakened, for a verse on the label pinned on the effigy of Hinshelwood carried the following warning:

Whosoever carries this away is an enemy to his country.
What greater glory can this country see
Than a stamp-master hanging on a tree.³²

However, any hope that the removal of the effigies would offer just reason for crowd action was in vain. In a town filled with British soldiers and sailors, the following morning two prominent citizens cut the effigies down without the least opposition from the inhabitants.

Some Halifaxians certainly felt sympathy for the American cause and attempted to defend their rights and liberties as British subjects in unison with their American neighbours. In a letter to the Board of Trade in November 1765, Hinshelwood complained that 'my Acceptance of this Office has not only brought upon me the whole Indignation of the people upon the Continent, but also of such settlers here, as

³¹ For example: *Massachusetts Gazette*, 6 December 1765; *The New-York Mercury*, 4 November 1765; Shaw, *American Patriots*, 9-11; Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 557, 559-60; Anderson, *Crowd Activity in Nova Scotia*, 98.

³² *The Newport Mercury*, 4 November 1765; *The Newport Mercury*, 11 November 1765; *Massachusetts Gazette*, 21 November 1765; *Boston Post Boy*, 18 November 1765; *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle*, 21 November 1765; Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 556-557; Anderson, *Crowd activity in Nova Scotia*, 97-98.

have been born there... towards the End of last month some of the lowest class, hanged up my Effigy with a Labell affixed to it.' He also included a letter he had received from a group of men in the city the following day that threatened his ruin 'if you don't resign that damnable Office of Stamp Man for this Province... so detestable in the Eyes of all the Sons of Liberty... Follow the example of sundry of the Stamp Men in the other Colonies', the letter continued, 'who resigned when they found that the People did loudly exclaim against such an unjust Act as the Stamp Act is, to enslave free People who were from the beginning of the first settling the Colonies in America till this memorial Period.'³³ Despite this threat, Hinshelwood was never forced to resign from his office and Haligonians did pay the stamp tax. Supporters of royal authority in the thirteen American colonies were the ones forced to remain quiet, while in Halifax the opposite was true. Without widespread support, or a local political climate that allowed for such demonstrations, Haligonians struggled to resist imperial rule like their fellow colonists in America.³⁴

Colonial American newspapers often portrayed the Haligonians as victims of local circumstances, which made public opposition to the tax an impossibility. In November 1765 communities throughout New England read 'that the inhabitants [of Halifax] are very uneasy with the Beginning of their Slavery, and it was thought they would not be holden of their Chains long.'³⁵ The *Boston Post Boy* reported that 'We hear the Stamped Papers are delivered out there by one Hinshelwood, the only surviving – famous Distributor of that Species of Oppression on the Continent. A large Party of Dragoons, who nightly watch his Property and Carcase, is his present Protection.'³⁶ Similarly, another item that circulated throughout New England newspapers reported that Hinshelwood 'has wrote home to resign his detestable office as he is held in the utmost abhorrence and his life is in great danger.'³⁷ A letter from a resident of Halifax printed in *The Newport Mercury* acknowledged that Haligonians had failed to offer the

³³ NORTH AMERICA, NOVA SCOTIA: John Brettell, Stamp Office, enclosing copy of a threatening letter sent to Mr. Hinshelwood, Distributor for Nova Scotia, 31 January 1766 Jan. 31', The National Archives (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO) T 1/449/368-371.

³⁴ Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 557.

³⁵ *Boston Evening Post*, 25 November 1765. Also see: *The Newport Mercury*, 2 December 1765; *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle*, 21 November 1765; *Boston Post Boy*, 25 November 1765; *Boston Evening Post*, 25 November 1765; *The Boston Gazette, and Country Journal*, 25 November 1765; *The New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle*, 29 November 1765; Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 560; Anderson, *Crowd Activity in Nova Scotia*, 102.

³⁶ *Boston Post Boy*, 18 November 1765.

³⁷ *Massachusetts Gazette*, 30 January 1766; 'Boston, December 2.', *Boston Evening Post*, 2 December 1765; Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia', 560; Anderson, *Crowd Activity in Nova Scotia*, 102.

level of resistance of their American brethren, but hoped that 'the neighbouring colonies will be charitable enough to believe that nothing but their dependent situation prevents them from heartily and sincerely opposing a tax unconstitutional in its nature and of so destructive a tendency as must infallibly entail poverty and beggary on us and our posterity if carried into execution.'³⁸ Even in Glasgow it was reported that 'Lord Corville does not molest any vessels that arrive without stamp-clearances, &c. but allows them to pass and repass, as usual; and the stamp-distributor has orders... not to prosecute for breach of the stamp-law.'³⁹

In Kingston, there were no reports of crowd opposition to the Stamp Act and no popular leaders or extra-legal groups such as the Sons of Liberty. The stamp distributor was not forced from his office, nor were there any popular protest or rioting against local authorities. This is all the more interesting when one considers the severity of the Stamp Act crisis in Jamaica.⁴⁰ A rate double that of the mainland was placed on probates of a wills, letters of administration and of guardianship for any estate worth more than twenty pounds. Crown land grants were treble those levied in the American colonies, and public officials had to pay a stamp duty of over twenty pounds on assuming office. Jamaica, with a white population of under eighteen thousand, received the largest consignment of stamps, worth a total of £15,781. In contrast, the colony of New York, with nearly three times the number of white inhabitants, received only £12,934 worth of stamps.⁴¹ Jamaica paid more stamp duty than the rest of the Empire combined, over £2,000 during the four and half months that the act was in force.⁴² Their passive response to the imperial crises led a bitter John Adams to ask,

But can no Punishment be devised for... Port Royal in Jamaica? For their base Desertion of the cause of Liberty? Their tame Surrender of the Rights of Britons? Their mean, timid Resignation to slavery? Meeching, sordid, stupid Creatures, below Contempt, below Pity. They deserve to be made Salves to their own Negroes. But they live under the scorching Sun, which melts them,

³⁸ *The Newport Mercury*, 4 November 1765.

³⁹ 'Halifax, Dec. 9. 1765.' *The Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (Edinburgh: W. Sands, A. Murray, and J. Cochran, 1766), 217.

⁴⁰ O'Shaughnessy, 'The Stamp Act Crisis', 205; Spindel, 'The Stamp Act Crisis', 208-212; T.R. Clayton, 'Sophistry, Security and Socio-Political Structures in the American Revolution; or, Why Jamaica did not Rebel', *The Historical Journal*, XXIX (1986), 323.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 214; Oliver Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 192, 206. In May 1766, *The New-Hampshire Gazette* reported that Jamaicans had paid 'more than Ten Thousand Pounds Sterling' during the four months the Act was in effect. While this was a gross over-estimate, it does show that even contemporaries were well aware that the tax had received little opposition in Jamaica. 'BOSTON, May 22.', *The New-Hampshire Gazette; and Historical Chronicle*, 30 May 1766.

dissipates their Spirits and relaxes their Nerves. Yet their Negroes seem to have more of the Spirit of Liberty, than they. I think we sometimes read of Insurrections among their Negroes. I could wish that some of their Blacks had been appointed Distributors and Inspectors &c. over their Masters. This would have but a little aggravated the Indignity.⁴³

Kingston residents did offer some resistance to the tax. They made 'repeated Threats of Violence, Torrents of Personal abuse and many other very disagreeable Circumstances' against the stamp distributor, John Howell. When he arrived in Kingston in October 1765, opponents reported that 'Great are the murmurings against the stamp-law, but we dare not proceed to such violences as the people of Boston and Virginia.'⁴⁴ Despite Adams' views, colonial American newspapers did report on opposition to the tax in Jamaica. *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle* reported in January 1766 that the inhabitants of nearby Port Royal 'we are sorry to say... permitted the Use of Stamps: But at Kingston, Vessels were cleared out as heretofore, without any Regard to the Stamp Act, and the Inhabitants were determined to oppose it.'⁴⁵ Another report stated that 'the People here are in a perfect phrenzy on account of the stamp-act, and declare they will sooner forfeit their lives than those privileges, the foundations of which were laid in the blood of their ancestors, namely the right to tax themselves!'⁴⁶

A letter from Jamaica, printed in a March 1766 issue of *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle*, reported that 'Vessels from the Continent, without Stamps, were admitted to enter, without the least molestation from the men of war or custom-house officers.'⁴⁷ According to a letter published in the *Boston Evening Post*, Kingston residents had also embraced Wilkite-inspired whig rhetoric and symbolic language in order to express their opposition to the imperial policy. 'Capt. John Dean arrived in 35 Days Passage from Boston, in the *Countess of Bute*, to the surprise of every one here', the writer stated, 'had he not been a Man well respected, and his Cargo much wanted, he would have found it difficult to have sold here. One of his old Customers refused to take any

⁴³ Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, I, 285.

⁴⁴ 'Extract of a letter from Jamaica, Octob. 23, 1765.', *Boston Evening Post*, 2 December 1765.

⁴⁵ 'NEWPORT, December 23.' *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle*, 2 January 1766.

⁴⁶ *Connecticut Courant*, 24 March 1766.

⁴⁷ *The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle*, 27 March 1766. Also see: *The Newport Mercury*, 17 March 1766.

of his Fish, except he had a Cask that was No. 45. Capt. Dean sent for the Cask & he paid the Money for the same.⁴⁸

The failure of Kingston residents to resist the Stamp tax can be attributed to several reasons.⁴⁹ Slave riots and insurrections throughout the 1760s, including one that occurred just after the introduction of the stamp duties, reminded the white inhabitants of the dangers of crowd action and popular opposition to authority.⁵⁰ In December 1765 a Jamaican reported in the *Glasgow Journal* that ‘there is nothing going on here at present but military duty, which we are obliged to attend three days out of seven on account of many rebellious negroes in this island.’⁵¹ Unlike in New York City – or other cities in the American colonies where rioting was most intense – Howell’s office and the stamp papers were not located in Kingston, where opposition from the merchants would have been most concentrated. Instead, they were moved to nearby Spanish Town, a community dominated by planters who were less threatened by the tax and more wary of slave insurrection. ‘This expedient,’ Howell asserted in February 1766, ‘put an Intire stop to the violences threatened’ in Kingston.⁵² Jamaicans were also in the midst of a local political crisis, in which the rights and liberties of the local assembly were set against the authority of the royal governor, Henry Lyttleton, forcing larger imperial issues into the background.⁵³ Unlike the American colonists, Kingston’s mercantile-interested residents had welcomed the Sugar Act of 1764 as confronting the illicit trade between the American colonies and the French and Spanish sugar islands, which had weakened Jamaica’s economy. Furthermore, the Quartering Act of 1765 that exacerbated the crisis in New York City had little impact on residents in Kingston who needed the soldiers to protect them against internal and external threats.

The distance between Kingston and the centres of resistance in the American colonies also played an important role in their lack of resistance. Opposition to the tax became increasingly coordinated and united over the later months of 1765 within the thirteen

⁴⁸ *Boston Evening Post*, 30 June 1766.

⁴⁹ Spindel, ‘The Stamp Act Crisis’, 208-212.

⁵⁰ Kingston residents, including both free and enslaved Blacks, did assemble in mass to celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act. There is also a report of riot in Kingston in December 1766, just six months after news of the repeal. See below.

⁵¹ ‘PLANTATION NEWS’ *Glasgow Journal*, 15 May 1766.

⁵² Howell to Unknown, 7 February 1766, quoted in Spindel, ‘The Stamp Act Crisis’, 209.

⁵³ Jack Greene, ‘The Jamaica Privilege Controversy, 1764-1766’, in Jack Greene, ed., *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 350-394; O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 111-115; Clayton, ‘Sophistry, Security and Socio-Political Structures’, 325; *Scots Magazine*, XXVII (1765), 329-330; *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 163, 272-273.

mainland American colonies. Groups such as the Sons of Liberty organized inter-colonial meetings and established networks of communication, often through the colonial press, to ensure that communities acted together in their response to the tax. However, it took weeks and sometimes months for news to travel to and from Kingston, making it increasingly difficult for residents there to respond in unison with their North American counterparts.⁵⁴

In Glasgow, the response of the American colonies to the Stamp Act crisis raised concern amongst a merchant and manufacturing community with a vested interest in the economic stability and prosperity of the North American trade. The widely-read and influential *Scots Magazine* had very little to say about the Stamp Act until reports arrived in July of opposition from the American colonists. Some of the city's tobacco merchants did send a letter to Parliament suggesting that the law be repealed and the Tobacco Lord John Glassford testified before the House of Commons that colonial protests had severely upset Glasgow's commerce with the colonies.⁵⁵ Such a response suggests that Glaswegians were less concerned with the political consequences of the tax and the issues it raised regarding the rights and liberties of British subjects living in the colonies. After all, they already paid such a tax. Instead, they saw the Stamp Act as a real threat to their economic livelihoods in the prospering British Atlantic trade and thus they supported the colonial American protests.

Local newspapers reported on the empire-wide objection to the Stamp Act in an attempt to unite public opinion on the matter. Colonial rituals of opposition were reported in a neutral tone without condemnation. Rioting in Boston was covered in full detail in the *Glasgow Journal*, with reports of two effigies discovered hanging from the, 'Great Trees... at the south part of town... one of which by the labels appeared to be a Stamp Officer, the other a Jack boot, with a head and horns peeping out the top.' News of the effigies was reported to have spread throughout Boston, 'and had such an effect on them that they were immediately inspired with a spirit of patriotism, which

⁵⁴ O'Shaughnessy has been critical of the importance of such local circumstances, arguing that similar conditions could be found in communities and colonies throughout the West Indies and in mainland North America where opposition did occur. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 81-104.

⁵⁵ Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 272; Dalphy I. Fagerstrom, 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XI (1954), 263.

diffused itself through the concourse.⁵⁶ By referring to the actions of Bostonians as patriotic, rather than fanatical or misguided, suggests that Glaswegians supported the colonial resistance to the stamp tax.

Over the following weeks Glasgow newspapers contained reports from Boston, New York, Rhode Island and Virginia of stamp collectors resigning from their post from fear of the public's reaction.⁵⁷ In another issue, a Philadelphian was approvingly reported as expressing concern that, 'our bretheren in England censure us severely, from a mistaken opinion, that we are unwilling to pay our proportion, towards relieving the nation from the heavy burden of debt it now groans under. This is by no means the case.'⁵⁸

Contained in the North American packet that arrived in London on 7 November, was a newspaper, "under the title, THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURANT, containing matters interesting to 'Liberty, and [k]now ways repugnant to Loyalty..." bearing the, "head piece of a snake or serpent cut into several pieces, on each of which are the initial letters of the names of the several colonies... and over are the words, 'Join or Dye' in large letters."⁵⁹ These reports raised sympathetic awareness among Glaswegians of the significant impact the tax had had on their colonial trading partners, further convincing them of the necessity of its repeal.

Stamp Act Repealed (1766)

News of the repeal of the Stamp Act reached New York City in the middle of May 1766, setting off widespread celebrations throughout the city. The printer Hugh Gaine published and distributed a broadside throughout the town that proclaimed, 'Joy to AMERICA!' and contained news of the repeal taken from the *London Gazette*.⁶⁰ Local newspapers reported that 'the Lovers of their Country, loyal Subjects to His Majesty George the Third, King of Great Britain, and real *Sons of Liberty*, of all Denominations, are hereby cordially invited to partake of the essential and long look'd for CELEBRATION.'⁶¹ William Parker's *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy* reported that 'a sudden Joy was immediately diffused thro' all Ranks of People in the whole City. Neighbours ran to congratulate each other, and all the Bells in Town were

⁵⁶ 'Extract of a Letter from Boston, August 26.' *Glasgow Journal*, 17 October 1765.

⁵⁷ *Glasgow Journal*, 24 October 1765; 'New York Sept. 7.' *Glasgow Journal*, 28 November 1765.

⁵⁸ *Glasgow Journal*, 7 November 1765.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ 'Joy to America. At 3 this day...' (New-York, 20 May 1766), *Evans Early American Imprints*, 10347.

⁶¹ *The New-York Mercury*, 26 May 1766; *The New-York Gazette*, 26 May 1766.

set to ringing, which continued till late at Night, and began again early next morning.⁶² On the Commons, crowds raised a liberty pole in honour of the event and attached 'a large Board' to the top bearing the whig inscription, 'George 3rd, Pitt—and Liberty.'⁶³ A few weeks later 'Rejoicings for the Authenticated arrival of the Repeal of the Stamp Act [were] blended' with celebrations for the King's birthday into 'one Festival.'⁶⁴ 'Two oxen were roasted, on the Common, which, together with a quantity of Beer, with Bread and Bisket was given to the People assembled, they constantly shouting a return of Thanks for the late Repeal on the 18th of March 1766, of an Act which passed the Legislature at Home on the *short-sighted* 22d Day of March 1765... All the Vessels [in the Harbour] were decorated, many Houses paid the same Compliment to the Day with Flags, Streamers, &c.' The celebration continued into the evening with 'Illuminations, Fire Works, Representations of Personages, Crowns, Coat of Arms, &c.'⁶⁵ And in the following weeks the general assembly agreed to erect an equestrian statue of King George III along with a statue of William Pitt in order to demonstrate their loyalty to Britain.

The importance of the Sons of Liberty in organizing and articulating colonial opposition to the Stamp Act over the previous year was reflected in the role they assumed on the day of celebration. On traditional celebratory occasions, it was usually local elite gentlemen, prominent politicians, and military officials who led the community's celebration. They were responsible for proclaiming the toasts, ordering royal salutes to be fired, after which they enjoyed elegant dinners and balls at the homes of local residents or in private taverns. Such was not the case on this occasion. Instead, the Sons of Liberty assumed the leading role. In doing so, they removed the traditional social distinctions that often characterized these celebrations by carrying out the day's events in the public sphere. First, the men met with the rector of the Trinity Church to decide on the sermon to be preached for the occasion, before returning to the Commons, dubbed 'the Field of Liberty.' Once there they ordered a royal salute to be fired. They then proceeded to 'their usual House of publick Resort, where an elegant Entertainment was prepared [and] attended with a Band of Musick.' Afterwards, a

⁶² *The New-York Gazette, or, The Weekly Post-Boy*, 22 May 1766.

⁶³ Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, 368. Gilje notes that the words Pitt and Liberty were printed in larger letters than George 3d, exposing the true feelings of the crowd at that time. Gilje, *The Rode to Mobocracy*, 53.

⁶⁴ 'NEW-YORK, June 2.' *The New-York Gazette*, 2 June 1766; *The New-York Gazette* [Weyman], 2 June 1766; Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 765.

⁶⁵ *The New-York Gazette*, 9 June 1766.

series of toasts were given to the King, Royal family, 'Mr. PITT, the Guardian of AMERICA', and lastly, to 'All true Sons of Liberty in AMERICA.' The evening was concluded with bonfires and illuminations from the 'vast Concourse of People that were assembled.'⁶⁶

Even in the years that followed the memory of the repeal of the Stamp Act continued to be significant for the American colonists. The eighteenth of March was celebrated annually in colonial American communities, which was described in the following:

a Day auspicious to America, and sacred to Liberty... celebrated, by the Friends of Freedom and this Country, for Ages to come: An Event the most important and interesting to this Continent of any since the Settlement thereof by British Subjects... Thanks be to GOD, a PIT[T], a CONWAY, a BARRE, and a numerous List of other illustrious Worthies, the firm and undaunted Assertors of constitutional Freedom, appeared in the British Senate, and, with Ciceronian Eloquence, displayed the Justice of our Complaints... May the Importance of this memorable Transaction be fully transmitted to the latest Posterity;--and may the GLORIOUS ANNIVERSARY never pass unnoticed.⁶⁷

In 1767, New Yorkers celebrated their 'gratitude to all those worthy Patriots by whom the repeal was affected, and the ruin of the English constitution prevented.'

Additionally, a local newspaper reported that 'we have already had accounts of their splendid commemoration of that auspicious day in the colonies of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, New-York, and S. Carolina,' thus linking the popular memory of that event in New York City with the beliefs and ideologies of American colonists elsewhere.⁶⁸ The repeal developed into a uniquely American anniversary, appearing as one of the 'red-letter days' in colonial almanacs alongside Royal birthdays and the King's coronation and accession anniversaries. During the late 1760s and into the early 1770s, both the Pitt statue and the liberty pole came to symbolize New York City's memory of the day, serving to continually remind the American colonists of the good that came from their united opposition to the imperial policy.

⁶⁶ *The New-York Mercury*, 26 May 1766; *The New-York Gazette*, 26 May 1766. Montresor adds in his journal that the 'Night ended in Drunkenness, throwing of Squibbs, Crackers, firing of muskets and pistols, breaking some windows and forcing... the Knockers off the Doors.' Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, 367-368.

⁶⁷ This celebration occurred in Newport, Rhode Island, and was reported upon in *The New-York Journal; or, General Advertiser*, 26 March 1767.

⁶⁸ *The New-York Journal; or, General Advertiser*, 3 April 1767; *The New-York Mercury*, 23 March 1767. For additional celebrations, see: *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 23 March 1769; *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 22 March 1770; *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 29 March 1770; *The New-York Mercury*, 25 March 1771; *The New-York Mercury*, 23 March 1772; *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 24 March 1774.

Glaswegians certainly had a vested interest in the outcome of the Stamp Act crisis. Desperate for news, they read that in London, 'At a noted club at the West end of town, the betts ran on Tuesday night last 105 l. to 71 l. that the Stamp act would be repealed.'⁶⁹ Local newspapers reported that 'all concerned in the trade and manufactures of this place who are so deeply interested in the *prosperity of the colonies* expressed a more than common joy and satisfaction.'⁷⁰

Glasgow's newspaper editors also reported upon colonial celebrations of the demise of the Stamp Act to convey the city's eager anticipation of and enthusiasm for the repeal.⁷¹ In New York City 'the arrival of the above mentioned delightful news' brought joy 'through all ranks of people in the whole city... Neighbours ran to congratulate each other, and all the bells were to ringing... At night there were two great bonfires in the fields, and the whole city was more generally and beautifully illuminated than ever was known before upon any other occasion.'⁷² In a speech to the Assembly in Boston, Governor Bernard congratulated them on the repeal and 'wished that a proper improvement may be made of this happy event, so as to restore this province to the publick reputation, and the domestick peace which it happily enjoyed before the late distractions.'⁷³ Philadelphians, 'to demonstrate our zeal to Great Britain, and our gratitude for the repeal of the stamp-act... will on the 4th of June next, being the birth day of our most gracious sovereign George III. dress ourselves in a suit of the manufactures of England, and give what *home spun* we have to the poor.'⁷⁴

Newspapers from London brought reports that the merchants 'met yesterday at the King's Arms Tavern, in Cornhill; from whence they went in their coaches to Westminster, to express their satisfaction on the Royal Assent being given to the bill for the repeal of the Stamp act.' News of the repeal caused the 'bells [to be rung] in every part of the city on the same occasion... and at night many coffee houses and other houses were finely illuminated. The American and West India Ships in the river hoisted their colours and fired their guns; and other demonstrations of joy were shewn on this

⁶⁹ *Glasgow Journal*, 20 March 1766.

⁷⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, 5 February 1766; *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 March 1766; *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 527-531; Fagerstrom, 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', 263-264; Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, 103.

⁷¹ For a collection of reports relating to colonial celebrations for the repeal of the act, see: *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 379-381, 419-421.

⁷² 'PLANTATION NEWS, NEW-YORK, May 22.' *Glasgow Journal*, 10 July 1766.

⁷³ *Glasgow Journal*, 10 July 1766; *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 367-368.

⁷⁴ *Glasgow Journal*, 17 March 1766; *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 381.

event.⁷⁵ Thus accounts from the American colonies, together with news of London merchants' celebrations, meant that the Glasgow newspapers presented their own city's opposition to the Stamp Act in terms of a shared imperial identity.

In London, similar reports had enabled Londoners to also participate in the patriotic empire-wide celebration. They also read of the pledge of Philadelphians to dress themselves in English-manufactured clothes, and of the joy the news brought to the inhabitants of New York City.⁷⁶ A letter from Boston printed in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, reported of a city-wide celebration, complete with fireworks and elaborate illuminations. On the following day, the Sons of Liberty went to the Liberty Tree in town and increased the number of candles from the forty-five already there, to one hundred and eight, for the number of ministers who voted for the repeal, and added portraits of the King and Queen.⁷⁷

There were additional reports from Chestertown, in Massachusetts, of a subscription being raised to erect 'a Monument at the City of Annapolis in Maryland (being the Seat of Government, and the most public Place in the Province) to the Honour of Mr. Pitt, to stand to latest time, in grateful Remembrance of his patriotic Defence and Support of the Rights, Liberties, and Privileges of British Americans.'⁷⁸ *The Daily Advertiser* reported that 'We hear the Statue of the good and patriotick Mr. Pitt, will be erected in every Province in America.'⁷⁹ Another newspaper contained a report from Charlestown, South Carolina of the 'public Rejoicings, on Account of the Repeal of the Stamp Act,' with toasts drank to 'The King and British Parliament, Mr. Pitt, and all our Friends in England who have exerted themselves in Favour of the Colonies... [and] All the True Sons of Liberty on the Continent, who have wisely and nobly distinguished themselves upon this very important Occasion.' To illustrate the widespread support for the repeal in the American colonies the printer concluded the report with the following note to his readers in London: 'As the Rejoicings at the several Places, on this

⁷⁵ *Glasgow Journal*, 27 March 1766.

⁷⁶ *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* [London], 5 July 1766. The New York City report was taken from *The New York Gazette* and printed in *The Daily Advertiser*, 30 June 1766.

⁷⁷ 'Extract of a letter from Boston, May 26.' *The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* [London], 2 July 1766.

⁷⁸ 'Chester-Town, Ap. 7.' *The Public Advertiser* [London], 24 June 1766.

⁷⁹ *The Daily Advertiser*, 1 July 1766.

happy Event, are much the same; we have not troubled our Readers with a Repetition of the different Accounts.⁸⁰

As in Glasgow, Londoners celebrated news of the repeal of the Stamp Act. They too were as interested in the economic consequences as the constitutional issues raised by the American colonists. Even before the repeal was made official, local newspapers reported that ‘Saturday last there was an universal joy to be seen in the countenances of every lover of trade in the City, on the hopes of the Stamp Act being repealed, that the Merchant as well as the Mechanic may once more hope to be able to pay their just debts, and the many Factors be enabled to employ the poor, who have been too considerable a time destitute of the common necessaries of life.’⁸¹ As the days and weeks passed, similar reports came in from communities scattered all over England and Scotland of British subjects celebrating the repeal and a return to economic prosperity.⁸²

No record exists of a popular celebration occurring in Halifax upon the repeal of the Stamp Act. News of the repeal arrived in early July and in the following weeks the Council drew up an address to the King, declaring that ‘we most humbly offer our most dutiful thanks and acknowledgments for the repeal of the act for granting certain stamp duties in America.’⁸³ Given the extent to which New England newspapers closely followed the response of Haligonians to the tax, and the likelihood that the local printer Isaiah Thomas would have taken joy in printing such news, it seems likely that there was no popular celebration. Quite possibly local authorities wanted to restrain crowd activity so as to present Halifax as a loyal, orderly and law abiding community, unlike their neighbours in the mainland American colonies. Such an appearance could help them win additional favour with the government, upon which they still relied heavily upon for financial grants and military protection.

In Kingston residents did take to the streets in a rare public display of celebration over news of the repeal. The magistrates and principal merchants were treated to an ‘elegant entertainment’ at the courthouse, while ‘the grenadiers, the light-infantry, the half boot blues, and the company of free negroes, assembled in the parade, from whence they

⁸⁰ ‘Charles-Town, May 19.’ *The Public Advertiser* [London], date unknown [circa 30 June 1766].

⁸¹ *London Chronicle*, 25 February 1766; *London Evening Post*, 25 February 1766. Also quoted in Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, 234.

⁸² *London Evening Post*, 28 February 1766, quoted in: Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, 234.

⁸³ Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 163.

marched to the court house, and fired several volleys.’ In the evening the light-infantry regiment constructed an effigy of Grenville affixed with a label that read, ‘*A Stamp*’ and had it carted through town by a group of black slaves. At the head of the procession, a soldier carried a flag, ‘representing Liberty strewing flowers, and the st--p-m—er with a large pair of goat’s horns on his head, kneeling on a roll of stamps, endeavouring to catch the flowers, at the same time dropping a stamp he held in his hand. Under the feet of Liberty was the ace of spades, on which was wrote, *Obitt*, 1766; and on the top, LIBERTY TRIUMPHRANT.’ A second effigy, representing the stamp-master John Howell, ‘under the figure of a goat hanging’ accompanied the procession, ‘in loving forgiveness for his many notorious oppressions.’ The effigies with ‘the great number of lights carried by the negroes, and the illuminations in the houses, added to the brilliancy of the procession.’ The effigies were temporarily hung up at the London coffeehouse before ‘being cut down [and] receiv[ing] an incredible number of stabs from bayonets.’ Finally, the effigies were burnt in a bonfire constructed on the occasion amid ‘the great joy and pleasure of an incredible number of spectators.’⁸⁴

The Stamp Act and its subsequent repeal had important consequences for popular conceptions of loyalty and identity amongst British subjects throughout the Empire. Local interests and circumstances required Britons living in each of these five communities to respond in different ways and for quite different reasons. In New York City, opposition to the Stamp Act extended to all levels in the community and manifested itself in often violent and increasingly organized and aggressive confrontations with the local and imperial authorities. In doing so, at least the beginnings of a radical transformation in the local political sphere was brought about by the increasing presence of ordinary Britons. Organized groups, such as the Sons of Liberty, challenged the authority and legitimacy of the existing political elite. As Countryman has asserted, it was during events such as the Stamp Act crisis that the ‘contradiction between a rhetoric of involvement, virtue, and public liberty and a reality of exclusion, corruption, and class interests was becoming increasingly visible.’⁸⁵ Furthermore, New Yorkers successfully linked their own beliefs, experiences and ideology with that of other colonial American communities. This helped to develop a

⁸⁴ *The Newport Mercury*, 14 July, 1766. Shorter versions of the celebration were also printed in: *The New-Hampshire Gazette; And Historical Chronicle*, 1 August 1766; *Georgia Gazette*, 20 August 1766; *Boston Evening Post*, 28 July 1766; *Boston Post Boy*, 14 July 1766; *South Carolina Gazette*, 21 July 1766. O’Shaughnessy, ‘The Stamp Act Crisis’, 214.

⁸⁵ Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 85.

popular political culture that offered a new, more radical whig articulation of the rights and liberties of British subjects.

However, in other colonial communities affected by the tax, such as Halifax and Kingston, ordinary Britons were unable to replicate similar forms of plebeian political culture often because of local circumstances. As such, they were often singled out and scrutinized by their colonial American counterparts for failing to support and defend the rights and liberties of colonial British subjects. During the Stamp Act crisis these divisions were still quite uncertain. As the situation progressed, however, and colonial American grievances escalated, the failure of ordinary Britons in communities like Kingston and Halifax to participate in this process appeared to divide them from the interests and objectives of the mainland North American protestors.

Finally, in communities such as Glasgow and London, opposition to the Stamp Act seemed to focus less on questions of the rights and liberties of Britain's colonial subjects, and more on the negative consequences the tax was having on their prosperous British Atlantic trade. To be sure, local newspapers in each communities devoted considerable space to coverage of the colonial response and often reprinted reports of rioting and crowd activity in the colonies without condemnation. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that ordinary Britons living in each of these communities openly supported the radical whig-inspired response of the colonial Americans by also taking to the streets in protest. For instance, news of colonial rioting reached Glasgow in late October, just days before the celebration of Pope's Day, but there were no reports of effigies of Grenville being burnt, nor are there reports of crowds assembling to protest the imperial policy. However, Glaswegians and Londoners, along with Haligonians and Jamaicans, were happy to celebrate the repeal using the whig language and rituals championed by residents of the thirteen mainland colonies.

Sugar and Free Port Acts Riot (1766)

Despite seemingly widespread support for the repeal of the Stamp Act in communities and regions throughout the Empire, the decision ultimately proved to be only a short-term unification of the interests and identities of these British Atlantic communities.

This was especially true in Kingston. In June 1766, just as news of the Stamp Act repeal was making its way around the British Atlantic, George III signed The Sugar and Free

Port Acts (1766) into law.⁸⁶ The revised Sugar Act was intended to appease the angry American colonists and rebalance Britain's Atlantic trade economy. The import duty on French West Indian molasses was reduced to the rate of molasses imported from the British West Indies, thus lowering prices by expanding the market. Of course, this did not sit well with Kingston merchants, who counted on their profitable dominance of the sugar market in the American colonies.

To offset these economic differences, Parliament also passed the Free Port Act. This law was intended to reopen the profitable British West Indian trade with the Spanish islands, particularly in bullion, that had rapidly declined after the end of the Seven Years War.⁸⁷ Free ports, including Kingston, throughout the West Indies were chosen as places in which foreign vessels could openly trade with British merchants. There were limits as to what could be traded in order to protect the interest of British merchants and manufactures. However, for Jamaicans, the influence of the West Indian planters in Parliament resulted in more substantial restrictions for that island. Kingston merchants could not import any goods that were grown or produced in Jamaica, such as sugar, molasses, coffee, pimento and ginger from foreign vessels. There was also a ban placed on the importation of all foreign manufactures. Without access to these goods, which British suppliers could not always provide, Jamaican merchants found it nearly impossible to reignite the profitable trade with the Spanish. This did not sit well with many in the community, from the wealthy Atlantic merchants down to the seamen, dockworkers, shipbuilders, and the many other residents with vested interests in the city's Atlantic trade.

Both acts were due to go into effect on 1 November 1766, much to the dislike of Kingston residents. And while the evidence is not entirely clear, it is possible that the likely consequences of this legislation encouraged people of all ranks in Kingston to take to the streets in protest. In April 1767 *The Newport Mercury* reprinted a letter from

⁸⁶ Frances Armytage, *The Free Port System in the British West Indies: A Study in Commercial Policy, 1766-1822* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 28-51. For an concise explanation of the terms of the Free Port Act, see Sherdian, *Sugar and Slaves*, 459-462; Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, 253-275; Allan Christelow, 'Contraband Trade Between Jamaica and the Spanish Main, and the Free Port Act of 1766', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXII (1942), 337-339; Burnard, "Prodigious Riches", 511-512.

⁸⁷ A letter from a Jamaican in St. Jago de la Vega (Spanish-Town) printed in the *Glasgow Journal* expressed the dismal economic conditions of that colony at that time: 'Our trade with the spaniards is asmost [sic] totally lost, our country destitute of currency to support the internal commerce thereof, our treasure long empty, and in consequence, our goals filled with unhappy sufferers.' 'Extract of a Letter from St. Jago de la Vega, in Jamaica, March 8.' *Glasgow Journal*, 15 May 1766.

Kingston dated 8 December 1766, that described a traditional whig-inspired public procession and execution of two effigies. The first appears to have been that of the prominent sugar planter Sir Charles Price. Price had served as the Speaker of the Jamaican Assembly and figured prominently throughout the 1750s and 1760s in opposing merchant appeals to have the capital of Jamaica moved from Spanish Town to Kingston.⁸⁸

The identity of the second effigy is less certain, though a case can be made that it was Charles Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Townshend had been the most vocal supporter of the recent Sugar Act, which had upset many of the Kingston merchants.⁸⁹ 'An attempt having been made to infringe the liberties of the inhabitants of this town', the report stated, 'two effigies were... put into a cart... and drawn backwards, thro' all the principal streets.' In addition to the effigies of Townshend and Price, members of the crowd also 'furnished... a companion, begin a very compleat figure of the devil, who, tho' more innocent than his brethren sufferers, was placed in the same cart with them.' In a symbolic enactment of justice, the crowd began the procession at the Court House, from which they proceeded, 'attended by mourners, two muffled drums and a bell,' to a gallows and pillory erected on the Parade. Once there, Sir Charles Price was the first to be 'fixed into the pillory', followed by Townshend and then the Devil 'with a fork in hand, and thus exclaim'd: What! C---- T----, and my old friend P----, You're welcome to me; we're at hell in a trice.' Afterwards, the effigies were set afire with 'several barrels of pitch and tar,' for the enjoyment of 'an incredible number of spectators, perhaps the greatest ever assembled in this town.'⁹⁰

The letter describing the event was dated 8 December, but it is unclear when this riot actually took place. Clearly, the rituals and symbols of the ceremony closely paralleled those used on the traditional celebration of Pope's Day on 5 November, which happened to be just five days after the Sugar and Free Port Acts were to go into effect. Thus an argument can be made that Kingston residents, like their fellow colonists in America a year earlier, politicized the Pope's Day celebration in order to express their opposition to the recent imperial legislation. Furthermore, by burning effigies of both Price and Townshend the merchants and mechanics in Kingston articulated their own

⁸⁸ Burnard, *Mastery, tyranny, and desire*, ; Cundall, *Historic Jamaica*, 152.

⁸⁹ Armytage, *The Free Port System*, 28-51; Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis*, 265-275.

⁹⁰ *The Newport Mercury*, 6 April 1767.

political and economic interests in both local and imperial contexts. Their inability to compete locally with the political interests of the sugar planters, illustrated in the repeated failures to have the capital moved to Kingston, coincided with the recent Parliamentary legislation that clearly favoured the planter interests, rather than the Kingston merchants. Lastly, this event suggests that residents of Kingston shared many of the whig beliefs of their colonial American counterparts and relied upon a rich popular political culture to define and articulate their opposition to the imperial policy.

However, unlike the American colonists, Kingston merchants and mechanics had little support in this fight. Most British Atlantic communities, especially those in the American colonies, benefited from the Sugar and Free Port Acts of 1766, and thus were unlikely to sympathize with the interests and objects of Britons living in Kingston.⁹¹ As such, this event becomes emblematic of the larger consequences that the various imperial crises of the 1760s had for the nature of loyalty to Britain. Competing economic interests, local circumstances and uneven imperial legislation served to divide, rather than unite Britons living throughout the Atlantic world. Finally, without the presence of a common, shared enemy, British subjects were more inclined to view their attachment to the Empire in local or regional terms, rather than as part of a larger British nation.

The Liberty Pole Riots (1766-1770)

Stamp Act repeal celebrations in New York City were also short-lived due to a series of confrontations between local citizens and British soldiers throughout the remaining years of the 1760s. These incidents continued to force New Yorkers to confront and defend their rights and liberties as British subjects. By and large, colonial Americans were opposed to having a standing army stationed in their city, but prior to 1763 most had appreciated the need for one given the threat of nearby French and Indian settlements. However, after 1763 New Yorkers increasingly found the presence of soldiers a direct threat to their rights and liberties and often the cause of many of the problems in the city.⁹² Drunken and rowdy soldiers often brawled with local citizens,

⁹¹ Many colonial American communities celebrated news of the Sugar Act of 1766. See *Boston Post Boy*, 6 October 1766; *Boston Post Boy*, 7 July 1767.

⁹² Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967), 55-93, esp. 61-66. On the difficulties associated with maintaining a standing army in the American colonies after the end of the Seven Years' War see Shy, *Toward Lexington*, 140-190. Of course, such criticism from local

destroyed public and private property, and were regularly visitors to the many brothels and bawdyhouses in the city.⁹³ More importantly, off-duty soldiers often took on labouring jobs at lower wages, which would have otherwise gone to the lower sort residents in the city. This became especially troublesome during the post-war recession in the mid-1760s when many New Yorkers struggled to find work.⁹⁴ To make matters worse, the Quartering Act of 1765 required colonial communities to house and provide for troops stationed in the city, whose numbers in New York City had grown substantially during the Stamp Act riots. The New York assembly refused to enforce the legislation early in 1766, thus setting the stage for nearly a half decade of heated exchange between soldiers and citizens in the city.⁹⁵

The fighting between the soldiers and citizens centred on the raising of a liberty pole in May of 1766 on the Commons directly in front of the soldier's barracks, during celebrations of the Stamp Act repeal.⁹⁶ Liberty Poles held an important place in eighteenth century British plebeian political culture.⁹⁷ As visual symbols of the political identity of a community, they were important tools of political expression for lower and middling sort residents who lacked formal political representation. As one New York City Patriot remarked, 'it has been the Custom of all Nations to erect Monuments to perpetuate the Remembrance of Grand Events. Experience has proved, that they have a good Effect on the Posterity of those who raised them, especially such as were made

citizens did not sit well with the British soldiers, who felt that the military protection they offered the colonists was underappreciated. In a poem, written by a soldier and published as a broadside, it was said:

God and a Soldier all Men doth adore,
in time of War, and not before:
When the War is over, and all Things righted,
God is forgotten, and the Soldier slighted.

'*God and a Soldier all Men doth Adore*' (New York, 1770), Evans 11936. Also quoted in Lee R. Boyer, 'Lobster Backs, Liberty Boys, and Laborers in the Streets: New York's Golden Hill and Nassau Street Riots', *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* LVII (1973), 281-308; Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 65; Tiedemann, *Reluctant Revolutionaries*, 147-148.

⁹³ The city's brothels, regularly frequented by soldiers in the city, were attacked by New Yorkers during the Stamp Act riots. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 47.

⁹⁴ Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 63-66; Kammen, 'The American Revolution as a Crise de Conscience', 130; Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 47.

⁹⁵ Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 52-58, 62, 72; Becker, *The History of Political Parties*, 79-83; Arthur Schlesinger, 'Liberty Trees: A Genealogy', *The New England Quarterly*, 25 (1952), 441-443, 445, 447, 451; Ketchum, *Divided Loyalties*, 224-236. For British General Thomas Gage's defence of the Quartering Act, see Shy, *Toward Lexington*, 176-181.

⁹⁶ Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 765; Scull, ed. *The Montresor Journals*, 368; *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 26 March 1767.

⁹⁷ J. David Harden, 'Liberty Caps and Liberty Trees,' *Past and Present*, 146 (1995), 66-102; Liberty Poles and Liberty Trees had their origins in sixteenth and seventeenth century English maypole celebrations. For more on the origins of these celebrations see: Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 21-23.

sacred to Liberty.’⁹⁸ Erected to memorialize their successful resistance of the Stamp Act, the pole defined the commitment of New Yorkers to the defence of British rights and liberties throughout the late 1760s and into the 1770s.⁹⁹ Yet for the soldiers stationed in the city – and for some of the citizens as well – the pole instead became the focal point of American resistance to British imperial legislation in the late 1760s and early 1770s. As such, they believed that the pole did not symbolise liberty so much as licentiousness and disorder. As one New Yorker declared in *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* in January 1770, for many persons liberty had come to mean the ‘Happiness of Assembling in the open Air, and performing idolatrous and vociferous Acts of Worship, to a Stick of Wood, called a Liberty Pole.’¹⁰⁰

In August 1766 there were two successful attempts by groups of soldiers to cut down the pole. The first occurred on the night of 10 August, causing upwards of two thousand New Yorkers, led by Isaac Sears and the Sons of Liberty, to assemble the next day on the Commons to confront the soldiers. A small skirmish followed in which ‘two or three were wounded, [and] several hurt, by the soldiers.’¹⁰¹ Montresor reported that two days later ‘The Sons of Liberty erected another high post in lieu of the other with ‘George, Pitt and Liberty’ and hoisted a large ensign thereon.’¹⁰² Meanwhile, newspapers and broadsides circulated throughout the city cautioning ‘Innholders & Inhabitants not to have Intercourse with the military or even to admit them to their houses’, while merchants were told not to sell any goods or provisions to the officers or soldiers stationed in town.¹⁰³ Just over a month later, the soldiers again cut down the newly erected liberty pole, but another one was raised the following day. Things remained quiet in the city until March 1767, when during the ‘commemoration of the repeal of the Stamp act, the mast erected on the Common, inscribed to his Majesty Mr. Pitt, and Liberty, on occasion of the repeal, was in the night cut down.’¹⁰⁴ Yet again,

⁹⁸ ‘To the Sons of Liberty in this City’ (February 3, 1770), Evans 11891. The origins and significance of Liberty Poles and Liberty Trees in Colonial and Early American popular political culture is covered in: Schlesinger, ‘Liberty Trees: A Genealogy’, 435-458; Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence*, 36-38; Newman, *Parades and the Politics*, 23-26.

⁹⁹ For instance, when New Yorkers refused to agree to a non-importation agreement in 1770 a letter from a person in Philadelphia asked if they would send their liberty pole to Philadelphia since ‘they can, by their late conduct, have no further use of it.’ Schlesinger, ‘Liberty Trees: A Genealogy’, 447.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Dougliad’, *The New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, 18 January 1770.

¹⁰¹ *The New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy*, 14 August 1766.

¹⁰² Scull, ed., *The Montresor Journals*, 382-383.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 383-384.

¹⁰⁴ *The New-York Mercury*, 23 March 1767. News of this event was also reported in: *The Glasgow Journal*, 28 May 1767.

another was erected the following day, this time with iron girders protecting the base.¹⁰⁵ In the following weeks attempts were made by the soldiers to bring it down, but the new fortified designs made it nearly impossible. Afterwards, the pole stood unmolested on the Commons for the following three years.¹⁰⁶

The situation intensified in January 1770 when New Yorkers again found themselves at odds with the soldiers. The colonial assembly, now controlled by the more conservative-minded DeLanceyites, reneged on their earlier decision to refuse to put the Quartering Act of 1765 into effect and granted financial assistance to the troops stationed in the city. The Sons of Liberty reacted bitterly to the assembly's decision. Alexander McDougall, in his famous broadside *To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York*, described it in traditional whig-inspired rhetoric as a direct threat to 'enslave a free People; when this unfortunate Country has been striving under many Disadvantages for three Years past, to preserve their Freedom.'¹⁰⁷

The broadside was intended to have been anonymous, but word having gotten out that McDougall was the author, he was promptly imprisoned on charges of libel. Seeing this as an opportunity to replicate the hugely controversial indictment of John Wilkes two years earlier in London, which had turned him into a 'martyr' for liberty in the eyes of many Britons, McDougall rejoiced in being 'the first Sufferer for Liberty since the Commencement of our glorious Struggles.' He and many of other New Yorkers embraced radical Wilkite rhetoric and symbols, such as the number forty-five, to display their ardent defence of the rights and liberties of New York City residents.¹⁰⁸ *The New-York Journal* reported that 'Most People are of Opinion that his Case is similar to that of Mr. Wilkes, in Instances more important than the No. 45, and even in this Similarity, many think there is something providential. Capt. M'Dougall is so warmly espoused, that in the two first Days of his Confinement, he was visited as a true Son of Liberty, by upwards of two hundred of the Friends of American Liberty of all Ranks.'¹⁰⁹ New Yorkers were also pleased to know that their support for Wilkes was reciprocal. In

¹⁰⁵ *The New-York Gazette* [Weyman], 30 March 1767.

¹⁰⁶ The soldiers responsible for the attack on the liberty pole the night of the Stamp Act repeal celebration were arrested and brought before the quarter-sessions. Shy, *Toward Lexington*, 279.

¹⁰⁷ *To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York*, December 16, 1769, Broadside NYHS.

¹⁰⁸ Ketchum, *Divided Loyalties*, 213-223.

¹⁰⁹ *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 15 February 1770. It was also during this time that Wilkes' *North Briton No. 45* was reprinted in New York City in order to remind New Yorkers of the origins of the Wilkite cause. Andrew Hook, *Scotland and America: A Study of Cultural Relations, 1750-1835* (Glasgow and London: Blackie, 1975), 62.

another issue of *The New-York Journal* it was confidently asserted that 'All Mr. Wilkes's friends are friends to America. Some of them talk of seeking a shelter from arbitrary power in those peaceful desarts.'¹¹⁰

In the following weeks tensions escalated in response to another broadside printed in the city. The writer derided local merchants willing to employ off-duty soldiers at lower wages when harsh winter weather and an economic recession had made work for the labouring sort especially scarce in the city.¹¹¹ The soldiers responded by cutting down the liberty pole on the night of 17 January. On the following day confrontations between civilians and soldiers finally erupted into a full scale battle in a poor section of the city referred to as Golden Hill: several people were seriously injured, though no one was killed.¹¹²

This four-year long confrontation between New York City residents and British soldiers, particularly during the early days of 1770, closely resembled traditional eighteenth-century moral economy riots in which local citizens defended the interest and well-being of their community from an unjust authoritarian presence.¹¹³ Yet these riots held more than just local significance. From the first celebration of the stamp act repeal anniversary, to news of the New York Assembly agreeing with Parliament's request to support the troops stationed in the city, these incidents occurred against the backdrop of a much larger, empire-wide crisis. As such, these quite local riots and violent confrontations with British soldiers had implication for ideas about and demonstrations of loyalty amongst ordinary Britons living in New York City. For many New Yorkers, threats and attacks to the Liberty Pole in the city became emblematic of the larger struggle they faced in defending their rights and liberties in the face of a government that over time seemed more and more intent on destroying them.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 27 April 1769, quoted in Langford, 'London and the American Revolution', 57.

¹¹¹ *To the Public*, January 15, 1779, Broadside NYHS.

¹¹² *The New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy*, 5 February 1770; *Boston Evening Post*, 19 February 1770; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 15 February 1770; 'NEW-YORK, January 15.' *The Nova Scotia Chronicle, And Weekly Advertiser*, 28 February 1770.

¹¹³ E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, L (1971), 76-136.

¹¹⁴ Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 57-58.

Townshend Revenue Acts (1767)

Not long after the repeal of the Stamp Act the new ministry of William Pitt began to formulate a new plan for raising revenue in the American colonies.¹¹⁵ Secretary of War Lord Barrington reported to the House of Commons in January 1767 that said it would cost the government £405,607 to maintain the British army in the American colonies. As Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend believed the American colonies should be responsible for these costs and felt that an external tax on imported goods was the solution. Yet by May his tax plan had expanded so that the money raised would cover some of the costs of governing the colonies as well. Import duties on British (rather than foreign) goods that included paper, paint, lead, glass and tea would raise enough revenue, Townshend believed, to make the American colonies self-sufficient. Furthermore, unlike the unpopular stamp tax, the duties collected under this new act would go directly toward the costs of administering the colonies, rather than for use by the British government. It was believed that the colonists would be more inclined to accept an external tax (rather than an internal tax such as the Stamp Act), especially if all revenue remained in the colonies.

This of course was not the case. Like the Stamp Act, the new duties were also viewed by many of the colonists as an unconstitutional tax. Additionally, the revenue raised was to pay for the Royal officials in the colonies, thus threatening the authority of the colonial assemblies who had previously enjoyed control over these men by overseeing their salaries. In response the American colonists did not revert to the violent crowd activity of the Stamp Act crisis. Rather, they offered a more focused, organized and ultimately more effective resistance to the new duties by agreeing to several non-importation agreements in the early months of 1768. These non-importation agreements not only continued to redefine the relationship of the colonists with Great Britain, enhancing resistance and strengthening the Patriot cause, for they also had important consequences on the popular political culture of loyalty in the British Atlantic world.

John Dickinson's 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania', which appeared in newspapers between December 1767 and February 1768, best articulated the colonists' opposition to the new imperial legislation. Dickinson argued that the Townshend

¹¹⁵ Peter D. G. Thomas, *The Townshend Duties Crisis: The Second Phase of the American Revolution, 1767-1773* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 20-22.

duties, like the stamp tax that had preceded them, were a ministerial conspiracy to enslave the colonies by taxing them on goods they could only import from Britain. 'If *Great Britain* can order us to come to her for necessaries we want', Dickinson asserted, 'and can order us to pay what taxes she pleases before we take them away, or when we land them here, we are as abject slaves as *France* and *Poland* can show in wooden shoes and with uncombed hair.'¹¹⁶ Relating the experience of American colonists to those living under the arbitrary rule of Catholic France effectively condemned the misguided and ultimately un-British actions of Parliament.

Non-importation agreements were signed in communities throughout the American colonies between 1768 and 1770. In New York City, an agreement was settled upon by local merchants and traders in August 1768, along with the formation of a local association who was responsible for ensuring that everyone complied with the agreement. The consequences were severe. Imports into New York harbour had been worth an impressive £482,000 in 1767. Yet by the following year they had fallen to just £207,000.¹¹⁷ The success of this agreement depended on the involvement of both the more conservative merchant elite and the radical Sons of Liberty. The latter assumed police-like powers over the community, threatening to report anyone who dared to import British goods and using local newspapers to publish the names of anyone who had acted against the interests of the broader community.¹¹⁸ As such, the non-importation agreement in New York City offered a new, more focused opposition to British imperial policy than the previous Stamp Act protests. There were still violent confrontations, attacks on personal property, and threats and accusations in local newspapers, but nothing on the scale of what occurred in 1765 and 1766.

By the late spring of 1770 the mood had changed. With Parliament agreeing to repeal all of the Townshend duties except the one on tea, many of the local New York City merchants believed that it was best to remove the non-importation agreement and reopen trade with Great Britain. However, radicals such as Sears and the Sons of Liberty, who had displayed a considerable amount of influence over city politics during

¹¹⁶ John Dickinson, 'Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania', in Richard D. Brown, *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Co., 1992), 97-102.

¹¹⁷ Becker, *The History of Political Parties*, 85, 68-69ff.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Richardson was made to appear at a scaffold erected near the liberty pole in order to confess his guilt in breaking the non-importation agreement. *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 21 September 1769. For the case of Simon Cooley see: *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, 20 July 1769.

the previous five years, felt that they should continue until the duty on tea was also removed. Between May and July both sides argued their cases, not just to the residents of New York City but to communities throughout the colonies. The merchants feared repealing the non-importation agreements without the support of merchants in Boston and Philadelphia, while the Sons of Liberty corresponded with similar groups elsewhere in the colonies to legitimate their own cause. Such a response offered striking evidence of the extent to which opposition to British imperial policy had matured since 1765. New York City merchants and mechanics alike were fearful of acting without the consent and support of the rest of the mainland American colonies. Popular resistance was no longer predominantly local, but rather required the participation of the broader colonial population. In the end the merchants were able to successfully end the non-importation agreement and reopen trade with Great Britain in all goods except tea.¹¹⁹ Boston and Philadelphia were slow to follow, but eventually concurred with the New York merchants and agreed to begin importation of British goods in the autumn of 1770.

This crisis represented the limits of local popular political culture in resisting British imperial policies. For the previous five years lower and middling sort residents had played a vitally important role in determining the city's response to the imperial legislation and had increasingly worked to reshape and redefine the nature of loyalty in the community. Groups such as the Sons of Liberty had called upon ordinary New Yorkers to take an active role in the politics of the city by defending, at times violently, their rights and liberties as British subjects. But the cessation of the non-importation agreement in 1770 marked a real break from this movement and illustrated that the conservative-minded merchant elite still controlled the city's political sphere.¹²⁰ Despite the unified response of the lower and middling sort to the imperial crises of the 1760s and 1770s, local politics presented a much more complicated problem. Religious divisions, viva voce voting methods, and the presence of an influential merchant elite made it considerably more difficult in New York City for artisans and mechanics to offer a united opposition in the face of local crises.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Becker, *The History of Political Parties*, 88-94.

¹²⁰ Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 364.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 362-372; Roger Champagne, 'Family Politics versus Constitutional Principles: The New York Assembly Elections of 1768 and 1769', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XX (1963), 57-79. For a challenge to this interpretation see: Patricia U. Bonomi, 'Political Patterns in Colonial New York City: The General Assembly Election of 1768', *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXXI (1966), 432-447.

Colonial non-importation agreements had a particularly strong impact on the prosperous port community of Glasgow. Residents relied heavily on the tobacco trade with the mainland American colonies. One writer asserted that it 'is alarming as well as a very unexpected height of insolence, and ought to remind us of the duty we all owe, in our respective stations, to our country, her trade, and manufactures, which must suffer very considerably if this [non-importation] spirit is allowed to go on without being properly checked in the bud.' Arguing that mercantilist colonial taxation was necessary because it kept the colonists from selling and buying outside of Britain's Atlantic trade network, he concluded 'Thus we should at once secure our trade, our manufactures, and our existence; and encrease [sic] our revenues by these very means, which American selfishness had contrived for subverting them.'¹²² The writer framed a problem suffered by Glaswegians in imperial terms, placing it within the context of a broader British Atlantic community. He presented the selfishness of American colonists as directly affecting the general wellbeing of communities across the Empire, and for many Glaswegians that was the real issue at stake.

Boston Massacre (1770)

From 1765 to 1770 many American colonists had grown increasingly concerned with the perceived threat British imperial policies posed to their rights and liberties as British subjects. However, it was the Boston Massacre in March 1770 that offered glaring proof of the deadly nature of the colonial struggle to protect and defend their rights and liberties in the face of an increasingly oppressive government. News of the event spread quickly throughout the American colonies and across the Empire. Yet, unlike previous coverage of the colonial crises, which was often supportive of the American colonists, the British popular print culture was rather less united in its response to events in Boston. Britons began to question the tactics used by the colonists to oppose British authority. For many, the events that unfolded in Boston were as much the result of the problems associated with housing a standing army brought on by violent protests by Bostonians, as they were with the increasing colonial opposition to British soldiers.

News of the incident in Boston resonated among ordinary Londoners who had also experienced similar violent clashes with British soldiers during the Wilkes and Liberty

¹²² *The Glasgow Journal*, 31 December 1767.

riots over the previous few years. In May 1768, after Wilkes had been arrested on charges of seditious libel, upwards of fifteen thousand Londoners gathered outside the King's Bench Prison in St. George's Field to demonstrate their support for Wilkes. Chants of 'Wilkes and Liberty', 'No Liberty, No King', and 'Damn the King' resounded from the crowd, who had come to see John Wilkes as the embodiment of the whig defence of British rights and liberties. Fearing a possible revolt, the soldiers stationed in London assembled on the field to quell the rioters. Unable to control the situation, the soldiers opened fire on the crowd, killing seven people.¹²³

Relations between the soldiers and citizens of London after 1768 remained tense. By March 1770, the St. George's Field Massacre, as it had become known, was still in the memories of many Londoners. Furthermore, whig supporters of the American colonists in London worked aggressively in the spring of 1770 to make sure that the Bostonians accounts of the event were widely circulated for Londoners to read.¹²⁴ *The Middlesex Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty* printed numerous reports blaming the British soldiers, and ridiculed them by suggesting:

'Capt. Preston, who with his party of soldiers so narrowly escaped the imminent danger which their lives were in, from the snow-balls of the inhabitants of Boston, will have free pardon, and be shortly appointed Governor of Massachusetts's Bay, as the fittest successor to Gov. Barnard; and that Col. Dalrymple will be tried by a court-martial and broke, for not aiding the engagement, and the long-concerted scheme of extirpation, but removing the troops from the town.'¹²⁵

However, in a city as diverse as London, with so much of its economic interests tied up in the colonial American trade, not all residents were willing to believe all of the accounts coming from the Bostonians. *The General Evening Post* also reprinted reports

¹²³ Widespread rioting among groups such as Sailors, Hatters Sawyers, Coal heavers, Glass-grinders and tailors added to the already tenuous atmosphere in the city at this time. *The St. James's Chronicle; or, the British Evening-Post*, 10 May 1768; *The St. James's Chronicle; or, the British Evening-Post*, 12 May 1768. Rudé claims that there was no connection between the 'industrial rioters' and those supporting the Wilkite cause, but clearly the instability in the city heightened the fears of both soldiers and protesters alike. George Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: Studies in Popular Protest* (London: Collins, 1970), 247-248. Also see: John Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1870* (New York: Longman, 1979), 64-76; Sutherland, *The City of London*, 8.

¹²⁴ Langford, 'London and the American Revolution', 55-78. John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 39-42. For more on the connection between Wilkes and the American colonists, see: Maier, 'John Wilkes and American Disillusionment with Britain', 373-395; Greene, 'Bridge to Revolution: The Wilkes Fund Controversy', 19-52; Audrey Williamson, *Wilkes: 'A Friend to Liberty'* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), 190-206; Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783*, 182.

¹²⁵ *The Middlesex Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty*, 24 April 1770; *The Middlesex Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty*, 1 May 1770.

taken from the *Boston Gazette*, along with letters from Bostonians that placed blame for the incident on the quartering of troops in the city.¹²⁶ The following issue carried the account of Captain Thomas Preston, who defended the actions of his regiment claiming they had been attacked by a mob ‘striking their clubs or bludgeons one against another, and calling out, “Come on, you rascals, you bloody backs, you lobster scoundrels, fire if you dare, God damn you, fire and be damned, we know you dare not;” and much more such language was used.’¹²⁷ A letter to the editor of *The General Evening Post* questioned the authority of Bostonians’ reports, believing instead that ‘some of the accounts in Tuesday’s papers were dictated by a hot partizan of certain inhabitants of Boston, who bear and avow what may be called a sarcastical hatred to the military.’¹²⁸ Another letter from a Bostonian warned Londoners that ‘I sincerely judge, if the country [New Englanders] had come in, there would not have been one soldier or officer left alive! Death would have been their portion! You have fired a whole continent, and you must expect to feel the heat of the fire you have kindled.’¹²⁹

In Glasgow the editor of a local newspaper also reprinted pro-American accounts of the massacre taken directly from *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, appending his own commentary:

The above account, which we have copied from Lloyd’s Evening Post must appear to every unprejudiced Reader in the highest degree partial. But as it is a most interesting and melancholy affair, which cannot well fail of being productive of dismal consequences, our Readers might think us remiss in our duty, were we to conceal from them so pompous a detail in favour of the Bostonians. We have, however, the best authority for saying, that it is undoubtedly much aggravated, and dressed up by the Champions for Liberty, to answer the purposes of their party in the very same stile with what they are pleased to call. The St. George’s Field Massacre.

The report concludes with a pro-British account, in which the massacre was presented as the conclusion of a week long series of troubles with the Bostonians, who had repeatedly threatened and attacked the soldiers stationed in the city.¹³⁰

Connecting the massacre in Boston to the violent Wilkes-inspired incident that had occurred two years earlier in London served to illustrate the contempt many Scots felt toward both unruly Bostonians and their London counterparts. The Wilkite cause did

¹²⁶ *The General Evening Post* [London], 24 April 1770; *The General Evening Post* [London], 5 May 1770.

¹²⁷ *The General Evening Post* [London], 28 April 1770

¹²⁸ ‘To the Editor of the GENERAL EVENING-POST’, signed ‘NO INCENDIARY’, *The General Evening Post* [London], 26 April 1770.

¹²⁹ *The General Evening Post* [London], 28 April 1770.

¹³⁰ *The Glasgow Journal*, 3 May 1770.

not sit well among most Scots. Wilkes's defence of British rights and liberties rested on his overt attack of Lord Bute and the increasing Scottish presence and influence in Whitehall and the palace.¹³¹ As such, the whig language of loyalty that emanated from London and colonial American crowds in the late 1760s certainly did not carry the same weight in Scotland. In fact, the opposite seems to have been the case. Instead of parading through the streets with cries of 'Wilkes and Liberty' many Scots defended their loyalty to Britain by attacking Wilkes.¹³² In the 1768 celebration of the King's birthday in Edinburgh, it was reported:

that on the night of the 4th inst. several hundred persons assembled there, and carried on their shoulders a figure which they called Wilkes; and after parading the streets, and shouting Wilkes and Liberty, they carried him to grass market, where they chaired the mock hero, on the stone where the gallows is usually fixed at execution; after making a fire, they committed the effigy to the flames, and scattered the ashes in the air, and then dispersed.¹³³

Similarly, a letter from a merchant in Edinburgh to a friend in New York City, which was then reprinted in *The Nova Scotia Chronicle, And Weekly Advertiser*, expressed his sorrow 'to read of your Americans attachment to Wilkes, that son of Belial; some colonies sending him presents, others inviting him to reside among you (as our news papers say).'¹³⁴ For many Scots, the Boston Massacre and its connections to similar events that occurred in London were not minor, insignificant incidents. Rather, they were interpreted as the illegitimate and un-British response of the American colonies' resistance to British rule.

There is little evidence of the response of residents of either Halifax or Kingston to news of the Boston Massacre, but we can assume that news of the incident would have found little support in either community.¹³⁵ In Halifax, lower and middling sort residents, many with ties to New England, and Boston in particular, may have felt

¹³¹ Brewer, 'The Misfortunes of Lord Bute', 3-43.

¹³² For instance, twenty-six Scottish counties and thirty-three burghs sent letters of support for the government's stance on the 1768 Middlesex election. Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 214fn.

¹³³ 'LONDON, April 13.' *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 30 June 1768. An effigy of Wilkes was also burnt in Aberdeen. 'LONDON, May 20.' *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 28 July 1768. A similar event occurred in 1763, after the publication of Wilkes's *North Briton*, No. 45. *Glasgow Journal*, 9 June 1763.

¹³⁴ 'NEW-YORK, October 9.' *The Nova Scotia Chronicle, And Weekly Advertiser*, 31 October 1769.

¹³⁵ News of the massacre arrived in Halifax on April 3, 1770. 'BOSTON.' *The Nova Scotia Chronicle, And Weekly Advertiser*, 3 April 1770.

sympathy for the five Bostonians killed on 5 March.¹³⁶ But the strict, authoritarian rule of the local magistrates and the overwhelming presence of the British soldiers and seamen meant that it was unlikely anyone would have expressed these concerns publicly. Atkins, in a history of Halifax written over a century later, does mention vaguely that 'Among the various exhibitions of public feeling at this period was the erection of a gallows, on the Common, with a boot suspended from it as a token of disapprobation of Lord Bute's Government.'¹³⁷ Such a typical whig demonstration of British rights and liberties does suggest that at least some Haligonians did attempt to express their support for the Bostonians, and the Wilkite cause more broadly.

However, the local press was also critical of Wilkes. In September 1768, *The Nova-Scotia Gazette* reprinted a letter from London that had come from Philadelphia, describing the imperial capital as a:

daily Scene of lawless Riot and confusion. Mobs are patrolling the Streets at Noon; some knocking all down that will not roar Wilkes and Liberty...What the Event will be GOD only knows; but some Punishment seems preparing for a People who are ungratefully abusing the best Constitution, and the best King any Nation was ever blest with; intent upon nothing but Luxury, Licentiousness, Power, Places, Pensions, and Plunder. Mean while, the Ministry, divided in their Councils, with little Regard for each other, worried by perpetual Oppositions, in continual Apprehension of Changes, intent on securing Popularity, in case they should lose Favour, have for some Years past had little Time to attend to great national Interests, much less to our small American Affairs, whose Remoteness makes them appear still smaller.¹³⁸

In Kingston white residents who were outnumbered fifteen to one by their slaves counted on the presence of the British military to protect them from possible slave revolts or invasions from neighbouring French and Spanish islands. Such a drastic difference in populations made opposition to the British military stationed there an impossibility. In fact, far from objecting to their presence like Bostonians, many of the British West Indian islands had actually petitioned the British government for more troops in the spring of 1770.¹³⁹ Thus it was unlikely that residents of Kingston would have felt a great deal of sympathy for the Bostonians.

¹³⁶ Kerr rather lazily concludes that the lack of support for the Bostonians in Halifax was due to the loyalty of Haligonians to Britain. W. B. Kerr, 'The Merchants of Nova Scotia and the American Revolution' *The Canadian Historical Review*, XIII (1932), 20-36.

¹³⁷ Atkins, *History of Halifax City*, 72.

¹³⁸ 'AMERICAN NEWS. PHILADELPHIA, August 25.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, 29 September 1768.

¹³⁹ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 56.

The increasingly organized and confrontational resistance of the American colonists against British imperial rule caused many Britons to begin to question the ways in which colonial Americans had opposed imperial taxation. Many had become concerned with the violent and unruly conduct of the American colonists in response to the crisis. In Glasgow, a letter penned by Britannus prophetically articulated how far they were willing to go in their sympathy toward the colonists. 'Liberty, no doubt, is a precious thing; but what is more pernicious, when it gets the better of obedience', the writer suggested. 'The great art of government consists in keeping a due medium between well-bounded Liberty and unbounded Licentiousness, and devising such checks and dependencies between subject and sovereign, that we may be either slaves or libertines,' and Britain should only 'Let the Americans enjoy all the sweets of legal freedom, and extend their commerce as far as they can, under proper restriction.' With that in mind, Brittanus warned that 'if they assume a power to themselves of undermining the very basis of our constitution, by erecting twenty distinct parliaments, and each of them with supreme authority... 'tis high time to make them sensible, that so daring an attempt will not escape with impunity.'¹⁴⁰

Most Britons would have agreed with colonial aims to question the motives of government, and accepted that such legal forms of protest that were intended for the good of all of society. E.P. Thompson and George Rudé, among others, have shown that popular protest and crowd activity were vital components of the eighteenth century British political system.¹⁴¹ At times in which local authorities failed to protect the interests of their residents, crowds had the right to take action against unjust laws and unresponsive civic authorities. They could exact the law upon themselves and their own form of justice through organized and legitimate modes of popular protest. In fact, the presence of crowds and mobs were seen as one of the great bulwarks of liberty

¹⁴⁰ 'To the PRINTER.', *Glasgow Journal*, 8 April 1766. Reprinted in the *Scots Magazine*, XXVIII (1766), 140-141.

¹⁴¹ Thompson, 'The Moral Economy', 76-136; George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964). Recent studies have shown that these same traditions extended to regions and communities throughout the Empire. For example, see: Alfred F. Young, 'English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism' in Margaret Jacob and James Jacob, eds., *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1984), 185-212; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 190-206; Kenneth Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780-1815* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1979); Smith, 'Food Rioters and the American Revolution', 3-38; Steven J. Stewart, 'Skimmington in the Middle and New England Colonies', Thomas J. Humphrey, 'Crowd and Court: Rough Music and Popular Justice in Colonial New York' and Susan E. Klepp, 'Rough Music on Independence Day: Philadelphia, 1778', in William Pencak, Matthew Dennis and Simon P. Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry in Early America*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

in British society, responsible not only for ensuring fair market prices, but also for upholding the whig freedoms and liberties that set Britain apart from other nations. During the Wilkes-inspired rioting in London in April 1768, a writer to *The St. James's Chronicle* discussed the nature of the English mobs, remarking that

The Truth is, there ever were and ever will be Mobs in England, whilst we remain a *free People*; and for my own Part, though I have many Windows in the Front of my House, I would rather have them all demolished once a Year, whenever the Common People...think the Cause of Liberty endangered, than live to see the Time when the Mob of England, like the Vassals of France, shall be afraid to shout, lest the Gens d'Armes should cut them in Pieces. The Licentiousness of a Mob may be very alarming, but any Abuse of Power in those who ought to be the Guardians of Liberty, appears to me to be infinitely more alarming. The former, if not opposed, lasts but a few Hours, and expires of itself; but the latter, if not opposed, and opposed with Spirit, gains Strength with Time, and lasts for ever.¹⁴²

However, for many Britons, even as early as 1766, the formation of extra-legal, self-interested groups in the American colonies dramatically challenged these traditional interpretations. News of the Stamp Act congresses, the influence of the Sons of Liberty and organized and coordinated attempts to obstruct the profitable British Atlantic trade through non-importation agreements raised concerns over the validity and legitimacy of these particular protests. It also increased speculation that they were orchestrated and were not in the best interests of society as they should have been, but rather were the work of a few self-interested gentlemen.¹⁴³ Later in 1768 *The Glasgow Journal* printed a letter from a Bostonian that reported that,

The poor unthinkable multitudes have been wretchedly misled by a few factious popular men, who, disguising their own self-interested designs, under the specious pretext of liberty, have worked them up to such a pitch, that the men of sense and good principle were afraid of declaring their sentiments.¹⁴⁴

Reports such as these became increasingly common by the end of the 1760s, when colonial Americans signed non-importations agreement in protest against the Townshend duties passed a year earlier.

¹⁴² 'To the Printer.' *The St. James's Chronicle; or, the British Evening-Post*, 9 April 1768.

¹⁴³ Potter also argues that loyal Britons questioned the legitimacy of the Revolutionary cause, yet she concludes that this did not occur until the early 1770s and that such opposition was rooted in a traditionally conservative interpretation of British rights and liberties, rather than the accepted tradition of eighteenth century popular political culture. Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 15-38.

¹⁴⁴ 'Letter from Boston, Oct. 6' *Glasgow Journal*, 17 November 1768.

Boston Tea Party (1773)

This changed in the spring of 1773 when Parliament passed the Tea Act. The act would maintain the threepenny per pound tax on tea imported into the colonies, but would also give the near bankrupt British East India Company a virtual tea monopoly in the American colonies by allowing it to sell directly to colonial agents, bypassing any middlemen, thus underselling American merchants.¹⁴⁵ This legislation was especially disastrous in port communities like New York City where merchants had made considerable profits in smuggling cheaper tea from foreign colonies. With the passing of the Tea Act, merchants would now be forced to buy all of their tea from the East India Company.

By the autumn, the situation had grown more tense with news that the ships carrying tea had departed for the colonies. Colonists held mass meetings to oppose the tax and demanded that the British tea agents resign from their position. In Boston, the situation was even more critical. Royal Governor Thomas Hutchinson had demanded that the tea should land in the city despite threats and appeals from the local inhabitants. The situation finally boiled over in mid-December when a group of disguised colonists raided the three ships holding the tea and deposited their contents in the harbour.¹⁴⁶

New Yorkers resisted the landing of tea on 17 December, before news of Tea Party had even arrived in the city.¹⁴⁷ As early as October the radical Sons of Liberty had begun to threaten the city's tea consignees against landing tea in their city. For many New Yorkers, the appearance of local merchants employed by the government to handle the tea on its arrival offered bleak reminders of the Stamp Act riots nearly a decade earlier. As such, New Yorkers could quickly realize the dangerous ideological threat imposed in the landing of the tea by linking it to similar events that occurred nearly a decade earlier. In an address from the residents of New York City to the London merchants who had supported the colonists opposition to the Tea Act it was stated that 'The individual

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 58-79.

¹⁴⁶ Peter D. G. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution, 1773-1776* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 14-25, Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, 126-145. For an account of the Tea Party from the perspective of the participants, see: Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999); 'George Robert Twelve Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXVIII (1981), 561-623.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, 16.

purpose of levying the duty in America, and taking off a much greater one in England, is equally manifest and detestable; being nothing less than to establish the odious precedent of raising a revenue in America. But it is a happiness to the inhabitants of this colony', he concluded, 'and we trust to every other on this extensive continent, that Stamp-Officers and Tea-Commissioners will ever beheld in equal estimation.'¹⁴⁸

Drawing upon such connections allowed New Yorkers to see the continuity in their cause to oppose parliament's threat to their rights and liberties.

The language of opposition presented by New Yorkers also began to reflect a new and decidedly American response to the crisis. Increasingly the popular print culture portrayed a unity amongst the New York patriot community in arguing for their rights as Americans rather than as Britons. On 5 November, the day traditionally set aside for Pope's Day celebrations, a broadside from 'LEGION' was printed in the city and published in the local newspapers threatening those that dared import tea. 'Whoever shall aid, or abet, the importation of any article, subject to a duty, by act of Parliament, for the purposes of raising a revenue upon you, or otherwise assist in the execution of any such acts, shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America.'¹⁴⁹

At the same time, a report spread of a former merchant in New York City named William Kelley having remarked that Governor Tryon 'would cram that tea down their throats' if New Yorkers attempted to resist the act. In response, a writer in *Rivington's Gazette* declared that the 'infamous, sordid, and parasitical declaration of William Kelley, has emboldened the Company to determine to send the tea to America: He is for this, by the resolutions above-mentioned, an enemy to this country.' On the evening of the fifth an effigy of Kelley, with a label pinned to his back that read 'a disgrace to my country,' was carted backwards through the city by 'The friends of liberty and commerce' who had found his remarks to be 'inimical to the liberties of America, and encouraging the Ministry to persevere in their diabolical project of enslaving this country.' Such rhetoric articulated the response of New Yorkers in a language and rhetoric of loyalty that seemed more American than British.

Yet amid this new challenge to imperial policy, there were New Yorkers who were beginning to question the legitimacy of the colonial protest in much the same way that

¹⁴⁸ 'New-York, October 21.' *Rivington's Gazette*, 21 October 1773.

¹⁴⁹ 'LEGION' *Rivington's Gazette*, 11 November 1773.

Britannus had in Glasgow in 1766. As Potter and Calhoun correctly assert, 'the touchstone of the patriot resistance... was its petulant refusal to listen to or tolerate criticism.'¹⁵⁰ Perhaps no person proposed their views better than Anglican minister Dr. Myles Cooper, who wrote under the pseudonym POPLICOLA. In a broadside published on November 12, and then reprinted in *Rivington's Gazette* a week later, Cooper offered a scathing attack on the legitimacy and authority of colonial protest and the nature of loyalty and patriotism in the British Atlantic world.

The man who makes the general interests of society, of which he is a member, the prevailing object of his actions, justly merits the honourable title of a patriot. This is the only ground on which a claim to so distinguished a character can be founded. An attachment to any particular branch of the community, and a zealous promotion of any men or measures, disguise them under whatever names you please, if they interfere with the good of the *whole society*, are not instances of patriotism... With what countenance, then, fellow citizens, can they assume the character of patriots, who endeavour to separate... the good of particular branches of the community from the good of the community itself? Can they have any title to public spirit, who, while they are acknowledged subjects of Great-Britain, would teach you to distinguish between your own interests and hers? You love your country, and this affection is your duty, your honour; but remember that not this, or any other province, is your country, but the *whole British empire*. Its strength and superiority over its rival neighbours, are the strength and glory of every part of its dominions, and its injuries, the injuries of us all... No man can be in a more abject state of bondage, than he whose Reputation, Property and Life, are not under the security of law; but exposed to the discretionary violence of any part of the community. The exercise of force, contrary to, or not authorized by law, is diametrically opposite to every idea of civil government, and introductive of the most dangerous and cruel species of slavery. Ought not therefore every good citizen, who values his liberty, to oppose the arbitrary incroachments [sic] of some men among us, who have assumed the legislative power of the colony, arrogated the privilege of decreeing what is right or wrong, and assumed the *judicial* and *executive* power of determining on the actions of any of the community, and punishing those whom they may deem offenders?... Even in the purest and simplest *democracy* nothing is obligatory except by the consent of the majority constitutionally given. But among US the crude decrees of a small cabal, who are actuated by self interest, are to be binding on the whole community; and whoever ventures to contradict them, or even express a doubt of their validity and propriety, must be exposed to violence, and, unheard, without a tryal, must be condemned to infamy and disgrace... While we are watchful against *external* attacks on our freedom, let us be on our guard, lest we become *enslaved* by *dangerous* tyrants within.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Potter and Calhoun, 'The Character and Coherence of the Loyalist Press', in Bailyn and Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution*, 241.

¹⁵¹ 'New-York, Nov. 12, 1773. TO THE The [sic] worthy Inhabitants of the City of NEW-YORK. POPLICOLA' *Rivington's Gazette*, 18 November 1773. Labaree fails to see these issues raised by POPLICOLA and instead focuses on his interest in supporting the East India Company. Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, 94-95.

A month later, Cooper again responded to his critics in the city, who by then had publicly agreed not to allow the tea to land in New York harbour.¹⁵² He declared ‘that genuine *liberty* can only be found in *civil society*; – that without *laws*, *civil society* cannot stand; – that *laws* are of no benefit, if they may be *transgressed at pleasure*; – that if *one part* of the community transgress them, *another* may also; – that where *all are free from the restraint of law*, there is no SECURITY for ANY.’¹⁵³ Similarly, a petition from the merchants in Plymouth against joining the movement not to import tea stated that they were ‘neither captivated by sounds and declamations, nor deceived by the cunning stratagems of men who under the specious masque of patriotism have attempted to delude an innocent and loyal people; but firmly and steadily fix’d and determin’d to defend our rights and privileges, and to endeavour to hand to our posterity the blessings of peace and good government which were procured by our fathers and transmitted to us.’¹⁵⁴

Yet what is most interesting about these views of the imperial crises and the nature of colonial protest is that they so closely resembled the arguments of the radical colonists. POPLICOLA also warned of a set of self-interested men who were out to rob the American colonists of their rights and liberties as British subjects, except his were the radical Sons of Liberty rather than colonial authorities or royal officials. Furthermore, he warned that civil government could not exist if force was used contrary to the established law, no doubt referring to the riots and protests that had riddled New York City streets for the past decade. The supporters of American resistance had argued a very similar point in response to the presence of a standing army in New York City and to threats from colonial officials of using force to ensure that the stamps were distributed. In other words, both the radical and conservative American colonists employed the same political language and ideology to defend their cause.

Britons throughout the Empire were able to read both sides of this debate. British newspapers reported upon the rioting and protests going on in the American colonies and reprinted letters and editorials that both defended and supported the colonial response. As such, we can begin to appreciate the ways in which the imperial crises of

¹⁵² There were many critics of POPLICOLA in the New York City press. See: ‘AN OLD PROPHET’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 2 December 1773, reprinted in *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 8 March 1774.

¹⁵³ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 28 December 1773.

¹⁵⁴ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 20 January 1774.

the 1760s and 1770s made popular conceptions of loyalty and patriotism to Great Britain difficult to define. As many of the American colonists began to articulate a new sense of identity, they did so in a language steeped in Britain's Protestant whig heritage, which required the rest of the British population to rethink and redefine their own understandings of loyalty and patriotism.

Conclusion

The imperial crises of the 1760s and early 1770s brought into sharp contrast the uneven nature of loyalty and identity amongst ordinary Britons throughout the British Atlantic world. For nearly a century, constant warfare with Britain's eternal enemy France, coupled with an emerging and prosperous Atlantic trade economy and an equally flourishing popular print culture had encouraged ordinary Britons throughout the Empire to adopt a shared rhetoric of loyalty that emphasized the superiority of Britain's Protestant whig heritage. In the mainland North American colonies, across the British West Indies and throughout Britain itself, British subjects celebrated their membership in the Empire and shared in an empire-wide identity that consciously defined itself in opposition to the Catholic French Empire.

Yet the 1760s and 1770s were peaceful. There were no threats of attack from Britain's rivals, thus reducing the need for ordinary Britons throughout the Atlantic to rally together in opposition to their common enemy. Instead, perceived threats to the rights and liberties of British subjects came from within Britain. A succession of imperial policies aimed at reorganizing and strengthening Parliament's control of her new, much larger Atlantic Empire illustrated the uneven and often local context in which Britain's Atlantic inhabitants understood their individual rights and liberties. As such, ordinary Britons in the North American colonies, throughout the Caribbean and across the British Isles were required to rethink and rearticulate their own understandings of Empire and their place within it.

In the American colonies opposition was especially intense, as many of the colonists became increasingly aggressive in their defence of their rights and liberties of British subjects. American colonists resorted to new, more organized methods of protest that built upon a rich and influential British plebeian political culture to challenge local and royal authority. In turn, their actions redefined their relationship with Britons in the

American colonies and elsewhere in the Empire. To varying degrees residents of Kingston, Halifax, Glasgow and London became more and more distant from the interests and ideology of many of the American colonists. To be sure, even as late as the Boston Tea Party the American colonists still remained loyal British subjects. Indeed, it was not until the following year that resistance to imperial rule developed into something bordering on rebellion and even revolution. Yet even by 1773 the loyalty and identity of many colonial Americans had come to mean something quite new and different. The belief that the British government – and military – was conspiring to rob the colonists of their rights and liberties had initiated an aggressive and often violent response from merchants and mechanics alike. As the situation unfolded from 1774 onward, the resistance movement quickly moved toward revolution. The British public was suddenly left with having to support or defend their attachment to the Empire in the face of an opposition that appeared not all that different from themselves.

Chapter 3

Britishness and the American Enemy, 1774-1777

Introduction

The aftermath of the Boston Tea Party marked a sharp transition in the popular political culture of loyalty in the British Atlantic world. Up until 1774, many American colonists – often supported by like-minded Britons – had employed traditional whig ideology and rhetoric to protest against what they perceived to be an oppressive and arbitrary British government. Their popular political culture, both on the streets and in print, attacked a government that had strayed from its lofty ideals as the protector and guarantor of British rights and liberties. On occasion, such as during the Stamp Act riots and in response to the Townshend Acts, crowd action and popular politics had transcended the bounds of traditional and socially acceptable forms of British plebeian political culture. Over time protest and resistance were formalized, and the formation of extra-legal political groups such as the Sons of Liberty, and the occasional use of economic boycotts enabled colonial Americans to exert a more aggressive and united resistance to British imperial policies. Yet all along the colonists had voiced their grievances as loyal British subjects who had been denied the very basic rights and liberties that were at the heart of British identity in the eighteenth century.

However, in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party, the British government adopted a hard-line approach to the rebellious colonists that caused many to move from resistance towards rebellion. In communities throughout the mainland American colonies, those who continued to articulate loyalty to Great Britain and demonstrate support for the authority of the British government began to attract widespread public disapprobation. Local associations and committees, formed to enforce a new, more concerted colonial-wide non-importation agreement, helped to redraw the lines of allegiance, widening a rift between Patriots and Loyalists within the colonies, and between the colonists en masse and the Empire as a whole.

In the face of more strident language and protest by the Patriots, popular expressions of loyalty to the King and Parliament also became more defiant. Loyal British subjects throughout the British Atlantic world were forced to assert and defend their attachment to the Empire in the face of an increasingly hostile and aggressive American popular political culture. At first, however, Loyalist responses were eventually local in character.

British subjects living in the Caribbean, mainland North America and throughout the British Isles understood and articulated their opposition to the American resistance in terms of local interests, rather than a broader British imperial identity. As opposed to recent conflicts, the British were not facing their traditional Catholic enemies, who were embodied in a language of opposition that was familiar to nearly all Britons. Instead they were moving towards armed conflict against fellow British subjects, who had defended their cause over the previous decade with same Protestant whig rhetoric used to define loyal Britons throughout the Empire. Without a familiar enemy defined in oppositional terms, loyal British subjects found that they could no longer take for granted a unity espoused in a shared rhetoric of loyalty to Great Britain.

The following chapter will examine the emergence of a revolutionary movement in the thirteen mainland American colonies, and how it affected popular conceptions of loyalty and patriotism in the larger British Atlantic world. I begin by analyzing the Association, which was formed to enforce the non-importation agreement in 1774 and 1775, and which thus constituted a police power and was effectively the creation of a nascent national government. The Association redefined social and political relationships in colonial American communities. Colonists of all ranks were called upon to ensure and protect the interests of the broader community in ways that transcended traditional British hierarchical political and social order. In the process, American resistance to imperial rule became increasingly republican in nature. Traditional social and political divisions in society gave way to a more united opposition by the Patriots, while creating a new division between them and loyal Britons whether in America or elsewhere in the empire.

The non-importation agreement was far more than just another economic boycott. It came to represent a rejection of Britishness that allowed colonial Americans to begin to envision themselves as distinct from the broader British Atlantic world. Of course, this process was unique to the thirteen mainland colonies. In communities elsewhere in the Empire there was not a break down of social and political order, despite the presence of support for the colonial American cause. Communities such as Halifax and Kingston continued to demonstrate their attachment to the Empire in ways that increasingly distanced them from the interests of the mainland American colonists.

The chapter continues by examining the ways in which the non-importation agreement, Associations and the coming of the war affected Britons living in each of these five communities. I argue that even as late as 1775, most Britons continued to view the colonial crisis from a distinctly local perspective. Their inability to immediately create a broad and accessible national narrative that defined the American enemy resulted in an uneven response from British Atlantic communities. Thus, in places such as London, where lower and middling sort residents had a long history of radical, whig-inspired opposition to the government, the ideas put forth by the American Patriots provided an opportunity to reassert their position as the defenders of British rights and liberties. In Halifax the events occurring in the American colonies had quite a different effect. The powerful merchant and political elite took advantage of the threat the American Patriots posed to traditional British imperial order to strengthen their grip on the local political sphere. For Britons living throughout the Atlantic world, the increasing threat of revolution in the mainland American colonies challenged their political status quo and their senses of loyalty in quite different ways from one another.

The chapter concludes by discussing the ways in which the beginning of the American War for Independence forced inhabitants of the broader British Atlantic world to redefine the colonial crisis and the new American opposition. Britain was now at war, but for the first time in the eighteenth century, her traditional Catholic enemies were not involved. As such, Britons were unable to unite in their support for Great Britain through a familiar use of Francophobic British Protestant rhetoric. Instead, they found themselves confronted with an enemy that was also Protestant and British, and one that had also called upon the traditional British whig ideology to defend their cause. As such, lacking a broad national narrative of identity, loyalty to Great Britain remained dependent upon local circumstances. In Kingston, a planned slave revolt in 1776 that appeared partially inspired by American revolutionary ideology, reminded residents of their dependence on the British military for protection, as well as underlining the dangers inherent in the American colonists' redefinition of whig ideals of liberty. In Glasgow, regular reports from the American colonies of the particularly cruel treatment the Scots received at the hands of Patriot committees and associations helped residents to interpret the American revolutionary cause as illegitimate. Throughout the British Atlantic world the American independence movement required loyal Britons to express their own understandings of loyalty and identity. Yet in the early stages of the war this

process proved difficult. Ultimately it would take a British defeat at Saratoga before Britons could begin to coalesce around a shared opposition to an enemy that they were beginning to redefine as not British.

The Association

In response to Parliament's passage of the Coercive Acts in 1774, which sought to punish the unruly and rebellious Bostonians, the Continental Congress came to an unprecedented agreement to not import or consume goods from Britain and to refrain from exporting goods to Britain.¹ Non-importation agreements had been used as a non-violent method of resistance by the American colonists throughout the 1760s and early 1770s. But along the way they had become increasingly more organized, widespread and ultimately more effective in securing broad support from all ranks of the American colonists. However, the 1774 agreement differed in significant ways from earlier ones signed by the American colonists. Previous agreements had been decided upon by less formal groups and committees throughout the colonies, which resulted in local differences and variations. In the case of New York City, as we have seen, the wealthy Atlantic merchants were able to successfully end the non-importation agreement in 1770, despite opposition both from residents in the city and elsewhere in the colonies. But the 1774 agreement was approved by the First Continental Congress, representing the interests of twelve of the thirteen mainland colonies.² The Congress drew up clear resolutions so that all colonists would be able to participate together in their resistance to imperial authority. In doing so, this agreement ensured that the colonial Americans would present an organized, united and ultimately more defiant response in opposition to the imperial legislation.

The consequences of this agreement also helped to reshape and redefine colonial American attachment to the Empire. Throughout the eighteenth century colonial markets had been inundated with British goods that served to instil in the colonists the culture and tastes of their mainland British counterparts.³ The types of foods they

¹ These four pieces of legislation were officially entitled The Restraining Acts, but were commonly referred to as the Coercive or Intolerable Acts by Colonial Americans. They included the Boston Port Act, Quartering Act, Administration of Justice Act and the Massachusetts Government Act. David L. Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974); Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence*, 26-87.

² Georgia was the only colony that did not send representatives. It should also be noted that neither Nova Scotia nor the British West Indian colonies were invited to participate in this meeting.

³ Breen, 'An Empire of Goods', 467-499.

consumed, the clothes they wore, and the furnishings that decorated their homes helped incorporate the colonists into the broader British nation. Thus, by rejecting these British 'baubles' in favour of locally produced goods the colonists were signifying a break from their attachment to the Empire.⁴ More importantly, this break was restricted to the mainland American colonies. Britons living in Nova Scotia or the West Indies did not participate in these non-importation agreements. In fact, the loss of American economy actually increased their trade with other British Atlantic markets. In communities such as Glasgow, Halifax, London and Kingston residents had to establish new trade routes and find other ways of getting goods and supplies that had previously come from American merchants and traders. Thus, the colonial American non-importation agreement actually strengthened the increasingly diversified economic ties that bound these communities to the Empire, while it weakened those of the American colonies.

The non-importation agreement, which was followed a year later with a non-exportation and non-consumption agreement, drastically redefined the social and political relationship between elite and ordinary colonial Americans. This was a result of the ways in which the agreement was to be enforced. In order for the boycott to work, the Continental Congress agreed that there must be a representative body in each colonial community to ensure that the local inhabitants obeyed the agreement. Section eleven of the agreement stipulated:

That a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town, by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association; and when it shall be made to appear, to the satisfaction of a majority of any such committee, that any person... has violated this association, that such majority do forthwith cause the truth of the case to be published in the gazette; to the end, that all such foes to the rights of British-America may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty; and thenceforth we respectively will break off all dealings with him or her.⁵

This committee, referred to as the Association, would assume the role of a quasi-legal police force, responsible for punishing those individuals deemed 'enemies to American liberty.' As such, the private interests and activities of colonial Americans became the

⁴ T.H. Breen, "Baubles of Britain": The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, CXIX (1988), 73-104.

⁵ Worthington Chauncey Ford, [et al.], eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), I, 75-80.

subject of public concern. Merchants and mechanics alike had a clear moral and political obligation to restrict their own economic self-interests in favour of the broader interests of the community.

Local Associations also illustrated the increasingly republican nature of organized colonial protests. By and large, they were made up of prominent leaders within a community, who had previously been active in local politics. Yet they also included new members from the middling and lower ranks who found in the structures created by the non-importation agreement an opportunity to assume larger roles in local political affairs. Their participation worked to redefine the social context of colonial American communities. The traditional British hierarchical social and political order was slowly being replaced, or at least challenged by a more egalitarian and popular system of governance. And the presence of elite and non-elite residents in this process helped to ensure widespread support for the cause.⁶

One of the ways Associations enforced the agreement was to require local inhabitants to sign oaths, and this was often done in the presence of an intimidating group of Association representatives. On appearance, these oaths may have seemed to be nothing more than token gestures of support for the cause, but in fact they meant much more. Oaths of allegiance held important political, social and religious significance in eighteenth century British communities.⁷ According to a writer in *The Nova-Scotia Chronicle*, 'AN Oath is a religious Asseveration, by which we renounce the Divine Clemency, or imprecate the Divine Vengeance, in Case we speak false... [it] is justly esteemed the firmest Bond of Society; without a due Regard to which, in the present degenerate Circumstances of human Nature, no Government could long well subsist.' The writer continues by noting that oaths were especially popular in English society, for 'It's a common Observation, that no People on Earth is so much addicted to Swearing whether common or political as the English.'⁸ As such, only the most obstinate opponents of the colonial non-importation agreement would have dared to refuse to either sign an oath, or to have broken their agreement thereafter. In such cases,

⁶ Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 106-107, 109-110; Barbara Clark Smith, 'Social Visions of the American Resistance Movement', in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the Revolution as a Social Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 34-38.

⁷ Kammen, 'The American Revolution as a Crise de Conscience', 135-139.

⁸ *The Nova Scotia Chronicle, And Weekly Advertiser*, 31 January 1769.

suspicious individuals would have been singled out by the Association as subversive to the interests of the community and had, at the very least, their names printed in the local newspapers as a form of public humiliation.

Besides the Association, many American colonists increasingly took it upon themselves to strengthen the support for the agreement in their local communities. Some pursued passive, non-violent approaches to show their solidarity with the cause. A group of forty-one blacksmiths in Worcester County, Massachusetts agreed ‘not to do any work for anyone we esteem an enemy to the country.’⁹ In a November 1774 issue of *The New-York Gazette* it was reported that ‘a late Meeting of the Distillers of this City, (in Support of the Proceedings of the Continental Congress)... unanimously Resolved, To distil no Molasses or Syrups that may hereafter be imported from any of the British West-India Islands, or from Dominica.’¹⁰ Such proclamations allowed inhabitants the opportunity to publicly notify their neighbours and fellow colonists of their support for the American cause without resorting to open, violent protest.

The Association and the non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreements of 1774 and 1775 held important consequences for the ways in which colonial Americans defined their attachment to the Empire. The increasingly participatory nature of colonial resistance required – sometimes violently – Britons of all rank in communities throughout the thirteen colonies to unite in their opposition to the imperial policies, or suffer the consequences. The extralegal formation of an Association to enforce the agreements usurped traditional forms of political authority in the American colonies, enabling colonial American resistance to assume a larger and more aggressive role in the political sphere. Oath-taking and public forms of punishment for those who broke the association made it compulsory for American colonists to proclaim their support for or opposition against the American cause. In doing so, the resistance effort became both more aggressive and more clearly defined.

Associations, Non-Importation and the Coming of War

In New York City, opposition to British imperial authority extended beyond economic boycotts of British goods. In fact, even before the First Continental Congress adopted

⁹ Quoted in Clark Smith, ‘Social Visions of the American Resistance Movement’, 41.

¹⁰ *New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, 14 November 1774, quoted in Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 869.

the non-importation agreement of 1774, the popular political culture of New York City had become increasingly resistant to public displays of loyalty to Great Britain. On the King's birthday in June 1774, John Holt's *New-York Journal* reported upon a celebration in which the only participants were local military officials, the regiments then stationed in the city and 'a Number of Gentlemen.' He concluded by describing the events that took place in the evening. Traditionally, his account would have referred to widespread celebration among all ranks of New Yorkers. The public would have been given free alcohol, and on some occasions, pigs or oxen would have been roasted in the Commons. Formal dinners and balls would have been held at public taverns for the elite gentleman in the city, where a long list of public toasts would be given in honour of the royal family. Instead, Holt reported that:

In the Evening some very curious Fireworks were exhibited, and a *small* Number of Houses were illuminated; but the Generality of the Inhabitants (though perfectly well affected to his Majesty's Person and Family, and preferring the English Constitution to every other Form of Government) were too deeply impressed with the melancholy Situation of all the British Colonies, to assume the least Appearance of public rejoicing, while it remains in Suspense whether we shall remain Freemen by maintaining our Rights, or submit to be Slaves.¹¹

The practice of illuminating in colonial America drew upon the plebeian political culture of early seventeenth century England, and remained one of the more important means by which individuals, poor and rich alike, could publicly display support for the authority and consensus of their community. Generally, illuminations consisted of placing a lit candle in the window of one's own home, shop, or place of business. On regular celebratory dates, such as the King's birthday, the public were imbued with the political symbolism of this single ritual. Locally, illuminations, or the lack of them in this case, allowed members of the community to express their own political identity and gauge the political loyalties of their respective neighbours. In the broader context, newspapers regularly reported on such illuminations in order to illustrate the political solidarity of their own community for people elsewhere to read.

Such rejections of British authority and identity in the community were vitally important to the resistance efforts of the American colonists. Yet such methods of protest also pushed many more moderate subjects further toward loyalty to Britain. For many, the increasingly organized and extra-legal nature of colonial protests challenged the basic

¹¹ 'NEW-YORK, June 9.', *New-York Journal, or the General Advertiser*, 9 June 1774.

principles of law and order upon which the rights and liberties of British subjects rested. The formation of the Association, and the requirement of inhabitants to take oaths of allegiance, were seen by loyal Britons in New York City as illegal and unconstitutional. A letter from "A JERSEY FARMER" published in *Rivington's Gazette* agreed that the Americans should protest parliamentary taxation, but within the confines of British constitutional law. 'NOTHING DOUBTING, but that whatever grievances we labour under, when constitutionally represented by our lawful *Assemblies*, to his Majesty and the British Parliament, they will be carefully listened to, and readily removed, if compatible with the general interest of the whole EMPIRE.'¹² In January 1776, a poem entitled "The Pausing American Loyalist", expressed the difficulties many felt in signing the oath of allegiance, which was often enforced with threats of violence by Association committeemen. It begins,

To sign, or not to sign!- That is the question:
 Whether't were better for an honest man
 To sign-and so be safe; or to resolve,
 Betide what will, against 'associations,'
 And, by retreating, shun them. To fly—I reckon
 Not where—and, by that flight, t' escape
 Feathers and tar, and thousands other ills.¹³

In a broadside published in September 1774 a writer referring to himself as "AGRICOLA" questioned the right of the colonial resistance leaders in the city to speak for the broader public. 'Who is *the Public*? If by this expression a majority of the inhabitants is understood, I will take upon me to say that nine tenths of them, never heard of the *application* which gave birth to this *noble refusal*.' He concluded his attack on these men by asserting that 'Dreadful indeed, would be the situation of *American freedom*, if it were only to be preserved by setting up one body of men to tyrannize over the rest. *Let those who choose it, go to heaven upon the devil's shoulders*.'¹⁴ An address from 'the subscribers, freeholders and inhabitants of the town of Rye' in Connecticut, which was published in *Rivington's Gazette*, proclaimed that that 'we have not been concerned in any resolutions entered into, or measures taken, with regard to the disputes at present subsisting with the mother country.' They concluded by testifying 'our dislike to many

¹² 'A JERSEY FARMER', *Rivington's Gazette*, 26 January 1775.

¹³ 'The Pausing American Loyalist', quoted in Kammen, 'The American Revolution as a Crise de Conscience', 143.

¹⁴ 'To the Worthy Inhabitants of the City of New-York, 16 September 1774', Evans 13100.

hot and furious proceedings, in consequence of said disputes, which we think are more likely to ruin this once happy country, than remove grievances, if any there are.’¹⁵

James Rivington’s popular pro-British newspaper also played a vitally important role in offering a public counter argument to the increasingly radical American resistance movement. In early 1775 he printed a description of both “A Modern Whig” and “A Modern Tory” in order to illustrate the misguided intentions of the radicals in the city. “A Modern Tory”, he asserted, ‘Is desirous to support the laws of his country, and instead of revenge against the parent state, is anxious to heal the dispute on constitutional ground, with that becoming decency, which is due to the crown, from all his Majesty’s loyal, grateful, and affectionate subjects.’ On the other hand, ‘A Modern Whig Endeavours to justify every irregularity in the American politicks; - full of revenge against the mother country, destroys constitutional liberty in the colonies, and boldly supports anarchy and licentiousness, insurrections and rebellions.’¹⁶ Similarly, a letter published in his newspaper declared that:

The *patriot’s* hobby is *popularity*: for the gratification of that passion he will *curry* favour with the lowest beings existing, and if he is of a scribbling turn, will *litter* every place with his inflammatory pieces. He is a *restiff, hard-mouthed* animal, and often deserves a *bridal* for his tongue, when he is railing till he almost *loses his wind* against every ministerial proceeding, right or wrong. With regard to real patriotism, however, he is *no-where*; for, if any scheme is proposed for the public good, he *starts* away and shews that he has not a drop of patriotic *blood* in his veins: he is full of *flaws*, and *beeds* nothing but sedition.¹⁷

The British General Thomas Gage, stationed in Boston, recognized the important role that loyal British newspapers played in countering the arguments of the radical American colonists during this time. In a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth he remarked that ‘I conceive the Press, which has been more open to Government than usual, to have been of very great use; through which Channel the Conduct of the Leaders has been laid open, and the absurdity of the Resolves of the Continental Congress exposed in a masterly manner; which has served to lower that Impression of high Importance, which the Congress had made upon People’s minds.’¹⁸

¹⁵ ‘Rye, September 24, 1774’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 13 October 1774.

¹⁶ ‘BELLISARIUS’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 9 March 1775.

¹⁷ ‘The CANDID CORRECTOR’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 12 October 1775.

¹⁸ ‘Gage to the Earl of Dartmouth, Boston, 18 January 1775’, TNA: PRO CO 5/92/70-71.

“BELLISARIUS”, writing in a March 1775 issue of *Rivington’s Gazette*, questioned the tactics used by the colonists to promote their resistance to British imperial rule.

If every man had thought for himself and not been led by the nose by a Cooper or an Adams, all might have been happy; but these inconsiderate people have made themselves idols, viz. liberty Trees, News-papers and Congresses, which by blindly worshipping, have so engrossed their minds, that they give not the least attention to their several occupations, but attend at taverns, where they talk politicks, get drunk, damn King, Ministers and Taxes; and *vow* they will follow any measures proposed to them by their demagogues, however repugnant to religion, reason and common sense.¹⁹

“ANGLO-AMERICANUS”, writing years later in *Rivington’s Gazette*, recalled the violent treatment loyal Britons had received at the hands of Patriot mobs in order remind the thousands of Loyalist refugees living in New York City of the cruel, misguided aims of the American Patriots. He remarked how they had been ‘driven out of the markets, deprived of trade, held up by name and description, as enemies to this their native country, insulted in their houses, in the streets, robbed of their rents and debts, rail rid... till they fainted, and many died of the wounds and ill treatment they had suffered under this punishment, exceeding all description, barbarous and indecent.’ As if that was not enough, he continues to say that ‘Their city [was] burnt, their farms sold, their cattle and other property driven off, wives and children starved while fathers and husbands were pining in loathsome gaols, and dungeons, far removed among New-England republicans, strangers to humanity and enemies to the common rights of nature.’ Yet despite all of this, these loyal British subjects ‘preserved their integrity, and never bowed their knee to that New-England monster, that curse of curses, an Independent Republic.—This faithful subjects had all these sufferings inflicted on them, by men stiling themselves Committees and Congressmen, to whom the private, the general, and universal destruction and misery of this once happy land is most justly by all disinterested virtuous men ascribed.’²⁰

Loyal Britons living in New York City also utilized traditional Protestant whig rhetoric to illustrate the illegitimacy of the colonial American resistance cause. In a pamphlet

¹⁹ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 9 March 1775.

²⁰ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 19 August 1780. New England, particularly Boston, was often portrayed in newspapers as the centre of the American rebellion. This was partly due to actual events such as the Stamp Act riots, the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party, but also had to do with more general stereotypes of New Englanders as rustic, backward, barbaric and prone to rebelling against authority. Julie Flavell, ‘British Perceptions of New England and the Decision for a Coercive Policy, 1774-1775’, in Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway, *Britain and America Go to War: The Impact of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754-1815* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 2004), 95-115.

entitled 'The Congress Canvassed', "A.W. Farmer" likened the Association to a '*Popish* inquisition. No proofs, no evidences are called for. The committee may judge from *appearances* if they please---for when it shall be made appear to a majority of any committee that the Association is violated, they may proceed to punishment, and *appearances*, you know, are easily *made*.' He continues to say that the Association can 'pass sentence of condemnation on any person... and then the poor culprit is to be delivered over to the power of the mob, for execution... Poor, unhappy wretch, how I pity thee! Cast out from civil society! Nobody to have any dealings with thee!'²¹

In "A CARD" published in *Rivington's Gazette* it was purported that 'Most of the insurrections and rebellions that have disturbed the nations of Europe, for two hundred years past, have been excited and fomented by the *Jesuits*, and the insurrections and rebellious appearances that now disturb the colonies, are equally owing to a few *Protestant Jesuits* among us.'²² In another issue, a letter from a resident of Philadelphia reported that the local Association had entered one of the city's taverns to demand the name of a person who had anonymously printed a broadside against the colonial resistance movement. 'I thought this *demand* favoured a little of a *popish inquisition*, and was still more surprised to find, that the persons, who had usurped this novel right of *demanding* authors, were the Committee, who had been chosen guardians of our liberties, but had instead of preserving them, introduced the worst species of tyranny, and the most dangerous kind of slavery that any country had ever experienced.' The letter goes on to say that the Committee was 'drunk with the power they had usurped, and elated with their own Importance, they were determined on nothing so much, as to increase discord and confusion, by these they had risen to power, from these they derived their whole consequences.'²³

However, supporters of colonial resistance were not without their own opportunities to invoke anti-Catholic rhetoric in order to justify their cause and unite public opinion. In June 1774 George III gave the royal assent to the Quebec Act, which was a statesmanlike policy that attempted to secure the allegiance of nearly seventy thousand French Catholics living in the recently conquered province of Quebec. The act granted

²¹ A.W. Farmer was the Anglican minister Samuel Seabury. A.W. Farmer, 'The Congress Canvassed: or, An Examination into the Conduct of the Delegates, at their Grand Convention, Held in Philadelphia, Sept. 1, 1774. Addressed, To the Merchants of New-York' (December 1774), Evans 13601, 14-16.

²² 'A CARD', *Rivington's Gazette*, 9 March 1775.

²³ 'Extract of a letter from Philadelphia, February 16, 1775', *Rivington's Gazette*, 23 February 1775.

religious tolerance to the French Catholics, which allowed them to hold office and participate in civil affairs. It also extended the borders of the province further south to include much of the Ohio country and the land west of the Mississippi River. Both of these decisions angered many of the American colonists, who saw the religious toleration as a threat to their own Protestant heritage, and the extension of the border as a threat to their own desires to expand westward. After all, only a decade earlier the American colonists and the British army had fought against the French to remove the religious, civil and military threat they imposed on the American colonies. The passage of the Quebec Act thus threatened to take away what so many American colonists had risked their lives to secure.²⁴

The Quebec Act differed significantly from previous attempts by the British government to integrate French Catholics into British society, most notably with the Acadians in Nova Scotia. In that case, as we have seen, the government opted for an aggressive expulsion of a much smaller and more geographically isolated population in order to ensure the stability and growth of the British colony. Yet in the case of Quebec, and its seventy thousand French Catholic residents, such an option was not feasible and thus required a more conciliatory response. Government officials responded by pressing for a gradual reformation in which the Catholic church would continue to exist, but under the complete control of the local British government. Catholic missionaries were no longer able to recruit new members and the Church was not allowed to correspond with officials in Rome. Catholics also had to share their churches with Protestants in their communities, and in cases where Catholics were outnumbered, Protestants held official jurisdiction over the local church. Additionally, the Royal Family had to be prayed for during all Catholic services and Catholic priests were now allowed to marry without penalty. All of these stipulations were intended to gradually reform the Canadian church toward the beliefs and practices of the Church of England, without having to resort to threatening or violent tactics.²⁵ Furthermore, British government officials believed that allowing Catholics to continue to practice their religion – albeit under strict governance – would give ‘ease and security to the

²⁴ Hilda Neatby, *The Quebec Act: Protest and Policy* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1972); Reginald Coupland, *The Quebec Act: A Study in Statesmanship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925).

²⁵ Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*, 146-153.

minds of the Canadians' at a time in which Britons living in the thirteen American colonies were nearing a state of rebellion.²⁶

British hopes for a peaceful reformation of the French Catholic church in Canada appear farfetched given the intense religious and political divisions that existed between Protestant Britain and Catholic France in the eighteenth century. Yet, as Peter Doll has shown, the main opponent of the Church of England during this period was not Catholicism in general, but rather Roman Catholicism. The French Gallican Church, however, operated free from the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman papacy and enjoyed many of the self-governing rights found in the Church of England.²⁷ These similarities encouraged British politicians and church officials to take a more passive approach to ensuring the loyalty of the French Catholic population in Quebec. They believed that French Catholics living in the province could be integrated into a traditionally Protestant British society so long as their church was isolated from Roman Catholic influence and placed under the control of the British government. In doing so, the church's Roman Catholic characteristics would be replaced by a reformed Catholicism not all that different from the Anglican church.²⁸

However, an increasingly tolerant attitude toward Gallicanism in elite British political culture had little, if any, effect on traditional anti-French and anti-Catholic rhetoric in the popular political culture.²⁹ Ordinary Britons continued to perceive of both Catholicism and the French as legitimate threats to their own rights and liberties as British subjects. As a result, many Britons living in the thirteen American colonies believed that such pro-Catholic legislation as the Quebec Act went directly against the very definition of a post-Reformation, Protestant Britishness. In relieving the French Catholics, George III and parliament had betrayed Britain's Protestant whig heritage, and thus enabled the American colonists to justify their opposition to British imperial

²⁶ William Knox, *The Justice and Policy of the Late Act of Parliament for Making More Effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec, Asserted and Proved; and the Conduct of Administration Respecting that Province, Stated and Vindicated* (London, 1774), 52-53, quoted in Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*, 151.

²⁷ The Roman Catholic church had also given up much of its control over the Catholic state churches throughout Europe, especially during the rule of Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758). Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*, 22-24, 94-98. Also see: Owen Chadwick, *The Popes and European Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 297-298.

²⁸ Doll, *Revolution, Religion, and National Identity*, 94.

²⁹ Doll's evidence consists primarily of correspondence between church and government officials, with almost no discussion of popular attitudes toward the Catholic church or the French. He also neglects to consider the role non-religious factors, such as economic competition and war, played in popular opposition to Catholic France in the eighteenth century British Empire.

rule. One writer in the *Boston Gazette* asserted that 'A prince who can give the royal assent to any bill which should establish popery, slavery and arbitrary power either in England or any of its dominions must be guilty of perjury; for it is, in express terms, *contrary to his coronation oath*', in which he promised to uphold 'the *protestant reformed religion established by law*.'³⁰ Reports and editorials were frequently printed that denounced the King's actions in 'giving his royal assent to the obnoxious Quebec bill, and thereby breaking his coronation oath.'³¹

Just outside Halifax, Timothy Houghton, a recent New England immigrant to the area, had blamed the passing of the Quebec Act on Lord Bute, 'who was a Steward.' He also proclaimed that the act proved that 'the King was a Papist', and in order to prove his case, Houghton referred to a law book 'to Shew & prove that no Protestant was bound in Allegiance to the King any longer than he continued protestant.'³² In March 1775 New York City residents William Cunningham and John Hill were attacked by 'a mob of above two hundred men' near the liberty pole. Cunningham, forced 'to go down on his knees and damn his Popish King George', instead proclaimed 'God bless King George.' As a result, the angry mob 'dragged him through the green, tore the cloaths off his back, and robbed him of his watch.'³³ Even in London, a visiting Bostonian recorded a crowd proclaiming 'no Roman-Catholic King: no Roman catholic religion! America forever!' to George III as he made his way to Westminster.³⁴ Thus, for many American colonists the Quebec Act assumed enormous political significance, for it allowed them to re-identify the King and government as betraying their very whig beliefs and ideals that they were so aggressively defending.

In Halifax the political and economic consequences of non-importation were quite different from elsewhere in the British Atlantic world. The refusal of the American colonists to trade with the rest of the Empire actually proved beneficial to the merchants in Halifax. Up until 1774 their trade had been dependent upon New England port communities, particularly Boston. Haligonian merchants lacked the ships

³⁰ 'Vox Vociferantis in Eremo', *Boston Gazette*, 15 August 1774, quoted in Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 238.

³¹ *Boston Gazette*, 22 August 1774; *The Providence Gazette; And Country Journal*, 27 August 1774; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 5 October 1774, quoted in Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 238.

³² Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 341-342.

³³ *Rivington's Gazette*, 9 March 1775.

³⁴ 'Thomas Young to Samuel Adams, 21 August 1774', quoted in Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 248. Also quoted in: Sainsbury, 'The Pro-Americans of London', 433.

and manpower need to participate fully in the Atlantic economy, so they had turned to New Englanders to serve as middlemen in the process. In 1764, of the total £64,790 of goods exported from Nova Scotia, £17,000 went through Boston. Furthermore, the influential local politician and distiller Joshua Mauger had initiated a 5d. a gallon impost on all rum imported into Nova Scotia, making it nearly impossible for local merchants to take part in the valuable West Indian sugar trade. But in November 1774, the new governor, Francis Legge, had the impost repealed. Legge also opened up free trade with merchants in the British West Indian islands, who were also now largely excluded from the colonial American ports.³⁵ Taken together, the opening of the West Indian trade and the removal of competition from the American colonists allowed unprecedented access to British Atlantic trade routes for Halifax's merchant community. As such, the non-importation agreements signed by the American colonists helped to ignite Halifax's Atlantic trade economy, rather than weaken it.

Not all Haligonians, however, enjoyed the economic benefits brought about by the colonial non-importation agreement. Some disagreed with British imperial policies and continued to try and support the resistance measures adopted by their colonial mainland American counterparts. Such efforts had gone on in the city since the time of the Stamp Act crisis, but an influential and politically powerful merchant elite, along with the regular presence of British troops in the city, had continually hindered their efforts to mount similar forms of popular protest. Yet in 1774 and 1775 there appears to have been a concerted attempt by some residents to unite with the Americans in opposition to Great Britain. Anthony Henry's popular *Nova-Scotia Gazette* remained supportive of colonial American resistance. He reprinted numerous reports and editorials that denounced the measures of Parliament and glorified the actions of the Bostonians in destroying the tea.³⁶ Local residents also took a more aggressive approach to aiding the Bostonians by obstructing efforts to supply the British troops stationed in Boston. In February 1774 there was a suspicious fire 'in the sail-loft, at his Majesty's careening-yard', where the hay intended for the British troops in Boston was stored. Another fire occurred in May, and yet another in July. In March Governor Legge's office was broken into and important papers taken, but no one was ever caught. By October 1774,

³⁵ Viola F. Barnes, 'Francis Legge, Governor of Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1773-1776', *New England Quarterly*, IV (1931), 425-427. George A. Rawlyk, ed., *Revolution Rejected, 1775-1776* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1968), 30-33; Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 267-68.

³⁶ Henry reprinted pro-American reports of the Boston Tea Party within just weeks of the incident. *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 28 December 1774.

the situation became even more tense when Halifax merchants agreed to take tea that had been refused in Boston. On hearing the news that the tea was due to arrive in Halifax, a former New England merchant and now local Halifax Justice of the Peace named William Smith had the town crier proclaim a public meeting 'to consult on some measures relative to a parcel of Tea consigned to him.'³⁷ However, local government officials quickly stepped in and declared that such a meeting would be illegal.

The situation was further compounded by the actions of another Halifax merchant and Justice of the Peace, John Fillis. Fillis was also a recent immigrant from New England and had openly objected to the idea of importing British tea, having 'declar'd that the measures of Government were oppressive.'³⁸ Both he and Smith were summoned to meet with Governor Legge and the council to settle the matter. As a result, they each lost their government offices and thereafter Legge issued a proclamation against the unlawful calling of assemblies.

Whereas there have been Meetings & Assemblies of the People at different times, in several of the Townships in this Province which have been call'd & held for various purpose contrary to the Public Good *etc., etc.*³⁹

In outlawing such public meetings, Legge had taken a critical step in strengthening the loyalty amongst Halifax residents. One local inhabitant remarked that 'the Governor has effectually cut the throat of Rebellious faction, in this Country & destroyed the seeds of Sedition, sewn among the People, who were irritated to Town Meetings &c on the arrival of some tea, by a Mr. Smith.'⁴⁰ This episode marked a real break from the increasingly rebellious popular political culture of the American colonies. At a time in which the Association was targeting individuals who had acted against the interests of the American public, the Halifax government was targeting those that acted against the interest of the British state. Furthermore, neither Smith nor Fillis seemed to get much support from the local residents, unlike the widespread cooperation exhibited in communities throughout the thirteen American colonies. Ordinary Haligonians, perhaps fearful of the soldiers stationed in the city or the consequences of opposing the rule of the merchant and political elite, or simply disinclined to identify with or support

³⁷ Legge to the Earl of Dartmouth, 20 September and 18 October 1774', quoted in Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 168.

³⁸ Anonymous, quoted in *Ibid.*, 168.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁴⁰ James Monk to the Earl of Dartmouth, 10 November 1774', quoted in *Ibid.*, 169.

the Patriot position, seemed less inclined to offer a united and defiant resistance in alliance with their colonial American counterparts.

The colonial American non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreements had disastrous consequences for residents of Kingston. By the 1760s and early 1770s Jamaican inhabitants had become heavily dependent upon the American colonial markets for food and raw materials that could not be produced on the island.⁴¹ Furthermore, the American colonists were the largest consumers of the rum and molasses produced on the island.⁴² As such, the loss of these markets would jeopardize the well-being of many of Kingston's residents as well as those colonial Americans whose economic interests also relied upon the West Indian trade. During the debates over the non-importation agreement in Congress, John Adams apprehensively recorded in his diary that 'None could pretend to foresee the effect of a total Non-Exportation to the West Indies.'⁴³ The New York representative Isaac Low also remarked,

Can they [the colonists] live without rum, sugar, and molasses? Will not this impatience and vexation defeat the measure. This would cut up the revenue by the roots, if wine, fruit, molasses, and sugar were discarded as well as tea. But a prohibition of all exports to the West Indies will annihilate the fishery because that cannot afford to lose the West India market, and this would throw a multitude of families in our fishing towns into the arms of famine.⁴⁴

Even the British government expressed concern about the threat of colonial American resistance to the profitable West Indian trade. The Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote in October 1774 that 'the State of Affairs in North America and particular in the New England Colonies is become very serious. It is to be hoped however that nothing will happen to obstruct the commerce between the Northern Colonies and the Sugar Islands. It is a Commerce that for the mutual interest of both ought to be cherished on both sides.'⁴⁵

Despite the concerns raised by members of Congress, the British West Indian colonies were ultimately included in the non-exportation, non-importation and non-consumption agreements. Yet it is difficult to determine the impact this had on the popular political culture of loyalty in Kingston. There are no surviving copies of

⁴¹ Carrington, *The British West Indies*, 25-47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 42, Table 28.

⁴³ Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, II, 101.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 865-66.

⁴⁵ Earl of Dartmouth to Payne, 5 October 1774, quoted in Carrington, *The British West Indies*, 49.

Jamaican newspapers for 1774 and 1775 and there is very little discussion of American affairs in government or personal correspondence. In a January 1775 issue of *Rivington's Gazette*, a person vaguely referring to himself as '*A Native of the British WEST-INDIES*' perhaps offered the most convincing explanation for the political ideals of Kingston residents. In his address 'To the People of NORTH-AMERICA' the writer expressed his support for the American cause, while also acknowledging the ill-consequences it was having on his native islands. 'I reverence the Deliberations of your late Congress', the writer remarked, 'I applaud, in general, the Wisdom of its Resolutions. The Sacrifice which you are about to make, is great, worthy of Admiration, worthy of Praise; –but remember, that the Islands of the *West Indies* are incapable of emulating your noble Example.' He continues by describing the clear differences between the American and West Indian colonies, which made it impossible for the latter to resist British imperial rule.

Although your Resolutions will deny you the Luxuries, yet the Necessaries of Life your different Climates, your various Soils will sufficiently afford: You have among you Manufactures, you have Manufactories to employ them. These Advantages the Islands of the *West Indies* do not enjoy; they exchange Articles on which they cannot alone subsist, for others necessary for their Support, which their Lands could not produce, or which their Skill could not construct.

The address continues by pleading with the American colonists that 'surely you will not doom them to Bankruptcy, to Nakedness and Famine! Shall Men who so nobly combat Oppression, be themselves oppressive? Forbid it Consistency, forbid it every generous Sentiment!... Shall unoffending Thousands be plunged into Want and Wretchedness, by the Means for punishing the supposed Venality of a few Individuals? Let not *Americans*, generous, just, equitable to an Enemy and a Murderer, entertain the idea.'⁴⁶ Just like "BRITTANICUS" writing in Glasgow in 1766, and "POPLICOLA" in New York City in 1773, this writer objected to the actions of the colonial American resistance, because they were essentially selfish, and thus antithetical to whig ideas about privileging the good of the entire community, or in this case, Britain's Atlantic empire. The American colonists' opposition to British rule had become increasingly self-interested in the eyes of many Britons.

⁴⁶ 'To the People of NORTH-AMERICA', *Rivington's Gazette*, 12 January 1775.

However, in December 1774 the Jamaica Assembly actually petitioned the king in favour of the American colonists.⁴⁷ They asked George III to find a solution to the colonial crisis, ‘and to consider the [Americans], however far removed from your royal presence, as equally entitled to your protection, and the benefits of the English constitution.’ Like the American colonists, the members of the Assembly believed the actions and decisions of the British government had been wholly unconstitutional and were aimed at reducing the colonies to ‘an abject state of slavery.’⁴⁸ The petition caused quite a stir throughout the Empire, but we should not be too quick to assume that Jamaicans were acting out of unselfish interest to the American cause. Rather, it is more likely that the Assembly’s petition to George III illustrated the dependency of the Jamaican economy on the American colonists. Only twenty-six of the forty-three members of the Assembly were in attendance, and most of them represented the Kingston merchant interests. Ever since the Stamp Act these merchants had always taken a more pro-American stance on the imperial crisis, for they were the ones that were most directly tied to the American colonies, and had been most affected by the loss of the American trade. Consequently they could ill-afford to criticize those people that provided the basic foods and necessities for most of the island’s inhabitants.⁴⁹

Colonial Americans approved of the Jamaica Assembly’s petition and publicly expressed their thanks in support of the cause. In March 1775, the *Connecticut Courant* printed the resolves of the Connecticut House of Assembly, who had voted in favour of sending an ‘Address of Thanks’ to the Jamaicans, ‘for their late kind and seasonable Mediation in favour of the Colonies on this Continent, by their humble Petition and Remonstrance to His Majesty.’ The Connecticut assemblymen also saw this as an opportunity to draw the Jamaicans into the colonial American resistance movement. They included with the address a copy ‘of the Resolution of said House, at their Session in May, 1773 appointing a Committee of Correspondence, and invite them to come into that, or a similar Method of mutually communicating such Intelligence, as may be of public Importance, and more immediately affecting the Inhabitants of the British Colonies and islands, in America.’⁵⁰ There is no evidence that this offer was taken up by Jamaican residents. Yet in November 1775, the same Jamaican men responsible for the petition

⁴⁷ Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica, 23 December 1774, 569-570. The petition was also printed in: *Rivington’s Gazette*, 23 February 1775.

⁴⁸ Carrington, *The British West Indies*, 129.

⁴⁹ O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 137-146.

⁵⁰ *Connecticut Courant*, 3 April 1775.

to the King a year earlier were able to defeat a motion to prevent the House of Assembly from receiving 'letters from any of the assemblies or congresses in North America during the present disturbances.'⁵¹

When the Continental Congress met in July 1775 they too thanked the Jamaica Assembly for its support. Delegates also took advantage of this opportunity to justify their decision to not import West Indian goods over the previous year. They admitted that in order for 'this scheme of non-importation and non-exportation... [to] be productive of the desired effects we were obliged to include the islands in it.' Yet 'from this necessity, and from this necessity alone, has our conduct towards them proceeded. By converting your sugar plantations into fields of grain, you can supply yourselves with the necessaries of life: While the present unhappy struggle shall continue, we cannot do more... The peculiar situation of your island forbids your assistance. But we have your good wishes. From the good wishes of the friends of liberty and mankind, we shall always derive consolation.'⁵²

The response in Jamaica was not all that dissimilar to the reactions of Britons living in Glasgow. In January 1775 the Glasgow merchants and traders petitioned the House of Commons for a conciliatory approach to the growing American crisis.⁵³ They expressed concern for the damage being done by the colonial non-importation agreements, and later in 1775 the tobacco merchants blocked attempts by the local magistrates to submit an address of loyalty to the king for fear that it would ruin their lucrative trade with the colonies. In fact, Glasgow was the only burgh in all of Scotland that did not send a customary address of loyalty to the king at this critical juncture.⁵⁴ Like the wealthy Kingston merchants, the Glasgow Tobacco Lords appreciated the vital role the American markets played in the success and prosperity of their local community, and as such, did not want to jeopardize their economic interests in the colonies.

Yet, at the same time Glasgow was the scene of growing animosity toward the American colonists and the ways in which they protested against British imperial

⁵¹ Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica, 2 November 1775, 576. Carrington, *The British West Indies*, 129.

⁵² Ford [et al.], eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, II, 79, 80, 204-206.

⁵³ Colonial American newspapers reprinted the petition from the Glasgow merchants in order to illustrate the broad support for the American cause. 'GLASGOW, January 19.', *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 5 April 1775.

⁵⁴ Conway, *The British Isles*, 272; Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, 124.

policies. Correspondence between the tobacco factors in the southern colonies of Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas and the tobacco merchants in Glasgow was often printed in the local newspapers to keep Glaswegians abreast of the situation in the colonies. During 1774 and 1775, these factors were increasingly targeted by local farmers and traders who believed their debts to the factors offered proof of British attempts to enslave colonial Americans. In November 1774 the *Caledonian Mercury* printed a warning to its readers that a Scotsman living in Virginia was ‘in danger of his life ([or] at least of being tarred and feathered) if he says a word that does not please them.’⁵⁵ Just over a month earlier, a letter from a Glasgow tobacco factor living in Virginia expressed concern that

The Glasgow factors seem to be great objects of their [the colonists] resentment, the case is plain; to them they owe the money, some of them have been roughly handled... James Dunlop, son of Mr. William of Glasgow... who resides at Port Royal refused to sign the association, a mob gathered soon and put it in his option to be hanged, have his storehouse burnt or sign.⁵⁶

Glasgow newspaper reports also questioned the sincerity of colonial American support for the non-importation agreements. In a letter printed in an August 1774 issue of *The Glasgow Journal*, a loyalist resident of New York City divided those colonists who were in support of the non-importation agreement into three categories so that the reader ‘may guess of our present stock of Patriotism.’ The first, he says,

really think that life, estate, and every thing else is concerned in the debate about who shall have the laying on of a paltry three penny tax... There are other men who trade to Spain, Portugal, &c. in wheat and flour, who never deal in English goods, these are very zealous about non-importation, for then trade will run entirely through their own hands... There is a third set more numerous than both of these put together, they are men who intend to make fortunes by breaking agreements, which they hope others will be such fools to keep.⁵⁷

Several colonial American newspapers also reprinted a letter from a Glaswegian, in which he proclaimed that ‘Your indignation would rise to hear how contemptible people talk here of American associations. They generally agree that such resolutions may last three Months nominally, though all hands agree that the majority of your merchants will violate the spirit of them in much less time.’ In order to prove his point, the writer asserts that ‘The town is full of letters from factors and little shopkeepers in different ports on the continent, all avowing their resolutions to import and sell goods,

⁵⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, 22 November 1774, quoted in Devine, *The Tobacco Lords*, 103.

⁵⁶ James Parker to Charles Stuart, 29 September 1774, quoted in *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁷ *The Glasgow Journal*, 25 August 1774.

let the public resolutions be what they will. I am fully persuaded that the merchants agreeing not to import goods will be of little avail unless the people also in general agree not to buy or sell goods imported, and that in a solemn manner.⁵⁸ For Glaswegians, the challenges set forth by the Associations and the non-importation agreement were less ideological and more economic. The critical years of 1774 and 1775 highlighted the economic importance of the colonial American markets to the growth and prosperity of the city.

In London, many of the city's inhabitants expressed support for the colonial American cause during the years of 1774 and 1775. As we have seen, Londoners had a long history of opposition to the British government. Since the seventeenth century, they had consistently petitioned for more equal representation, wider voting rights and parliamentary reform. More recently, John Wilkes had garnered widespread support among the populace for his radical whig beliefs, which had encouraged the public to remain steadfast in defence of their own definitions of British rights and liberties. In events such as the publication of Wilkes' *North Britain* No. 45 in 1763, the St. George's Field Massacre in 1768 and the Middlesex election of 1769, ordinary Londoners were made aware of the dangerous consequences of an increasingly corrupt and oppressive government. These local events influenced the ways in which local inhabitants viewed the colonial crises in general, and specific events such as the Boston Massacre. Many felt a sense of solidarity with the American colonists in their struggle against what they also perceived to be an oppressive and arbitrary British government.

However, local politics in 1774 and 1775 were relatively quiet, which made it difficult for Wilkes and his supporters to articulate and defend their whig beliefs and ideology without the presence of an oppressive government. As a result, Wilkes and other London city officials turned their eyes toward the American colonies and used events occurring there to renew and encourage radical whig support from the London populace.⁵⁹ Numerous proclamations and petitions defended the rights of the

⁵⁸ 'Extract of a letter from Glasgow, dated August 16.' *The Massachusetts Spy or, Thomas's Boston Journal*, 24 November 1774. Also see: *Boston Evening Post*, 21 November 1774; *The New-London Gazette*, 25 November 1774; *The Providence Gazette; And Country Journal*, 26 November 1774; *The Newport Mercury*, 5 December 1774.

⁵⁹ Langford attributes support for the American cause to the political interests of Wilkes and other London officials. 'London and the American Revolution', 63-76. Sainsbury, on the other hand, argues that there was a sincere support amongst Wilkes and the London populace for the cause of the American

American colonists, and called upon Parliament to repeal the oppressive Coercive Acts.⁶⁰ On the delivery to the king of one such petition in the early months of 1775 a local newspaper reported that thousands of Londoners had crowded the streets to testify 'their approbation of the petitioners' proceedings.'⁶¹ *Lloyd's Evening Post* also reported that the Lord Mayor and important city officials had contributed to a fund to relieve the Bostonians after the closure of their port.⁶² Thus the American crisis served the local interests of London's radical politicians and populace. In supporting the American resistance efforts, and expressing their solidarity with the colonists in defence of British rights and liberties, certain Londoners were able to reaffirm their role as the defenders of British whig ideals.

It was also during this time that the radical pro-American periodical, *The Crisis*, was published in London. The periodical's first issue opened with an address 'To the People of England and America' that lambasted the oppressive and tyrannical policies of the King and Parliament in their attempts to subjugate the rights and liberties of British subjects. The writer proclaimed,

It is in your Defence I now stand forth to oppose, the most *sanguinary*, and *despotic* Court that ever disgraced a *free* Country... It is in your Defence I now unsheath the Sword of Justice, to oppose the most profligate and abandoned Administration, that ever shewed the *Weakness*, or abused the *Confidence* of a Prince.

The writer then used the recent passage of the Quebec Act to establish the arbitrary and ultimately un-British designs of the current administration, which if not checked would lead to the destruction of British rights and liberties in London and throughout Britain and the empire. 'The Altar of Despotism is now erected in America', he warned, 'and we shall be the next Victims to Lawless Power; all the Horrors of Slavery, now stare us in the Face; our Religion *subverted*, Freedom, Law, and Right *artfully undermined*, the

colonists. John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 55-93.

⁶⁰ Merchants and traders presented counter-petitions of loyalty in the autumn of 1775, but the radicals claimed they were only supported by 'Jews, Papists, Contractors, Justices, and the whole ministerial group of creatures and runners of the Ministry, who, to gratify their Lordlings in place, would endeavour even to extend discord, faction, and civil war, to still greater lengths.' *The London Evening-Post*, 7 October 1775, quoted in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 115.

⁶¹ *The London Chronicle*, 11 April 1775. Also quoted in *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶² *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 2 September 1774, quoted in Clark, *British Opinion*, 165.

*Roman Catholic Religion, not tolerated, but ESTABLISHED, a majority of the House of Commons, and House of Lords mere Creatures of the King.*⁶³

In the third issue, published several weeks later in February, the author set his sights on the King arguing ‘that there was a Plan formed by Lord *Bute* and yourself... for Subverting the British Constitution in Church and State; which to our Grief, with indefatigable Pains and too much Success, Lord *Bute’s* Tools and your infernal Minions have carried into Execution.’ He continued in traditional whig language by stating that ‘Men, Sir, at three thousand Miles Distance, must think it extremely hard to work, toil, and run Hazards; only to support the infamous Luxury of high pampered Lords, a rotten Court, and your Tribe of venal Senators, Minions, Pimps, and Parasites the Pests of Society; and to be taxed and mulct by them at their Pleasure: All Nature, Sir, even at the Idea of such a State of Misery.’⁶⁴

It is difficult to determine whether *The Crisis* represented the views of a single individual or a majority of the broader London populace at this critical juncture in American affairs. The third issue’s attack on the King was deemed to be seditious libel by Parliament and ordered to be burned by the public hangman. In response, crowds of Londoners gathered to protest the burning in large popular shows of support for the views it expressed. A report in *The Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser* stated that ‘as soon as the fire was lighted before the Exchange it was immediately put out, and dead cats and dogs were thrown at the officers.’ Both sheriffs were injured in the ordeal, and ‘the City Marshall, was dismounted, and with much difficulty saved his life.’⁶⁵ Such a response indicates that at least some Londoners were supportive of the colonial American cause, and saw the recent actions of the King and Parliament as a direct threat to their own rights and liberties. Whether they were provoked into such beliefs by the political interests of Wilkes and other radical London politicians remains to be seen. But clearly, the problems in the thirteen American colonies were informing the popular political culture of loyalty in London. The Coercive Acts had provided a platform for ordinary Londoners to reassert their defence of British rights and liberties

⁶³ *The Crises*, 20 January 1775, quoted in Jennings B. Sanders, “‘The Crisis’ of London and American Revolutionary Propaganda”, *Social Studies*, LVIII (1967), 11.

⁶⁴ *The Crisis*, 4 February 1775, quoted in *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁵ *The Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser*, 8 March 1775, quoted in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 86 and Sanders, “‘The Crisis’”, 8.

in the face of what many perceived to be the actions of an arbitrary and oppressive government.

The decisive years of 1774 and 1775 had a tremendous impact on the popular political culture of loyalty in the British Atlantic world. Associations and non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreements redefined the social, political and economic identity of the American colonists, both in local and Empire-wide contexts. During this time many American colonists, unlike Britons living elsewhere in the Empire, began to reject their ties to Great Britain in favour of a new, uniquely American identity. Their resistance to British imperial rule had grown increasingly republican in nature, requiring what one historian has referred to as 'public rituals of commitment' from the broader colonial American public.⁶⁶ The success of resistance depended upon the broad participation of American colonists in resistance against imperial authority and those at home who opposed such views. As such, by 1776 elite and ordinary colonial Americans had begun to see themselves as part of a greater struggle against an oppressive and tyrannical British government.

However, the crisis had yet to clearly define an opposition, both locally and in the broader context of the British Atlantic world. Britons continued to interpret and articulate their responses to the events occurring in the American colonies on the basis of quite distinct local interests. In Kingston and Glasgow, merchant interests in the colonial trade required a cautious approach to the crisis. Britons in both communities understood the important role the colonial markets played in the success and prosperity of their local economy. As such, they were less willing to proclaim either their opposition to the American colonists, or support for the British government. In Halifax, the American resistance to imperial rule also created a tense atmosphere in a city dominated by elite merchants and British soldiers. Throughout this period the city's political leaders worked tirelessly to repress pro-American sentiment and thus ensure the loyalty of their residents. In London the American cause served to reignite the radical whig interpretation and violent defence of Britishness that had characterized the city's popular politics during the previous decade. Still encouraged by the leadership of John Wilkes and other radical city officials, Londoners of all sort defended the rights

⁶⁶ Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 144.

and liberties of the American colonists in an effort to reassert their own beliefs and ideology.

The Shot Heard Round the World: Lexington and Concord (1775)

When news reached New York City of the outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord, issues of identity and loyalty assumed an entirely new significance.⁶⁷ For nearly a week, the city found itself under a quasi-military rule, in which Isaac Sears and the Sons of Liberty took advantage of the heightened anxiety of the public and armed themselves with muskets taken from the city's arsenal. They then attacked and unloaded two supply ships intended for General Gage's army in Boston, and 'formed themselves into a Voluntary Corps and assumed the Government of the City.'⁶⁸ With divisions more clearly drawn, sporadic, often acute instances of public opposition to British rule gave way to a more systematic and militant process of encouraging community-wide resistance. By week's end the port had been closed, armed mobs patrolled the streets, and local government was at near standstill. Rivington was forced to publicly rescind his views and had to promise to 'conduct my Press upon such Principles as shall not give Offence to the Inhabitants of the Colonies in general, and of this City in particular.'⁶⁹ Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden lamented the 'unfortunate situation of the City... the people were assembled, and that scene of disorder and violence begun, which has entirely prostrated the Powers of Government, and produced an association by which this Province has solemnly united with the others in resisting the Acts of Parliament.'⁷⁰

A few months later, a local newspaper reported that even on the occasion of the King's birthday 'there were, we hear no illuminations in the city... except one house, the lights of which, it is said were, on the request of the spectators, presently withdrawn.'⁷¹ Like the year before, ordinary New Yorkers used this important celebratory date to

⁶⁷ News of the battle reached the city on April 23 and was immediately printed in a broadside and sold throughout the town. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 881; Thomas Jones, *History of New York During the Revolutionary War, and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period*, edited by Edward Floyd De Lancey, (New York: Printed for the New York Historical Society, 1879), I, 39-40.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 882; Champagne, 'New York's Radicals and the Coming of Independence', 22-24; Ketchum, *Divided Loyalties*, 320-332.

⁶⁹ *To the Public... April 27, 1775*, Evans 14435; *Rivington's Gazette*, 4 May 1775.

⁷⁰ 'Colden to the Earl of Dartmouth', quoted in Jones, *History of New York During the Revolutionary War*, 497.

⁷¹ *The New-York Journal, or the General Advertiser*, 8 June 1775. Also see: *The Connecticut Journal*, 14 June 1775; *The Massachusetts Spy: Or, American Oracle of Liberty*, 14 June 1775; *The New-London Gazette*, 16 June 1775.

demonstrate publicly their opposition to British imperial rule. However, on this particular occasion, the lack of illuminations held dual significance. First, by not illuminating their homes New York City's Patriots were renouncing their British heritage by overtly rejecting the authority and legitimacy of the Monarchy. Secondly, in denying others the right to illuminate, which often entailed breaking or threatening to break their windows, the Patriots were demonstrating their control of the city's public political identity.⁷² Loyal Britons in New York City would now be risking their lives and property if they dared publicly support British authority.

Violent, extralegal activity against suspected Loyalists continued throughout the summer and autumn as Patriot mobs aggressively opposed pro-British sentiment. Leonard Tweed, a shoemaker 'who had been heard in public Company to utter many disrespectful and abusive Words, of the American Congresses, Committees, and Proceedings' was paid a visit by local Patriots. 'They contented themselves with causing him to strip, receive an ample Coating of Tar, plentifully decorated with Feathers.' From there, he was 'carried...from Street to Street [Each listing] him for the great' part of the day as a Publick Spectable [sic] in the course of w^{ch} he reiceved [sic] from the populace the most ignominious and cruel treatment.' Afterwards, he was forced to escape to England, returning a few years later only to gather his wife, children and scant personal belongings.⁷³ In the neighbouring colony of New Jersey Thomas Randolph, a cooper by trade, 'had publicly proved himself an enemy to his country, by reviling and using his utmost endeavours to oppose the proceedings of the Continental and Provincial Conventions and Committees.' Consequently, he 'was ordered to be stripped naked, well coated with tar and feathers and carried in a waggon publicly around town.'⁷⁴

⁷² Peter Borsay, 'All the Town's A Stage: Urban Ritual and Ceremony 1660-1800', in Peter Clark, ed., *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1984), 237-242; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 67-90; For examples of American colonists being punished for refusing to illuminate during Independence Day celebrations, see Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life Cycle of an Eighteenth-Century Woman* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), 60, 78.

⁷³ 'Memorial of Leonard Tweed', TNA: PRO AO 12/24/294-296; *The New York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*, 28 August 1775; Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 65-66; Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, 154; Benjamin Irvin, 'Tar, Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties, 1768-1776' *The New England Quarterly*, 76, 2 (June 2003), 197-238; Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, eds., *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution As Told By the Participants* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), I, 136-141.

⁷⁴ 'NEW-YORK, December 28', *The New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser* 28 December 1775.

James Rivington's continued publication of a pro-British newspaper left him open to numerous public attacks. Even after the news of fighting at Lexington and Concord he had remained supportive of the British government against the increasingly radical colonial resistance. To some residents of New York City, and others throughout the American colonies, Rivington's newspaper was seen as a direct threat to their rights and liberties. He openly criticized the decisions of the Continental Congress, denounced the actions of riotous mobs and urged the American colonists to see the hypocrisy of American resistance. Consequently, it became important for the Patriots to discount the contents of his newspaper in order to ensure that the colonists remained committed to resisting British imperial rule. One correspondent of John Holt's *The New-York Journal* referred to Rivington as one of the 'few remaining enemies of American Freedom' for '*publishing such parts of letters from London, and elsewhere, as can be made to suit their purpose, AND SUPPRESSING THE REST.*'⁷⁵ At a meeting of the Newport, Rhode Island Committee of Inspection in March 1775 it was agreed to that every local inhabitant should cancel their subscription to *Rivington's Gazette*. 'Impelled by the love of sordid pelf, and an haughty, domineering spirit' Rivington

hath for a long time, in his dirty Gazetteer, and in pamphlets, if possible still more dirty, uniformly persisted in publishing every falshood which his own wicked imagination, or the imagination of others of the same stamp, as ingenious perhaps in mischief as himself, could suggest and fabricate, that had a tendency to spread jealousies, fears, discord and disunion through this country... and all this profusion of scurrility, abuse and falshood, this insidious, profligate printer hath paid out, in order, if it were possible, to subvert the association, which all the American colonies have approved.⁷⁶

The town of Worcester, Massachusetts not only agreed to stop purchasing Rivington's newspaper, but they also included the printers 'Gaine of New-York, Draper, [and] Mills and Hicks of Boston' who were endeavouring 'to create divisions among the inhabitants' and thus were 'the enemies of these united colonies.'⁷⁷

Far from avoiding controversy Rivington appeared to invite it. In April 1775 he printed a satirical picture of himself hanging in effigy, 'merely for acting consistent with his profession as a free printer.' Accompanying the image was a fabricated report of the

⁷⁵ 'New York, Jan. 25, 1775', *SUPPLEMENT To the New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser*, 9 February 1775.

⁷⁶ 'At a meeting of the Committee of Inspection', *The Newport Mercury*, 6 March 1775.

⁷⁷ 'BOSTON, February 16', *The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser*, 23 February 1775. Countryman, *A People in Revolution*, 144.

incident that ridiculed the licentious and arbitrary nature of the colonial American protests.

THE PRINTER has been informed, that a number of Bacchanalians, at Brunswick, flushed with the inebriating draught, not of the juice of the Vine, but of New-England Rum, have lately sacrificed him to the *Idol of Licentiousness*... From this publication too, these little, shabby, piddling politicians may know how much their vengeance is regarded... The Printer is bold to affirm, that his press has been open to publication from ALL PARTIES, and he desires his enemies to produce an instance to the contrary... But the moment he ventured to publish sentiments which were opposed to the dangerous views and designs of certain demagogues, he found himself held up as an enemy to this country, and the most unwearied pains taken to ruin him. In the country where in he was born he always heard the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS represented as the great security of freedom, and in that sentiment he has been educated; nor has he reason to think differently now on account of his experience in this country. While his enemies make liberty the prostituted presence of their illiberal prosecution of him, their aim is to establish a most cruel tyranny, and the Printer thinks that some very recent transactions will convince the good people of this city of the difference between being governed by a few factious individuals, and the GOOD OLD LAWS AND CONSTITUTION, under which we have so long been a happy people.⁷⁸

Finally, in the autumn of 1775 Rivington's print shop was attacked and his prints were stolen by Isaac Sears, the former leader of New York City's Sons of Liberty. Afraid for his life Rivington fled to England, and did not return to New York City until 1777 when the British army occupied the city. The consequences were devastating for loyal British popular political culture. Without Rivington's newspaper loyal Britons in New York and indeed throughout the colonies were unable to publicly refute the ideas of the radical Americans and defend their loyal attachment to Great Britain. On news of his press being sacked, one loyal New Yorker lamented that

The Presses are now all shut up against publications in favour of Government Poor Rivingtons was the last, he stood singlely for a long time but a few Days after the sailing of the last Packet... Cap^t Sears and Cap^t Broome (formerly Merchants here) came from Connecticut and seized his Types... The Violence of the People is incredible and the leading men, have taken effectual means that nothing shall be said or wrote to open the Eyes of the Populace.⁷⁹

By early 1776, New Yorkers were flooding out of the city, some by force and others to avoid the disastrous consequences of an increasingly likely battle with the British army. One resident remarked that the 'Streets look plague-stricken, so many houses are

⁷⁸ *Rivington's Gazette*, 20 April 1775.

⁷⁹ 'Extract of a letter from Mr. Foxcroft to Anthony Todd, New York, 6 December 1775', TNA: PRO CO 5/135/78

closed.⁸⁰ Another person, describing the terrifying situation to a friend, closed the letter with the grim acknowledgment that 'We are Now a City of Waar.'⁸¹ The exodus increased during the late spring and early summer months as rumours of a British invasion gained credibility.⁸² By then Washington and his colonial army had turned the city into a Rebel garrison, working tirelessly to fortify it against the impending British invasion. Soldiers were billeted in private houses, personal possessions sequestered and defensive works were erected along the North and East Rivers and throughout the city streets.⁸³ Strict military rule was introduced and citizens were required to take public oaths of allegiance to the Patriot cause. Additionally, local committees and associations acting on the Continental Congress's recommendations, sought to weed out the few remaining pro-British sympathizers.⁸⁴

One such sympathizer was the butcher George Birks who was imprisoned three times for his loyal sentiments, before finally being banished in June.⁸⁵ Another was David King, a free black shoemaker, who was banished for passing letters from Mayor David Mathews in the city to Governor William Tryon in the harbour. King was forced to hide in Rhode Island until the British army arrived.⁸⁶ In July a milkman named John Lewis was imprisoned at city hall 'for his Drinking healths to King George and Success to his Fleet and Manifesting his intention to Join the Said fleet or the Army of the Enemy, against the Continental Army.'⁸⁷ At least one Patriot leader revelled in this

⁸⁰ Ewald Schaukirk, 'Occupation of New York City by the British', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, X, 4 (1886), 420.

⁸¹ 'Garish Harsin to Mr. William Radcliff at Rhyn Beck', quoted in Henry B. Dawson, ed., *New York City During the American Revolution. Being a Collection of Original Papers From the Manuscripts in the Possession of The Mercantile Library Association, of New York City* (New York City: Privately Printed for The Association, 1861), 85-86.

⁸² The Memoirs of Stephen Allen, 1767-1852, Typescript, New-York Historical Society (NYHS), 9; 'Harsin to Radcliff', quoted in Dawson, ed., *New York City During the American Revolution*, 85-86.

⁸³ Thomas Glyn- "Journal of American Campaign" 1776-1777. 18 September 1776. General Manuscripts [Bound], Princeton University Library.

⁸⁴ The legislation was passed on 14 March 1776. Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, 62-63; Barck, Jr., *New York City During the War for Independence*, 42-43.

⁸⁵ 'Memorial of George Birks', TNA: PRO AO 12/24/376-381. For criticism of the statistical relevance of the Loyalist Claims, see Eugene Fingerhut, 'Uses and Abuses of the American Loyalist's Claims: A Critique of Quantitative Analysis', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XXV, 2 (1968), 245-258; Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1972), 185-222; Esmond Wright, 'The New York Loyalists: A Cross-section of Colonial Society', in Robert A. East and Jacob Judd, eds., *The Loyalist Americans: A Focus on Greater New York* (Tarrytown: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1975), 77-78. For the most comprehensive statistical examination of the claims, see Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalists Claimants* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

⁸⁶ 'Memorial of David King', TNA: PRO AO 12/19/351-353.

⁸⁷ He lost his home in the 1776 fire, but stayed on in the city as a cartman for the military. Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, IV, 939; 'Memorial of John Lewis', TNA: PRO AO 12:18:230.

social cleansing, rejoicing that ‘there is some Prospect now of discovering all those vile Rascals, that have already pass’d too long unnoticed, & have enjoy’d greater Benifits than their bleeding Countrymen.—There will soon be a stop to this Tory Faction.’⁸⁸

The shrinking minority of obstinate Loyalists who attempted to stay were often subjected to severe forms of public punishment at the hands of Patriot committees and associations.⁸⁹ James Deas, a hairdresser and perfumer, was attacked by a ‘Riotous & Tumultuous Mob... with[ou]t any other provocation than his persisting in his Loyalty and Attachm^t to his Sovereign and the British Constitution.’ As a result, ‘he found it necessary the next day for the preservⁿ of his Life to fly with his family to the country.’⁹⁰ The Reverend Gustavus Shewkirk witnessed a mob abusing several suspected Loyalists in the streets of the city. Each was forced to hold a lighted candle directly above their head, and if his pace slackened, or the candle dropped, the mob threatened to push the flame into his face. At each street corner a crier shouted the names of these loyalists to the cheers of the crowd.⁹¹ Other suspected British sympathizers were dragged from their hiding places, stripped naked and ‘carried thro’ the streets (at Noonday) on Rails,’ amid a crowd of onlookers.⁹²

Such riotous events, often referred to as skimmingtons or rough music, were common occurrences in eighteenth-century British plebeian popular culture. They were generally used to publicly punish and humiliate an individual who had acted outside and against norms, through such activities as adultery or domestic violence. However, they became increasingly politicized during the revolutionary era, perhaps illustrating the larger moral

⁸⁸ ‘John Varick, Jr., to Captain Richard Varick’, in Dawson, ed., *New York City During the American Revolution*, 91-92.

⁸⁹ Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, 78-84; ‘Proceedings in New York in Re: Disaffected Persons’, June 5, 1776, NYC Misc. Mss., NYHS.

⁹⁰ ‘Memorial of James Deas’, TNA: PRO AO 12/24/383-386; Though the name is different, the date and the nature of the incident suggest that this may be the same barber Peter Elting referred to three days later in a letter to Captain Richard Varick. In it he said, ‘We Had some Grand Toory Rides in this City this week, & in particular Yesterday, Several of them ware handeld verry Roughly Being Caried trugh the Streets on Rails, there Cloaths Tore from there becks and their Bodies pritty well Mingled with the dust. Amongst them ware C— Capt. [Theophilus] Hardenbrook, Mr. [Rem] Rapelje, Mr. Queen the Poticary & Lessly the barber. There is hardly a toory face to be seen this morning.’ Quoted in Dawson, ed., *New York City During the American Revolution*, 97; Deas was also one of signers of the October 16, 1776 declaration of loyalty addressed to Admiral and General Howe, upon the British occupying the city. *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹¹ Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 372.

⁹² Solomon Drowne, Jr. to his father, in Dawson, ed., *New York City During the American Revolution*, 99; Jones, *History of New York During the Revolutionary War*, 101-102; Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 67; Van Buskirk., *Generous Enemies*, 16-17. This incident was also printed in London newspapers. See: ‘Extract of a letter from a Gentleman at Sandyhook, near New-York, to his friend in London, dated July 6, 1776.’, *The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, 19 August 1776.

and social contexts for the colonial economic boycotts. Besides defaming and ostracizing suspected Loyalists, such events empowered Revolutionaries of all sort by allowing them to participate in the process of redefining the political identity of the city and the community of inhabitants.⁹³ To the Loyalists, however, the actions of the Patriot mob contradicted their cries for liberty. As one accused British sympathizer noted, 'These are the people who are contending for liberty; they engross the whole of it to themselves and allow not a little to their opponents.'⁹⁴

Halifax was also thrown into a state of confusion after news arrived of the fighting in Lexington and Concord. The supporters of the American cause, who had been kept under control for the previous decade, once again attempted to show their support for the colonial Americans resistance. In May 1775 *The Nova-Scotia Gazette* reported that 'a Hay Stack belonging to *Joseph Fairbanks, Esq;* was maliciously set on fire, and most part of it consumed, before it was extinguished.'⁹⁵ A more spirited report of the incident made its way into Rivington's paper in New York City the following month. The writer reported that

We hear from Halifax, that the people have at last shewn they have spirits. It seems the agents for procuring forage for the expected regiment of Dragoons had taken without the consent of the owner, and were shipping for Boston a great quantity of hay, on which the people set fire to, and wholly destroyed it; and when that work was finished, they attempted the like by the King's magazines, which they several times fired, but they were extinguished by the people from the ships of war lying there, who made a brisk fire on the people, and prevented them from effecting their design. The fugitives from Boston are gone for Halifax, but the people say, no d---d Tories shall be allowed to breathe in their air, so that these d---ls, can't find a resting place there, which was the only place on the continent that they even dared to hope they might stay in.⁹⁶

The following month, John Fillis and William Smith, the two Halifax merchants involved in the tea scandal of a year earlier, once again had to defend themselves in front of the House of Assembly. Both men complained to the Assembly that 'some evil minded Persons had transmitted Accounts to *Boston*, that they were factious and

⁹³ Skimmingtons were used in colonial America to publicly punish those who acted outside societal norms, but became increasingly politicized in the Revolutionary era. Stewart, 'Skimmington in the Middle and New England Colonies', 41-86, Humphrey, 'Crowd and Court', 107-124, Klepp, 'Rough Music on Independence Day', 156-176, in Pencak, Dennis, and Newman, eds., *Riot and Revelry*; Young, 'English Plebeian Culture', 189-194.

⁹⁴ Anonymous, quoted in Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, 72.

⁹⁵ 'HALIFAX, May 9', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 9 May 1775; Executive Council Minutes, 19 June 1775, Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), RG 1, 170: 164-165

⁹⁶ 'Extract of a letter from the Camp at Cambridge, dated May 18, 1775', *Rivington's Gazette*, 8 June 1775.

rebelliously disposed, and that it was generally supposed, that they were secretly Instrumental in the burning of the Hay, lately purchased for his Majesty's Service.' They continued to say that their names were mistakenly included in a list of suspected American sympathizers in Halifax that was given to General Thomas Gage in Boston. Gage was then told by the Deputy Quarter-Master General Mr. Shireff 'that he understood there were many disaffected Persons in this Province, and that he should tell all such Persons as talk'd of Government in a disrespectful Manner, that if any Attempt was made to prevent Provisions being sent to the Army, a sufficient Force would be sent to destroy the Towns... and that the Indians should be set on them.' After deliberation, the House found 'Mr. *Fillis* and Mr. *Smith*, to be dutiful and loyal Subjects to his Majesty King *George* the Third, that they have acknowledged the Supreme Power of the *British* Legislature, that they have behaved with Decency and Good Order.'⁹⁷

However, this incident raised concerns among local government officials about the increasingly rebellious attitude of some of the colony's inhabitants. As a result, Governor Legge took decidedly more aggressive steps to ensure that Nova Scotia remained loyal and attached to Great Britain. Unlike the thirteen American colonies to the south in which local associations and committees had usurped the power of many of the suspended colonial assemblies, Legge and the local assembly still held considerable control over the Nova Scotia's politics. In an address to the House of Assembly he proclaimed that:

On so critical a Conjunction of Affairs in America, I cannot forbear expressing the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction I receive, from your steady and uniform Behaviour in your Duty and Allegiance to the King, and in your due Observance of the Laws of Great-Britain, nothing can more advance the Good and Welfare of the People, nor render us more respectable to Great-Britain, nor be more subservient to procure the Favor of Protection, of our Royal and most Gracious Sovereign; as on the continuance of his Protection, our Safety, or Prosperity, and the very Existence of this Colony Depends.⁹⁸

During the following weeks Legge sought more strict measures to curtail the increasingly rebellious attitude of some of the inhabitants. First, he deemed it 'proper and necessary that all Persons coming into this Province from any Parts of *America* should, during these Times be call'd on and required to give Testimony of their Fidelity

⁹⁷ 'Province of Nova-Scotia. In the House of Assembly. June 16th, 1775.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 20 June 1775.

⁹⁸ 'HALIFAX, June 20.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 20 June 1775.

and Allegiance to his Majesty's Sacred Person and Government.'⁹⁹ Early in July Legge further declared that Nova Scotians were prohibited from 'exporting gunpowder, arms, and ammunition, or Salt Petre out of the colony.' And in another proclamation he stated that 'there is at this Time, in *New England*, a most daring and open Rebellion against the King's Authority and Government', and that 'all Persons in this Province should beware of aiding, or corresponding with any Person or Persons concerned in said Rebellion.' As such, he ordered that a proclamation be published

hereby notifying and warning all Person aforesaid, that they do not in any Manner directly or indirectly aid or assist with any Supplies whatever, any Rebel or Rebels, nor hold Intelligence with or correspond with them, nor conceal, Harbour or protect any such Offenders, as they wou'd avoid bring deemed Rebels, and Traitors, and proceeded against accordingly.¹⁰⁰

By late August, Legge had gone one step further by announcing that '*it is thought expedient and necessary at this critical Juncture, that all Person in this Province should be call'd on and requir'd to give Testimony of their Allegiance and Duty to his Majesty's sacred Person and Government.*'

Legge also wrote to the British General Gage to report that 'upwards of seven hundred of the Principal Inhabitants of the County of Halifax, King's County, and Annapolis, have not only taken the Oaths, but enter'd into an Association', though most of those inhabitants were from Halifax.¹⁰¹ Even Chief Justice Jonathan Belcher took pains to illustrate the loyalty of Haligonians. In a September 1775 issue of *The Nova-Scotia Gazette* he had a loyal address to the King printed, which was signed by four hundred residents of the city.¹⁰²

Despite the public displays of loyalty to Parliament and the King, the situation in Halifax continued to worsen in the late months of 1775. The British Naval Commander Marriott Arbuthnot reported to the Lords of Admiralty that he was busy rounding up all of the cannon in town and building defences to protect against a possible attack from the American rebels. Arbuthnot believed that American 'Orders are to interrupt the trade of this Country, by preventing them from sending lumber & other Necessary's to the West Indies or great Brittain & particularly to stop all supplies for

⁹⁹ 'PROCLAMATION. [June 23, 1775]', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 27 June 1775; Executive Council Minutes, 23 June 1775, PANS, RG 1, 170: 166-167.

¹⁰⁰ 'HALIFAX, July 5th', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 4 July 1775; Executive Council Minutes, 5 July 1775, PANS, RG 1, 170: 169-170.

¹⁰¹ Legge to Gage, 16 August 1775, quoted in Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 308.

¹⁰² *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 26 September 1775.

Boston, & prevent as much as possible the success of the fishery on this Coast.’¹⁰³ A letter from the Earl of Suffolk in London to Governor Legge ordered that he was to raise a provincial regiment of one thousand men to protect the colony during the rebellion.¹⁰⁴ In response, Legge declared martial law in the colony and ordered that Nova Scotian communities raise local militias to protect against possible invasion.¹⁰⁵ He also proclaimed that those people who did not live in Halifax, or had moved there after 30 September 1775, should now go to the Justice of Peace to give their names, places of abode and their reason for coming to that town. Additionally, boats and ships were required to obtain a license before entering the harbour and anyone caught hiding unregistered people would be punished accordingly.¹⁰⁶

The response of Legge and other government officials to the increased threats of war and the fear of internal dissent in 1775 illustrates the extent to which the crisis in the thirteen American colonies had challenged the loyalty of Nova Scotian inhabitants. For nearly a decade some Nova Scotians had tried to express their support for colonial American resistance, but they had never achieved the organization and unity of the thirteen colonies. Many of these men and women had only recently immigrated to the colony from New England and thus still felt an attachment to their former homeland. As such, Legge’s decision to call up the local militias proved unpopular amid a general population unwilling to fight their former friends and neighbours. Several petitions from various communities and counties around the province expressed hope that the inhabitants could remain neutral in the impending war. Residents of Cumberland county said they opposed fighting ‘Friends and Relatives’, but were willing to defend their own property if the need arose. The inhabitants of Yarmouth professed ‘to be true Friends & Loyal Subjects to George our King.’ Yet, ‘We were almost all of us born in New England, we have Fathers, Brothers & Sisters in that Country, divided betwixt natural affection to our nearest relations, and a good Faith and Friendship to our King and Country, we want to know, if we may be permitted at this time to live in a

¹⁰³ ‘Copy of letter from Arbuthnot to Mr. Stephen, Halifax yard, 26 December 1775’, TNA: PRO CO 5/123/205-206.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Extract of a letter from Earl of Suffolk to Governor Legge, Whitehall 16 October 1775’, TNA: PRO CO 5/8/60.

¹⁰⁵ Executive Council Minutes, 5 December 1775, PANS, RG 1, 170: 188-190.

¹⁰⁶ Executive Council Minutes, 8 December 1775, PANS, RG 1, 170: 191-193.

peaceable State, as we look on that to be the only situation in which we with our Wives and Children, can be in any tolerable degree safe.'¹⁰⁷

The events of 1775 and the early months of 1776 proved decisive in determining the loyalty of Haligonians to Great Britain. The fighting at Lexington and Concord, and the British military occupation of Boston had encouraged some residents to become more active in their support for the colonial American cause. As in the past, however, government reactions were swift and severe. With the colony's economic and political interests still tied closely to the government in London, colony leaders could ill-afford to allow local resentment to fester. Governor Legge's long list of proclamations made it nearly impossible for Haligonians, or Nova Scotians more generally, to encourage and promote widespread support for their fellow colonists in mainland America.

What is more interesting is how similarly the Patriot leaders in New York City and the loyal British political leaders in Halifax challenged popular conceptions of loyalty and identity and encouraged support for their cause. In both cases, the loyal Haligonians and the American Patriots in New York City had made personal political interests and allegiances a matter of public concern. They had required local inhabitants of New York City and Halifax to publicly swear allegiance to their cause and reject the interests and objectives of the opposing party. Moreover, they had also asked local inhabitants to play an active role in this process. Ordinary Haligonians and New Yorkers were required to be on the lookout for any persons who acted against the interests of their community. And in both communities there were occasions when residents did oppose the local authorities. In New York City, people like George Birks and David King were imprisoned or banished for publicly supporting the British, while in Halifax the merchants John Fillis and William Smith were continually brought before the assembly for their rumoured support of American resistance. The outbreak of fighting at Lexington and Concord had provoked a more aggressive attack on the opposition in both loyal British and rebellious American communities. It had required residents in each to profess publicly their loyalty and allegiance to the cause, or suffer often violent consequences.

¹⁰⁷ 'The Inhabitants of Yarmouth, 8 December 1775', quote in Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees*, 291. Also see: Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God. The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), 63-76.

American Independence and the First Years of the Rebellion

The Declaration of Independence bound together many residents of the thirteen colonies in what had become a war against the British. It provided a framework for colonists to envision themselves as part of new, American nation in much the same way that the British constitution worked to unite the British public. People of all ranks in communities throughout the thirteen American colonies could now unite in a shared rhetoric of loyalty to a new nation. In one often printed account from Ticonderoga, American soldiers on first hearing the Declaration read aloud were reported to have declared ‘now we are a people!’¹⁰⁸ In New York City, John Holt filled an entire page of his newspaper with the Declaration ‘to oblige a number of our Customers, who intend to separate it from the rest of the paper, and fix it up, in open view, in their Houses, as a mark of their approbation of the INDEPENDENT SPIRIT of their Representatives.’¹⁰⁹ Publicly displaying the declaration in one’s home or workplace would have carried enormous political symbolism, in a similar vein to illuminating one’s window on royal anniversaries or other national celebratory dates.

The first public reading of the declaration in New York City also spurred the crowd of American supporters to tear down the city’s equestrian statue of George III. Holt reported on the incident as a sign of the inhabitants’ new found independence. ‘The same evening the equestrian stature of George III. which Tory pride and folly raised in the year 1770, was, by the Sons of Freedom, laid prostrate in the dirt, the just desert of an *ungrateful Tyrant!*’¹¹⁰ The destruction of the statue held enormous political significance. It allowed New York City’s revolutionary community to share in the physical destruction of their allegiance to the British monarchy and all that it ostensibly entailed. More than that, it served to redefine the political identity of the city. This statue, like the William of Orange statue that adorned the streets of Glasgow, had symbolically linked the political identity of New York City residents with other British Atlantic communities. In destroying it Patriots were effectively severing their ties to the Empire in favour of new, American national identity.

¹⁰⁸ *New York Constitutional Gazette*, 12 August 1776; *New York Packet*, 15 August 1776; *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 15 August 1776; *Connecticut Courant*, 19 August 1776; *Providence Gazette*, 24 August 1776. Quoted in Robert G. Parkinson, ‘Enemies of the People: The Revolutionary War and Race in the New American Nation’ (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2005), 6-7.

¹⁰⁹ *The New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser*, 11 July 1776.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

However, this process of redefining New York City as an American community was short-lived. In the course of just a few months nearly 25,000 British and Hessian soldiers reclaimed the city, which in the process was reduced to as little as 5,000 beleaguered inhabitants.¹¹¹ One dejected citizen 'found it a most dirty, desolate and wretched Place. My House had been plundered by the Rebels of almost every thing I had left behind.'¹¹² A British general commented that 'the Houses were destitute of Inhabitants,' while a Hessian noticed that the returning Loyalists 'find their houses empty, their belongings destroyed, and windows broken.'¹¹³

Conditions worsened in the early hours of September 21st, when a fire broke out in the lower dock area on the East River in the south-eastern part of the city. From there, it quickly spread west through Broadway and then north along the North River past Trinity Church. With the town nearly deserted and the military inadequately trained to deal with such a problem, the fire continued to burn until nearly one-quarter of the city was destroyed.¹¹⁴ Rumours quickly spread that the fire had been instigated by Patriots still lurking in the city. Amid the chaos, Loyalist mobs and angry soldiers sought violent revenge against the suspected arsonists. Reports circulated of these mobs dealing with alleged conspirators by summarily tossing them into the raging fire.¹¹⁵ One man was stabbed, strung up by his heels and left hanging for days as a sign of how Patriots were to be treated.¹¹⁶

Firsthand accounts of the fire were printed in local newspapers over the following days in order to illustrate the wicked designs of the American revolutionaries. Hugh Gaines' *New-York Gazette*, and the *Weekly Mercury* used the fire to launch a broader attack on the

¹¹¹ Many citizens had fled in August when a broadside written by George Washington warned of a 'Bombardment and attack upon the City of New-York, by our cruel, and inveterate Enemy.' *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, I, 331. During the war, the population rose rapidly from roughly 5,000 in 1776 to nearly 11,000 by February, 1777.

¹¹² *The St. James's Chronicle; Or, British Evening-Post*, 9 November 1776.

¹¹³ Thomas Glyn, 'Journal of American Campaign', September 18, 1776, General Manuscripts [Bound], Princeton University Library; Carl Leopold Baurmeister, *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces*, translated and annotated by Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 50.

¹¹⁴ The Rev. Charles Inglis noted in his diary, 'The rebels carried off all the bells in the city, partly to convert them into cannon, partly to prevent notice being given speedily of the destruction they meditated against the city by fire, when it began.' quoted in Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, V, 1016. A quarter of the city was destroyed in the fire, including over 500 homes, along with numerous places of business. Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, 51.

¹¹⁵ Edward H. Tatum, Jr., ed., *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle: Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940), 110-111.

¹¹⁶ Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy*, 73; 'The Memoirs of Stephen Allen' Typescript, NYHS, 16-17.

legitimacy of the revolutionary cause, and he shifted the blame to non-New Yorkers. Gaines reported that the actions of 'the New-England incendiaries will be a lasting monument of their inveterate malice against the trade and prosperity of this colony, as well as of their rooted disaffection to British law and government.'¹¹⁷ These newspaper reports gave an enduring political significance to the ruined buildings and destroyed homes that riddled the city's landscape, and the charred remains served as a constant reminder of the dangerous nature of the Patriot enemy for the remainder of the war.

Amidst these difficulties the growing community of loyal British subjects took advantage of various events and anniversaries to publicly display their loyal support for the British cause. Many loyal New Yorkers turned out to celebrate the British army's arrival in the city decorating their hats with red ribbons to symbolize their loyalty to the monarchy and British army.¹¹⁸ Pastor Shewkirk noted in his diary that the troops were 'drawn up in two lines in the Broad Way; Governor Tryon and others of the officers were present, and a great concourse of people. Joy and gladness seemed to appear in all countenances, and persons who had been strangers...were now very sociable together, and friendly.'¹¹⁹ Returning Loyalists were seen parading soldiers around the town on their shoulders while a group of women climbed to the top of Fort George, tore down the Rebel standard and proudly hoisted His Majesty's flag.¹²⁰ A month later, when the remaining British and Hessians soldiers disembarked from the ships in the harbour, crowds gathered along the water's edge 'cheering their Military Brethren and other Spectators on Shore, and making the Hills resound with Trumpets, French Horns, Drums and Fifes, accompanied by the Harmony of their Voices.'¹²¹ Ironically, the presence of the army, which had been the source of so many problems in New York City during the Liberty Pole riots in the 1760s, brought relief and celebration to residents that had suffered greatly under Patriot rule.

Crowds of loyal Britons re-assembled a few days later to celebrate the anniversary of King George's accession to the crown. Nearly five hundred ships in the harbour hoisted the King's standard and fired a twenty-one gun salute 'which echoed over the

¹¹⁷ *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 2 November 1776.

¹¹⁸ Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, 50; Barck, Jr., *New York City During the War for Independence*, 77.

¹¹⁹ Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, V, 1015.

¹²⁰ Van Buskirk., *Generous Enemies*, 21.

¹²¹ *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 28 October 1776; Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, V, 1031.

Water and Hills with a kind of pleasing Terror.’¹²² *The New-York Gazette* reported that ‘So noble an Appearance, and so grand a Salute, were never known in this Port before.’¹²³ At the same time the notorious Patriot spy Nathaniel Hale was hanged at the gallows on the northern edge of the city. From there his body was taken and put on display on the city’s Commons amid the cheering crowds. A board, painted to resemble a soldier, and labelled “George Washington” was placed along side Hale’s body as a symbolic reminder of the British army’s objective in the war.¹²⁴ Lastly the Liberty Pole, ‘a monument of insult to the Government, and of licentiousness to the people’, was ordered by British soldiers to be taken down, much to the delight of the city’s inhabitants.¹²⁵

The significance of this last event should not be overlooked. The New York City Liberty pole had been the city’s greatest symbol of resistance to Britain and the focal point of riots between British soldiers and citizens throughout the late 1760s and into 1770 when fighting broke out over the pole on Golden Hill. Thereafter the pole continued to annoy the soldiers still stationed in the town, but it also became an important meeting point and symbol for Patriot opposition to British rule. In March 1775, two suspected Loyalists were ‘used in a most cruel manner by a mob of above two hundred men’ for refusing to denounce King George at the Liberty Pole.¹²⁶ Just days earlier *Rivington’s Gazette* reported that a mob in Elizabeth-Town, excited by rumours of a local oyster-man breaking the non-importation agreement, ‘proceeded to abuse all the people in the town, who were know to be *well-affected* to the *constitution*; they erected a gallows, in order more particularly to insult them, and fixed up a liberty pole in the middle of the town.’¹²⁷ Thus for many Loyalists in New York City Patriot definitions of liberty were derided as the ‘*Happiness of Assembling in the open Air, and performing idolatrous and vociferous Acts of Worship, to a Stick of Wood.*’¹²⁸

¹²² Tatum, Jr., ed., *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle*, 130.

¹²³ *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 28 October 1776.

¹²⁴ Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, V, 1025; *The Kentish Gazette* (Canterbury, England), 9 November 1776.

¹²⁵ ‘William Tryon to Lord George Germain’, quoted in Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, V, 1032; W. H. W. Sabine, *The New-York Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch, of the 17th (Connecticut) Regiment From August 22, 1776 to December 15, 1777* (New York: Colburn & Tegg, 1954), 62.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Schlesinger, ‘Liberty Trees: A Genealogy’, 451; *Rivington’s Gazette*, March 9, 1775.

¹²⁷ *Rivington’s Gazette*, March 2, 1775.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Schlesinger, ‘Liberty Trees: A Genealogy’, 445; “The Dougliad,” *The New York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*, January 18, 1770.

As a result, when the crowd of Loyal Britons gathered to watch its destruction, the Liberty Pole represented something very different to them than to the Patriots.¹²⁹ Rather than appearing as a beacon of freedom it symbolized an oppressive, arbitrary and often violent faction who had robbed the city of a stable and ordered form of governance. In short, it had come to represent an identity that was unquestionably not British. By removing it, the Loyalists were symbolically reclaiming their rights and liberties as British subjects. As such, it could be argued that the absence of the Liberty pole spoke just as strongly to the loyal Britons in the community as its presence had to the Patriots. Furthermore, the taking down of the Liberty pole was of equal symbolic value to the Patriot destruction of the King's statue months earlier. The removal of each had allowed residents of all rank to publicly take part in proclaiming their loyalty to one or the other cause.

Throughout 1777, royal British anniversary dates provided additional opportunities for ordinary Britons in New York City to participate in a defiant reclamation of their British identity. The Queen's birthday was celebrated in January despite George Washington and the American army engaging the British in battle in nearby Kingsbridge. An officer of the British army reported that 'A very fine Piece of Fire-work... was played off upon the Occasion; and a vast Concourse of People, considering the Place and its Circumstances, were assembled to see it. To most of them it seemed a most wonderful Phenomenon [sic].'¹³⁰ During the King's birthday in June, loyal New Yorkers again turned out in number to express their support for the King and Great Britain. Hugh Gaine, the printer of *The New-York Gazette*, recorded in his dairy that 'It was kept in a different Manner from last Year, and every Face in Town seemed joyful.' Another resident proclaimed that the day 'was celebrated very magnificently and with great solemnity.' At noon, the ships in the harbour and the guns stationed at the various forts surrounding the city fired a *feu de joy* in honour of the day. 'One could hear a continuous thunder and roar of the cannon, and there must have been over three or four thousand cannon shots.'¹³¹

¹²⁹ From March 1775, *Rivington's Gazette* printed reports that linked violent, oppressive Patriot actions with Liberty Poles, redefining their political symbolism for the loyal British inhabitants. *Rivington's Gazette*, 2 March 1775; 20 April 1775; 28 October 1778.

¹³⁰ Tatum, Jr., ed., *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, 176-177; The Royal American Gazette*, 23 January 1777.

¹³¹ Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), II, 35; Johann Conrad Döhla, *A Hessian Diary of the American Revolution*, translated, edited, and with an

The anniversary of George III's coronation in September provided perhaps the most assertive display of loyalty from New York City's loyal inhabitants. A local newspaper reported that 'At twelve o'clock the guns on Fort George were fired... and in the evening many of the houses were illuminated.' More importantly, at the tavern of Loosley and Elms an illumination 'consisting of upwards of 300 spermaceti candles, with the stature of his Majesty on horseback, crowned with laurels, standing on a pedestal, and several other figures, much surpassed any thing of the kind before exhibited.'¹³² This illumination was clearly intended to represent the equestrian statue of George III that the Patriots had destroyed a year earlier. As such, it carried enormous symbolic importance for the ways in which loyal Britons had reclaimed the political identity of the city. They had resurrected, if only for the night, the very symbol of British authority that had been so aggressively attacked by the American rebels the previous year.

Glaswegians were also kept abreast of the events occurring in New York City in the autumn of 1776. In local newspapers, the British siege of New York City provided an opportunity to illustrate the tyrannical, despotic, and self-interested nature of the American rebels. An account from London boasted that because 'of the shameful retreat of the rebels at New York, many people are of opinion that they will make the best of their way at Kingsbridge also.' The author continues 'Even some of the warmest advocates for the Americans begin now to give them up; they say, if they will not fight for their liberties, they deserve to lose them.'¹³³ The subsequent fire in New York City, reported to have been caused by the retreating Patriots, provided further evidence of their malevolent and socially dangerous nature.

A letter printed in *The Glasgow Chronicle* reported that the residents 'all behave themselves as yet become good subjects; I mean the New Yorkers, not the New England people, some of who I find stayed behind for the villanous purpose of setting fire to the city which, 'tis verily believed, was concerted by some great ones among the Rebels, and that the poor wretches who did the business were only their tools.' In an

introduction by Bruce E. Burgoyne (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 22-23; *The Royal American Gazette*, 5 June 1777; *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 9 June 1777.

¹³² *The Royal American Gazette*, 25 September 1777.

¹³³ *The Glasgow Chronicle or, Weekly Intelligencer*, 14 November 1776.

effort to inflame loyal readers the writer reported that the fire was set ‘in a part of town where the labouring people lived, as also where the English Protestant churches were, as well as the college.’ Attacks on the moral, religious, and educational foundations of British society, as well as the long-suffering working class ‘lower sorts’ would have resonated with nearly the entire Glaswegian public. The arrival of the British in New York City was reported as bringing a welcome return to stability, morality, and prosperity and Glaswegians read that ‘the distressed inhabitants begin again to return, and the place seems already [half] alive, goods are plenty, provisions of all kinds moderate, and the people healthy. While the town was in the hands of the rebels, it was almost quite deserted.’¹³⁴

A writer in *The Edinburgh Advertiser* confessed his earlier sympathy for the colonists, ‘but some of their late proceedings have convinced me, that their opposition is not dictated by true patriotism, but by a spirit of tyranny and despotism.’ He complained that the colonial leaders had destroyed the liberty of speech and press, forced peaceful citizens to subscribe to associations contrary to their principles and opinions, and deprived them of the right to trial by jury, before concluding, ‘Shall the sacred name of liberty be made the instrument to glut the avarice, the tyranny of such enemies to civil society?’¹³⁵ In an August 1776 issue of *The Caledonian Mercury*, “Sempronius” questioned the motives of the American colonists in declaring their independence.

Reflect, can the ruin of the trade and constitution of your country be pleasing? It can please none but them that seek to make their fortune by it, and it must, upon sober reflection, disgust you, unless you are sunk below the feelings of men; and are in fact, the friends of h—l, sent here by the d—l, in human shape, to be a plague and curse to your country.¹³⁶

In Halifax news of the American Declaration of Independence was initially suppressed by the local authorities. A report from Boston in September said that ‘The Governour of *Halifax* received the Declaration of Independence about four weeks since, but would not permit the poor dupe of a printer (had he ever so good a mind) to publish any more of it than barely the last clause.’ When asked why he would not allow it to be published, the Governor responded ‘Because it may gain over to them (the Rebels) many converts, and inflame the minds of his Majesty’s loyal and faithful subjects of the Province of

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ ‘Appius- To the Printer’, *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, 27 September 1776.

¹³⁶ ‘Sempronius- Address to our Modern Patriots’, *The Caledonian Mercury*, 21 August 1776.

*Nova Scotia.*¹³⁷ The Executive Council met to discuss Isaiah Thomas's attempt to print extracts of the declaration and agreed that 'the Publication thereof being deem'd of most dangerous Consequences, and directly tending to inflame the minds of the Kings Subjects in this Province and to Seduce them from their duty and Allegiance by Asserting the most Malignant falsehoods, and misrepresentations.' In a proclamation issued the following day Governor Marriott Arbuthnot acknowledged the vitally important role the press had played in the rebellion in the colonies. He believed that the American newspapers had been designed 'to alienate the Minds of His Majesty's Subjects from their Allegiance to him as their Sovereign and to invite them to take up Arms against his Authority and Government.' He also feared that 'several of said Papers have been brought into this Province and published within the same, whereby His Majesty's faithful Subjects here may become corrupted, and they seduced from their duty and Fidelity.' Consequently the Governor stated:

I have therefore tho't fit, by and with the advice of His Majesty's Council to issue this Proclamation, hereby strictly enjoining and forbidding all persons whatsoever to utter, publish or print or in any other Manner to make publick any such Traiterous and Treasonable papers or other any Matters or things that shall have tendency the good Order and Peace of this Government, under the pains and penalties of the Laws in those Cases provided.¹³⁸

Once again, Halifax government officials were able to quickly stifle the efforts of pro-American Haligonians to spread support for their cause.

In Kingston the apparent support for American resistance expressed by the Assembly in 1774 had all but disappeared by the following year. In December 1775 the Assembly sent an address to George III that expressed their 'unshaken loyalty to the best of kings' for providing more soldiers for the defence of the island.¹³⁹ The following year the assemblymen again addressed the King, proclaiming that they 'think it our great happiness to enjoy the constitutional rights of our country, under the reign of the best of kings.'¹⁴⁰ By then American privateers were roaming the Caribbean seas, attacking British merchant vessels attempting to trade with communities elsewhere in the Empire. For many residents of Kingston the loss of trade with the thirteen American colonies

¹³⁷ Peter Force, ed. *American archives* (Washington: Published by M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837-1853), Series V, I, 189-190. 'Boston. *September 5.*', *The Newport Mercury*, 16 September 1776.

¹³⁸ Executive Council Minutes, 13 July 1776, PANS RG 1, 170: 210-212.

¹³⁹ Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica, 14 December 1775, 613.

¹⁴⁰ Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica, 21 December 1776, 700.

had been difficult enough, but these further disruptions made the American cause appear increasingly self-interested and destructive.

The most significant factor to encourage loyalty amongst Jamaicans at this crucial time was the failed slave rebellion of 1776, which was interpreted as a direct result of the colonial American crisis. Furthermore, the colonial American non-importation agreement had severe consequences for Jamaicans, whose plantation society depended upon the mainland American colonies for much of the food and raw materials that it required. The loss of that trade, along with a succession of severe droughts, had made food scarce on an island that devoted most of its land to the raising of sugar cane. One resident complained that 'the present unhappy disputes subsisting between American and Great Britain affects this Island greatly particularly in the Articles of Provision and Lumber, the Prices of which are advanced at least 100 per cent.'¹⁴¹ In a petition to Governor Keith, the Assembly remarked that many parts of the island were 'labouring under the distresses of Famine.'¹⁴² The slave population were most affected by the shortage of food, and thus grew increasingly resentful of the white inhabitants. Pontack, a slave on the Blue Hose Estate in the parish of Hanover on the northwest corner of the island argued that the slaves 'were angry too much with the white people, because they had taken from them their bread.'¹⁴³

There is also evidence that the slaves were encouraged by the revolutionary ideology of the American colonists. Reports spread across the island that house slaves had overheard their masters discussing the ideas of the American Patriots and toasting the American cause at their dinner tables. Reverend John Lindsay wrote to Dr. William Robertson, the principal of Edinburgh University, in August 1776 that 'Dear Liberty has rang in the heart of every *House-bred Slave*, in one form or other, for these Ten years past—While we only talk'd about it, they went no farther than their private reflections upon us & it: but as soon as we came to blows, we find them fast at our heels. Such has been the seeds sown in the minds of our Domestic by our Wise-Acre Patriots.'¹⁴⁴ Not only were slaves aware of the revolutionary ideology, but they also closely followed the

¹⁴¹ 'Dalhous and Stephens to John Hugh Smith, 23 July 1776', quoted in Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, XXXIII (1976), 621-622.

¹⁴² Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica, 24 October 1776, 625. Also quoted in *Ibid.*, 622.

¹⁴³ 'Examination of Pontack, 28 July 1776', quoted in O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 152.

¹⁴⁴ 'Lindsay to Robertson, 6 August 1776', quoted in *Ibid.*, 153 and Sheridan, 'The Jamaican Slave Insurrection', 301.

military events of the war. The islands' slave revolt itself was planned to coincide with the departure of British soldiers to the American colonies and the withdrawal of the British naval ships ordered out to protect merchant ships from American privateers. Thus for Jamaica's white inhabitants the attempted slave revolt in 1776 offered a stark reminder of the dangers posed by the American revolutionary ideology for Jamaica itself.

By the end of 1776 the American Revolution had arrived in Jamaica. The loss of trade with the mainland American colonies, the threats from American privateers and the attempted revolt by the slaves on the island had forced many Jamaicans to re-evaluate their attachment to the Empire. Over the previous decade some inhabitants, particularly in Kingston, had supported colonial Americans in their opposition to British imperial policies agreeing that the government had acted arbitrarily and that colonial grievances should have been redressed. However, the events of 1776 reminded residents of Jamaica of the significance and value of being British. Their attachment to the Empire ensured them access to Britain's profitable Atlantic trade routes. It also provided them protection, in the form of British soldiers and seamen, against slave revolts and possible invasions from neighbouring French and Spanish islands.¹⁴⁵ The recent actions of the American colonists also provided proof that their opposition to imperial policies was less guided by traditional British whig ideals than it was motivated by self-interest. These feelings were summed up in a letter written by "BRITANNICUS" that appeared in *The Cornwall Chronicle*. He denounced the arbitrary measures of the American Congress who had instigated the war with Britain, before concluding:

For was the people to think rationally for a moment, such barefaced miserable lies would never find their way in America, even with the sage John Hancock tacked to them. We pity in such a case, the undiscerning, the unjudging mob; but we cannot avoid invoking the vengeance of Heaven to speedily overtake those traitors the Congress, who deliberately deceive the hapless multitude, and to gratify a wild and fruitless ambition, like devils sport over the calamities and destruction of the human species.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ In an address to the Royal Governor Sir Basil Keith in October 1775, the Assembly of Jamaica proclaimed that they would 'with great cheerfulness, provide for their [soldiers] subsistence, and raise such supplies as will be necessary for the honourable support of his majesty's government.' *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, 24 October 1776, 625.

¹⁴⁶ *The Cornwall Chronicle and General Advertiser*, 29 March 1777.

Londoners, too, were dismayed by American independence. Over the previous two years, and indeed since the outbreak of the imperial crises, many Londoners had supported American opposition to unfair and arbitrary British imperial policies. On several occasions, such as the Boston Massacre, Londoners were able to find commonality with the struggles faced by the American colonists. And more recently, the colonial crises had served an important role in reigniting the Wilkes-inspired whig rhetoric that had dominated the popular political culture of London throughout the 1760s.

Yet until 1776 most Londoners believed that colonial Americans were still and wanted to remain British. After all, the staunch whig defence of British rights and liberties professed by the colonists over the previous decade was commonplace in London popular political culture. Londoners of all rank had grown accustomed to questioning the rule and authority of the British government, and thus were able to sympathize with the plight of the colonial Americans who were voicing related criticism of the government. However, while Londoners had made it a habit to aggressively challenge popular conceptions of loyalty over the years, they had done so within the confines of traditional forms of popular protest. Most residents were willing to assemble in protest and on occasion use organized violence to achieve political ends, but abolishing monarchy and parliamentary rule and declaring independence meant something quite different. The American colonists had completely abandoned accepted forms of popular protest in British society. John Almon, perhaps the most prolific printer of pro-American sentiments in London during this period, expressed the confusion many Londoners probably felt when American resistance turned to rebellion. In the summer of 1776 he advertised Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* alongside James Chalmers' refutation, *Plain Truth*, with the following explanation for his customers: 'The public have been amused by many extracts from the Pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, which have been held up as Proof positive that the Americans desire to become independent; we are happy in this opportunity of publishing *Plain Truth*; which we take to be as good a Proof that the Americans do not desire to become independent.'¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 128.

Conclusion

After the Boston Tea Party the crisis in the mainland American colonies quickly moved from resistance to rebellion. As the British government attempted to exert even greater control over the American colonies, the colonists responded by presenting a more unified and defiant resistance. From 1774 onward colonial American society became increasingly less British and more self-consciously American. Economic boycotts and the formation of extra-legal committees and associations replaced traditional British political and social relationships with a more republican-based society. At the same time, many colonial Americans began to reject their political, economic and cultural ties to Great Britain in favour of what was to become an American national identity.

The increasingly aggressive attacks on popular conceptions of Britishness brought about an uneven response from communities throughout the British Atlantic world. Despite being at war, even by 1777 Britons were unable to share in a unifying definition of the American opposition, but rather understood and responded to the rebellion from a distinctly local position. Thus while Americans were increasingly able to see themselves as sharing in a common, shared identity, British loyalty throughout the Atlantic remained quite local and self-interested in character. In New York City, loyal residents found themselves on the frontline of the battle over the city's identity, and thus had to offer a more defiant opposition to the American revolutionary cause. They were aided in this process, at least until the autumn of 1775 and then again in the autumn of 1777, by James Rivington's gazette. His newspaper provided a persuasive criticism of the American revolutionary ideology by illustrating the arbitrary and licentious nature of their cause. Yet there was an equally accessible and persuasive Patriot popular political culture that was able to refute the claims of Rivington's newspaper and thus unite the broader public in opposition to imperial rule. Furthermore, from 1774 until 1776 the city underwent a massive transformation of identity, as Patriot committees and associations sought to deconstruct the community's attachment to the Empire. The non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreement played an important role in the process, forcing residents to reject a traditional British social and political culture in favour of a new, American one.

In Halifax, the influence of the local merchant and political elite, and the presence of thousands of British soldiers, continued to make it nearly impossible for residents there

to express their political views on the colonial crisis. Thus the American Revolution illustrated the limits to which popular political culture could function in Halifax. Instead, the increasingly republican nature of colonial protests allowed local government officials to exert a greater amount of political control and influence over the local inhabitants. Counter-revolutionary political culture reigned in Nova Scotia.

Conversely, Londoners were initially able to exploit the American cause for their own political purposes. Wilkes and other radical city officials encouraged support for colonial American resistance in order to remind Londoners of the traditional whig-inspired rhetoric of loyalty that was commonplace in the eighteenth century London popular political sphere. However, American claims of independence weakened American support in the metropolis. Many Britons had defended the rights of American colonists to oppose unfair British imperial policies, but when they claimed their independence the Americans moved beyond traditional British forms of popular protest and crowd activity. As a result, Londoners began to perceive the American resistance as based less on their defence of British rights and liberties, and more as an unjust attack on all Britons and on all that defined Britishness.

In Kingston, merchant interests encouraged residents there to remain supportive of the American cause to avoid disrupting their valuable trade with the colonies. In 1774 they were instrumental in persuading the local assembly to petition the King on behalf of the American colonists, and in 1775 they asserted their right to carry on correspondence with American Patriot committees and associations. However, the attempted slave revolt of 1776, influenced by the American revolutionary ideology, reminded Kingston residents of the dangers of supporting resistance and revolution. More importantly, this event also forced them to appreciate the necessity of their attachment to the British Empire, which guaranteed them the protection of the British army and navy.

Even as war raged in the mainland American colonies, loyal Britons living throughout the Atlantic world still struggled to define and articulate a shared sense of attachment to the Empire. In each of these five communities the revolution had affected residents in quite distinct and different ways. The situation was further complicated in the autumn months of 1777, when the Americans achieved an unexpected victory at Saratoga. Until then, most Britons were convinced that the outnumbered and poorly-trained colonial

militia would be no match for the superior British army and navy. British forces had already taken New York City relatively easily and were marching through New Jersey and Pennsylvania to take Philadelphia.¹⁴⁸ A letter from an officer station in New York to a friend in Edinburgh in the summer of 1777 reported that ‘Since my last, we have had several skirmishes, in which the rebels have been defeated as usual; indeed we are no match for them at running.’¹⁴⁹ Most were under the impression that the war would be over within a matter of months, but the loss at Saratoga – marking the first time a British army had ever surrendered – destroyed these plans. It gave new hope to the rebellious colonists, whose support for the revolutionary cause had waned over the previous months.

More importantly, the surrender of Burgoyne and some six thousand soldiers had enormous, though unseen consequences on the popular political culture of loyalty in the British Atlantic world. The American victory convinced France to join the war, thus turning a colonial rebellion into a full-scale European war. Britons were now faced with a new, more substantial enemy, both on land and at sea. Furthermore, the British public now confronted rebellious Americans allied with Britain’s ancient enemy, France. The implications of the Franco-American alliance, as we shall see, had enormous consequences for the ways in which the broader British Atlantic public defined and articulated the enemy and defended the superiority of Britain’s Protestant whig identity.

¹⁴⁸ The account of the taking of New York City by the British is best described by Barnet Schecter, *The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution*, (New York: Walker & Company, 2002)

¹⁴⁹ ‘Extract of a letter from Officer in New York to friend in Edinburgh’, *Ruddiman’s Weekly Mercury*, 3 July 1777.

Chapter 4

Britishness and the Franco-American Alliance, 1778-1781

Introduction

The Franco-American alliance had enormous consequences for the popular political culture of loyalty and patriotism in communities throughout British Atlantic world. It reinvigorated the traditional and persuasive rhetoric of loyalty, or what Stephen Conway has colourfully labelled the 'old-style gallophobia' that had long characterized Britons.¹ On the surface, the alliance allowed Britons living throughout the Atlantic world to identify as an enemy opponents who had defied simple definition. Britons were shocked by the hypocrisy of a rebellion whose leaders had claimed a greater appreciation of individual rights and liberties: now the Patriots were more readily associated with an oppressive and arbitrary Empire. French participation in the conflict enabled Britons of all sorts to reconstruct the meaning of the war and their place within it. They were able to redefine the American Patriots as political and religious enemies, while simultaneously celebrating their loyalty and identity within a broader empire-wide conception of Britishness.

The Franco-American alliance also extended the geographical reach of the war. For most Britons throughout the Atlantic world, even as late as 1777, the Revolution and war had only existed in the pages of local newspapers and magazines, and in debates around the coffee-house and tavern tables. To be sure, the economic consequences were certainly felt in communities such as Glasgow and Kingston, but the physical and deadly context of the battlefield remained a distant thought in the minds of most British subjects. As such, they could retain a sense of comfort in their support for or opposition to the American revolutionary ideology. Britons elsewhere in the Atlantic world could argue the ideological consequences of the war in the thirteen colonies without the fear and anxiety felt by someone living in the midst of the fighting.² After 1778, however, instead of fighting a small, undisciplined American army in the thirteen colonies, Britons were now faced with a global war and enemy. Britain would be engaged in numerous battles in the Caribbean, West Africa and India, while threats of

¹ Stephen Conway has shown quite extensively how important this alliance was to Britons living in England, but has not explored the issue in the wider context of the Atlantic World. Conway, 'From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners', 65-100; 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past', 194. Also see: Cogliano, *No King, No Popery*, 71-87; Wahrman, 'The English Problem of Identity', 1-23.

² For example, the often violent attacks on loyal Britons in New York City between 1774 and 1776 discussed in chapter three were not a part of the political climate in most British Atlantic communities.

invasion from the French navy and raids by American privateers kept mainland Britons constantly on their guard. The physical effects of a much larger war compelled Britons in each of these communities to think more acutely about the war and their attachment to the British Empire.

The alliance also came about after a decade of intense political debate over the ways in which Britons understood and articulated their rights and liberties as British subjects. The American crises and eventual war had raised difficult and serious questions about the perceived superiority of Britain's Protestant whig heritage and the authority and legitimacy of a British government based on that heritage. In each of these five communities residents had debated the actions and ideas of the American Patriots in the context of their own local understandings of these issues, rather than from the perspective of a trans-local, imperial definition of Britishness. In London, for instance, the radical nature of the colonial rebellion had provided an opportunity for local inhabitants to deploy the radical whig beliefs and ideals that were so integral to the politics of the city. Even residents in Kingston, though far less radical than Londoners, had responded to the oppressive measures of Parliament in 1774 by addressing the King in support of the mainland American colonists. They, too, had understood the imperial crises in terms of the threats they posed to their own rights and liberties as British subjects. In Glasgow, on the other hand, aggressive opposition to the American rebellion had provided opportunities for residents to enthusiastically elaborate their patriotic membership in the British union and their loyalty to the Hanoverians, thereby dispelling any lingering sense of the city as a Jacobite stronghold. Thus, up until 1778 each community had reacted quite differently to events in the thirteen colonies: it was the French alliance with the Americans and entry into the war that would unite them.

The following chapter examines the impact of the Franco-American alliance on popular conceptions of loyalty and patriotism in the British Atlantic world. I begin first by discussing the ways in which Britons responded to Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777. This was the first ever surrender by an entire British army, and the fact that the under-estimated colonists had achieved such a striking victory led contemporaries and then historians to regard Saratoga as the turning point in the war,

when the possibility of American independence became a reality.³ Before then, the American army had struggled to oppose the much larger and better trained British forces. The Patriots had given up New York City almost without resistance, and the British army had followed this victory by taking control of New Jersey and much of the Pennsylvania countryside around Philadelphia. By the summer of 1777, the morale of the American soldiers was low and support from the broader public for the revolutionary cause was diminishing. Yet shortly after the victory at Saratoga France joined the Americans in their fight against the British, and brought with them an organized, professional and battle-trained French army and navy. As such, Britain was faced with a new, much larger opposition that extended the war – and British resources – to all corners of the British Empire.

However, it is only hindsight that enables historians to definitively declare Saratoga to have been the turning point in the war. Furthermore, such an understanding illustrates an American exceptionalist approach to our understanding of the Revolution, and the events that shaped and defined it. We have come to understand the importance of Saratoga only in terms of its role in the success of the revolutionary cause. To contemporary British subjects, however, Burgoyne's defeat meant something quite different. In fact, I argue that this defeat actually had important positive consequences for British subjects throughout the Empire. The loss at Saratoga alerted Britons throughout the Atlantic world. By awakening a sense of vulnerability it encouraged a renewed determination to defend Britain against the rebellious Americans. The defeat and the mounting rumours of a Franco-American alliance made local approaches to and interpretations of the war in the American colonies unacceptable. If Britain was going to reassert its authority, it would require the united resolve and commitment of the broader British public throughout the Atlantic world. Consequently, in the aftermath of Saratoga was not a nation of dejected subjects, but rather an inspired public who professed a more firm and patriotic support for Great Britain.

The chapter continues by examining the ways that the Franco-American alliance of 1778 enhanced this renewed patriotic fervour. Britons throughout the Atlantic world

³ Richard M. Ketchum, *Saratoga: Turning Point of America's Revolutionary War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 1997). For a military history of the battle and its consequences, see: Hoffman Nickerson, *The Turning Point of the Revolution, or Burgoyne in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928).

could now make sense of an enemy that had resisted easy definition. The alliance reorganized the traditional Protestant whig language of loyalty and patriotism that had been the foundation of the eighteenth-century British Empire. Crucially, Britons believed that the alliance exposed the hypocrisy of an American cause that was allegedly based upon a superior articulation of individual rights and liberties. Britons no longer struggled to contend with an American revolutionary ideology that challenged their own whig definitions of Britishness. The American alliance with the arbitrary and oppressive French Empire provided tangible proof of the misguided and illegitimate nature of the colonial rebellion.

Between 1774 and 1776, many colonial Americans aggressively sought to strip away their political, social and cultural attachment to Great Britain in order to begin to see themselves as members of a new American nation. Non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreements, along with the formation of extra-legal Associations and Committees of Correspondence, aggressively undermined the rhetoric and symbols of Britishness in communities throughout the thirteen colonies in an effort to redefine them as American. It was a one-sided process, however, for while the Americans were beginning to shed their loyalties to the Empire, the British were unwilling to separate themselves from the Americans. Loyal Britons throughout the Atlantic world struggled to define the American rebels who justified revolution in terms of their shared political and constitutional heritage. All that changed when France joined the war in 1778. Finally, Britons were able to construct an identity that emphasized difference from and superiority to the American colonists.

This process, however, required an intense and aggressive reassertion of the traditional Protestant whig definition of Britishness. When France joined the war Britons throughout the Empire vigorously reclaimed their whig identity. In print and on the streets they reasserted their Protestant British heritage in an effort to not only discount the American cause, but more importantly, to elucidate Britain's whig supremacy. After more than a decade of intense and often violent American attacks on the very definition of Britishness, loyal Britons were finally able to proclaim an ideological victory over the American enemy. Yet, in doing so, this new more confrontational articulation of British loyalty and patriotism elevated debate and created a more politically conscious British public. Britons became increasingly aware of the inability of their own government to

live up to the lofty definitions of the identity they now so proudly displayed. The contradiction grew more marked in 1779 and 1780, due to the combination of an increasingly unsuccessful war and the government's decision to repeal some anti-Catholic legislation. Consequently, the reinvigorated Protestant whig spirit of the British public collided with a government that appeared to favour Catholicism as it lost the war, producing a series of violent riots and protests in both Scotland and England.

Loyalty, Identity and the British Defeat at Saratoga

Burgoyne's defeat by an inferior American army at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777 marked the first time in history that an entire British army had surrendered. Even worse, they had surrendered not to one of the well-trained professional armies of their European rivals, but rather to the disorganized and undisciplined Continental Army. Such a humiliating defeat made many Britons realize that they could no longer comfortably oppose the policies and actions of the British government when thousands of their fellow Britons were being made prisoners of war, or worse yet, being killed on the battlefields. Even the radical whig John Wilkes, who had openly supported the idea of American independence, remarked that 'I am sorry that 800 valiant English and Germans were killed in a bad cause, in fighting against the best constitution on earth.'⁴ As one writer pointedly remarked in a passionate letter from London that was reprinted in *Rivington's Gazette*, 'The misfortune at Saratoga needs not occasion any dejection. A proper spirit is now excited through the nation, and preparations are every where making for a much more vigorous campaign... The cause of Truth, Justice, and Honour, must finally prevail. The British Lion is roused [sic] in good earnest', and I have no doubt, 'but the standards of Rebellion will shrink before him.'⁵ New Yorkers, fearing that a disillusioned British military would jeopardize their safety in the city, took solace in a letter from a 'good authority' in London which said that the King was more convinced than ever in defeating the rebellious Patriots and that he would 'SELL HANOVER AND ALL HIS PRIVATE ESTATE, BEFORE HE WOULD DESERT THE CAUSE OF HIS LOYAL AMERICAN SUBJECTS, WHO HAD SUFFERED SO MUCH FOR HIM.'⁶

⁴ Quoted in Colley, *Britons*, 142.

⁵ 'Extract of a letter from a gentleman in London, Dated January 7, 1778.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 21 March 1778.

⁶ 'Extract of another Letter from good authority, dated London, December 9, 1777.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 7 February 1778. Also see: *The Pennsylvania Ledger: or the Philadelphia Market-Day Advertiser*, 7 March 1778.

As news of Burgoyne's defeat spread throughout the Atlantic world, Britons became acutely aware of the critical situation in the mainland American colonies. In London, a writer calling himself "PASTOR FIDO" passionately reminded Londoners that 'the American war is become a serious business to this nation; the question now, is not whether the war originated from principles of injustice, and oppression on the side of the Mother Country... But it is, whether America is to become the Empire of the World, at the expence of the downfal [sic] and destruction of Great Britain?' He then pointedly reminded his fellow subjects that Britain would lose this war 'unless the united, and wonted spirit of Britain... once more rouse itself to that magnanimity, and resolution, which have for ages rendered this country, the envy, and glory of all Europe.'⁷ In New York City the defeat of Burgoyne dashed the spirits of a Loyalist community whose members had suffered a great deal at the hands of the American Patriots. In a letter addressed "TO THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK AND IT'S VICINITY", the writer pleaded with the Loyalists to unite and defend their loyalty to the Empire by taking up arms in support of the British cause.

Ought you not, then, to do something? Ought you not to do every thing that you possibly can do, to stop it's horrid progress, and bring it to a speedy and happy conclusion? that liberty may again be established... that your lives may no longer be exposed to the relentless cruelty of committees and banditti of armed men, nor your religion be trampled under foot by the implacable enemies of our happy constitution... Nothing, my friends, but a sufficient military force, can prevent this horrid situation from being your's. Shall the enemies of our peace be more active to destroy than we to defend the fair fabrick of BRITISH LIBERTY?⁸

A writer in *The Glasgow Mercury* drew parallels between Burgoyne's defeat at Saratoga and General James Abercromby's loss to the French at Fort Ticonderoga in 1758.

However, he also observed that Abercromby's fight 'was undertaken to save and protect our brethren in America, then in the most abject distress and helpless situation; the other to quell the most unnatural, unprovoked rebellion, from these brethren, that ever disgraced the annals of any country.'⁹ Burgoyne's defeat began to change the ways in which Britons understood the war, which included reconstructing the rebellious fellow Britons as a dangerous enemy. It brought forth a renewed, reinvigorated assertion of Britishness that had been absent over the previous years.

⁷ 'PASTOR FIDO', *The Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser*, 23 December 1777.

⁸ 'TO THE CITIZENS OF NEW YORK AND IT'S VICINITY', *Rivington's Gazette*, 8 November 1777. The address was also printed in *The Pennsylvania Ledger: or the Weekly Advertiser*, 3 December 1777.

⁹ *The Glasgow Mercury*, 8 January 1778.

Burgoyne's defeat mobilized the British public in the most tangible way. As a sign of their renewed patriotism and determined opposition to the rebellious Americans, Britons of all rank contributed to the raising of regiments in their local communities. By the end of 1778 as many as fifteen thousand Britons had enlisted to fight the rebellious Americans, and many more volunteered to defend their own communities against the threat of invasion.¹⁰ Yet the importance of the raising of these regiments was not in the number of soldiers that were recruited. Rather, it lay in the significant ideological consequences of the mobilizing of troops in the late months of 1777 and into 1778. In New York City, London, Glasgow and Kingston, local newspapers reported upon the raising of regiments in an effort to demonstrate the loyalty of the inhabitants and their commitment to the British cause. In London the Associated Livery contributed £2180 to the raising of a regiment 'for... supporting the constitutional authority of Great Britain over her rebellious American colonies.'¹¹ A resident of Kingston reported that

This morning a general and full meeting of the inhabitants assembled at the courthouse, when it was unanimously agreed, that a committee should be appointed to draw up an address to his majesty, offering their lives and fortunes in support of his crown and dignity, against the daring rebellion in North America. The address is to be approved of on Monday next, when it is thought a handsome subscription will be made, to raise money for his majesty's service. This true spirit of loyalty, I hope, will extend over all the island.¹²

In Glasgow a local newspaper reported that 'the inhabitants, animated by that zeal for their excellent constitution, and for the prosperity of their country, (which has in all times of public danger characterized the city of Glasgow,) subscribed most liberally.'¹³ Despite their own suffering occasioned by the interruption in trade with the American colonies, the 'Journeyman Weavers in Glasgow' displayed 'the ardent loyalty of this place, among all the lovers of liberty, of their country and of our happy constitution' in a letter to the Lord Provost printed in *The Glasgow Mercury*.¹⁴ In March the

¹⁰ Edward Curtis, *The Organization of the British Army in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 75-77.

¹¹ 'LONDON', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 19 February 1778.

¹² 'MONTEGO-BAY (Jamaica) March 14. Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Kingston, to his friend in this town, dated March 16, 1778. *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 11 May 1778.

¹³ The list of those trade incorporations that raised subscriptions illustrated the broad support for the war amongst all ranks of Glaswegians. They included: Taylors, Cordeners, Maltmen, Bakers, Wrights, Coopers, Weavers, Skinners, Barbers, Gardeners, Masons, Bonnet-makers & Dyers and Fleshers. 'GLASGOW, Dec. 29', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 8 January 1778.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* While a great majority of the soldiers raised were poor, displaced highlanders who saw the military as an opportunity for a better life, this one always the case. Fourteen weavers, for instance, enlisted and

Incorporation of Shoemakers in nearby Lanark, 'from principles of loyalty and patriotism, and in order to strengthen the hands of government at this critical situation of affairs', offered two guineas on top of every other bounty to men willing to enlist with the Royal Glasgow Volunteers.¹⁵

In November 1777 a correspondent for *Rivington's Gazette* in New York City reported that 'Every Loyal Heart must have been delighted with the first appearance of some of our volunteer companies at the parade on Monday last... When the several companies are filled we shall be able to boast of a militia, (as they will be united by the noblest motives, the interest of their Country and Constitution) whose only contention will be to be most forward in promoting the safety and good of the public.'¹⁶ In February 1778 General Tryon reviewed a newly raised regiment of 'a considerable number of fine recruits, very personable young fellows,' who testified their loyalty to Britain through 'loud acclamations of joy, and other demonstrations... What a pleasing sensation must this afford to every true friend of his King and country... and at the same time animate others to imitate their laudable example.'¹⁷ Recognizing the numerous loyal Scots in the city, an advertisement in *Rivington's Gazette* embodied the growing unity of the British Atlantic world by asking all "North Britons" 'who are emulous of that noble spirit of loyalty and attachment, which so eminently distinguishes their countrymen at home, on the present occasion', to enlist in Capt. William Sutherland's regiment of Caledonian Volunteers in order 'to seize this favourable opportunity of doing honour to their native country, and manifesting their zeal and attachment to his Majesty's person and government.'¹⁸

Local newspapers in each of these communities carried reports of similar regiments being raised by loyal Britons elsewhere in the Empire in order to articulate a shared, empire-wide support for the British cause.¹⁹ The success of Glaswegians seems to have

many middling sort tradesmen forsook their business to join the army. J.H. Stocqueler, *The British Soldier: An Anecdotal History of the British Army From its Earliest Formation to the Present Time* (London: William S. Orr and Co., 1857), 59.

¹⁵ 'THE INCORPORATION OF SHOEMAKERS of the Royal Burgh of Lanark', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 19 March 1778.

¹⁶ *Rivington's Gazette*, 22 November 1777.

¹⁷ *Rivington's Gazette*, 21 February 1778.

¹⁸ *Rivington's Gazette*, 8 July 1778.

¹⁹ Conway, *The British Isles*, pp. 196-99; 'British Mobilization in the War of American Independence,' *Historical Research* LXXII (1999), 66-71; "Like the Irish"? Volunteer Corps and Volunteering in Britain during the American War', in Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway, *Britain and America Go to War: The Impact*

drawn particular attention from loyal inhabitants of the British Empire. *Rivington's Gazette* in New York City reported that the 'sum subscribed for raising the Glasgow battalions, already exceeds £9000' and provided a detailed account of the different amounts given by the city council and each of the trade incorporations.²⁰ *The London Chronicle* reprinted a letter from a Glaswegian that proclaimed the continued and absolute patriotism of that city's residents. 'The Citizens of Glasgow', the writer acknowledged, 'have ever been distinguished for their loyalty and patriotism; but upon no occasion have they exerted themselves more than in the present case; all ranks of men seem determined to contribute liberally to support the constitutional rights of Great Britain over her misled and refractory Colonies.'²¹

New Yorkers, Londoners and Glaswegians also read that the 'principal inhabitants of the town of Manchester, as soon as they received the news of Gen. Burgoyne's convention, met, and resolved to make an offer to his Majesty, to raise him, at their own expence *One Thousand Men*.'²² While in a March 1778 issue of *Rivington's Gazette* a letter from the mayor of Liverpool asked 'every loyal subject, to contribute our endeavours to the support of our beloved Sovereign, our happy constitution, the honour of his Majesty's arms, the trade and welfare of these kingdoms in general, and of this town and neighbourhood in particular.'²³ In a letter published in *The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser* in December 1777, the writer concluded 'that meetings had been held at most of the principal places in England... to solicit government that they might be permitted to raise and clothe such particular bodies of men... for the service of their King and country. These truly patriotic proceedings, it is expected, will be universally adopted.'²⁴

A correspondent for *The Morning Post*, having noted the patriotic efforts of Britons in Manchester and Liverpool, enthused that 'Scotland has offered 10,000 men to support the dignity of the crown, the rights of the legislature, and honour of the nation. All England and Ireland', he proclaimed, 'will undoubtedly contend who shall be most active to shew their zeal in the same laudable purpose of reducing the American rebels

of War and Warfare in Anglo-America, 1754-1815 (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 2004), 143-169.

²⁰ 'EDINBURGH, January 9.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 21 March 1778.

²¹ 'LONDON. Extract of a Letter from Glasgow, Jan. 8.', *The London Chronicle*, 15 January 1778.

²² 'LONDON.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 7 February 1778; 'Extract of a letter from Manchester', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 8 January 1778.

²³ 'Liverpool, December 10, 1777', *Rivington's Gazette*, 21 March 1778; 'Letters from Liverpool, dated Dec. 26th', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 8 January 1778.

²⁴ *The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, 17 December 1777.

to their duty and allegiance.’²⁵ *The London Chronicle* perhaps best summed up the unprecedented displays of loyalty by the British public following the loss at Saratoga. ‘Orders were yesterday issued from the war office’, he remarked, ‘for calling in all the recruiting parties throughout England, Scotland, &c. it being judged unnecessary to maintain [them] when troops are raising in different cities and counties by voluntary subscription.’²⁶ A year later, a correspondent to *The Glasgow Mercury* reflected on the positive effects of the *rage militaire*, concluding that despite the relatively small size of Great Britain, ‘nations... are cautious how they offend a little insular empire. France... seeks for alliances with America, Spain, Naples, &c. before she dare draw the sword against Great Britain. May she ever continue the pride of Europe, the scourge of France, and the terror of all her enemies!’²⁷

The determined and united response of the British public to Burgoyne’s defeat at Saratoga, and the impending threat of a French war, thus assumes a greater significance in our understanding of the ‘turning point of the American Revolution’. Rather than dividing and weakening the British cause, Saratoga had actually galvanized Britons into a more national opposition to the American rebellion. It not only increased the number of soldiers who would soon be needed to fight an empire-wide war, but it had larger ideological consequences for Britain’s Atlantic population. Britons felt a renewed spirit of patriotic loyalty to Great Britain after the humiliating defeat to the Americans. Further, it united the spirit of British subjects throughout the Empire at an absolutely critical moment in the war. Within months France allied with the Americans and thus turned a colonial rebellion into a major European and imperial war. Great Britain would now be required to carry on a war along multiple fronts and against several enemies. A letter published in an American Patriot newspaper from a Scot who lived just outside Glasgow dashed any hopes the Americans may have had that Britain would not be prepared for such a conflict. The writer warned the American colonists that rather than breaking British spirits, Burgoyne’s defeat and the entry of France into the war had awakened them. He proclaimed that the port at Greenock was brimming with thousands of recently raised soldiers ready to embark for America. ‘The first operations of our troops this campaign’, he reported, ‘will be to bombard and lay Boston in ashes. May all the rebellious set be therein consumed, with the city, where it first began... It

²⁵ *The Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser*, 26 December 1777.

²⁶ ‘LONDON’, *The London Chronicle*, 3 January 1778.

²⁷ ‘Glasgow Jan. 7 1779’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 7 January 1779.

seems we must have a French war', the writer warned, 'May the God of armies go out with our troops, that the perfidious wretches may be severely punished.'²⁸

Britishness and the New American Enemy

Ironically, then, the renewed patriotic spirit of Britons after Saratoga was in fact heightened early in 1778 by news of France's entry into the war. The French alliance with the rebellious Americans completely reshaped and redefined the ideological significance of the American Revolution for popular conceptions of loyalty in the British Atlantic world. For over a decade the imperial crisis and eventual war in the mainland American colonies had eroded the Protestant whig definition of loyalty that had previously united Britons throughout the Empire. Faced with an opposition that articulated a political ideology not all that different than their own, the broader British public had struggled to come together in opposition to the colonial American cause. 'It is not our natural enemy, it is not French or Spaniards, nor rebel Scots, that we are contending with' proclaimed one of the many confused Britons early in 1776, 'it is our friends, our brethren, with whom we have this unhappy and unnatural contest.'²⁹

The Franco-American alliance of 1778 thus assumed enormous significance for loyal Britons. It allowed Britons to identify their political and military enemies not as adherents to but as opponents of whig and Protestant beliefs. American revolutionaries rapidly became less British and more alien, for loyal Britons regarded alliance between French absolutist Catholics and Protestant British whigs as a theoretical impossibility. As such, Britons were finally able to make sense of a previously confusing enemy by seizing upon the hypocrisy and illegitimacy of the American revolutionary cause. How could American colonists lay claim to superior whig ideals of individual rights and liberties while at the same time allying themselves with an arbitrary, oppressive and tyrannical Empire? One Loyalist New Yorker pointedly asked the rebellious colonists:

Let me seriously ask you, where is your liberty now?... You were told that [the rebellion] was to avoid the establishing of *Popery*... is not *Popery* now as much established by law in your state as any other religion? So that your Governor and all your rulers may be *Papists*, and you may have a Mass-House in ever corner of your country.³⁰

²⁸ 'Extract of a letter from Greenock, dated April 9.', *The Norwich Packet*, 22 June 1778.

²⁹ *London Evening Post*, 2 January 1776, quoted in Wahrman, 'The English Problem of Identity', 7.

³⁰ 'A NEW YORK EXILE', *Rivington's Gazette*, 6 January 1779.

In another report, it was rumoured that the devout Puritans in Boston had granted one of their meeting houses to accommodate 'a congregation, in communion with the church of Rome.' This, the writer asserted, 'ought to be ranked in the first class of the insults which distinguish the present era; as nothing can more elucidate the villainy and hypocrisy of these miscreant Puritans, than their preposterous coalition with the French Catholics.'³¹ Such infamous behaviour by the American rebels was not lost on the loyal Protestant British subjects living in New York City. One resident emphatically recorded in his diary that 'these Enthusiastick Rebels in Boston have given Liberty to the French amongst them to sett up Mass in an English Church in that place. fine protestants indeed.'³²

The blatant hypocrisy of the revolutionary cause was again highlighted when a correspondent in *Rivington's Gazette* reminded readers that the Patriot leaders had heatedly opposed Parliament's passing of the Quebec Act in 1774, and reacted bitterly to rumours of an Anglican bishop in America. 'But now', he says, 'the Congress are very willing to make us the instruments of weakening the best friends, and of strengthening the most powerful and ambitious enemies of the reformation... towards the universal re-establishment of Popery thro' all Christendom.'³³ In another letter a loyal Briton attempted to reason with the Patriots by reminding them that they 'are of the same blood, profess the same religion, speak the same language, and have in every respect a kindred interest. That they are Englishmen, united with the only free nation in the world, enabled from its constitution and power to support the cause of liberty and toleration, and prevent the human race from being debased and rendered miserable by the tyranny of despotism or persecution of superstition.' However, he warned the Americans that they must either reunite with their British brethren or 'combine with the national enemy of both, with the most powerful and inveterate enemy to all liberty, civil and religious, in endeavouring to crush the people to whom she owes her liberty, her strength, her very existence, at the hazard... of every thing that ought to be dear to her.'³⁴

³¹ *Rivington's Gazette*, 13 June 1778.

³² 'Saut^d June 6— 1778', Diary of Alex^t Houston at New York and Shelburne, N.S., 1778-1788, Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management (NSARM).

³³ *Rivington's Gazette*, 13 June 1778.

³⁴ 'MENTOR', *Rivington's Gazette*, 23 September 1778.

In a letter from “AN AMERICAN,” the writer asked the rebels to accept the recent peace offering from the Carlisle commission and quit the rebellion. The letter closed with a plea to the Patriots:

Rouse, then, my *infatuated countrymen!* Open your eyes. Be no longer cajoled, misguided and trepanned by wicked and designing men, who are laying your country waste, and, *are their selves,* bring Popery in your land. Lay down then the arms of rebellion, a rebellion the most wicked and detestible [sic], that ever existed. Don't lend France a helping hand, to overturn and pull down the *Protestant Church* to its ruins. Don't help the French King and the Congress, your best friends in *imagination,* but worst enemies in *reality;* don't, I say, help them to rob Great-Britain of her *dearly purchased colonies!* In fine—Act like *Englishmen,* like *Protestants,* like *Christians.* Be wise betimes, were *it be too late.* Be just, be loyal, be free, be happy.³⁵

Reports also circulated that if Britain were to lose the war the Americans would become subjects of the French. A New Yorker asserted that many of the Americans ‘now confess their apprehensions that their country is sold to the French King, and that all their boasted struggles for liberty, will end in wretched submission to French despotism, and popish superstition, should Great-Britain give up her colonies.’³⁶ ‘Do you imagine that the nature of the French nation is changed, because you have disclaimed all dependency on Great-Britain?’, a writer calling himself “BRITANNICUS” asked in an address ‘To the Inhabitants of the revolted Colonies in America. On the Alliance with France.’ ‘Is the French King so much your friend—so much the friend of mankind—as to engage in a war with Great-Britain, merely to establish you in that liberty, which he denies to his own subjects? Believe it if you can! No gentlemen, he has made a better bargain for himself. Some part of America is undoubtedly to be his reward, and he will trust to accident and management to make himself master of the rest.’³⁷

Similarly, *The Glasgow Journal* reported late in 1778 that ‘the rebel soldiery say publicly, that... [Washington] and the Congress aim at absolute power, and mean to sell their country to the French.’³⁸ A few months later the same newspaper reprinted a letter from Hugh Gaine’s *New-York Gazette*, which reported that the American public had grown ‘more and more disaffected to the Congress’s alliance with a Popish King, and their disgust has greatly increased since the publication of a resolution of that body... which implies the most abject dependence upon... their *great* and *good* ally, Louis the

³⁵ ‘AN AMERICAN’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 20 June 1778.

³⁶ ‘AN AMERICAN FREEMAN’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 22 August 1778.

³⁷ ‘BRITANNICUS’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 2 January 1779.

³⁸ ‘Extract of a letter from New York’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 12 November 1778.

XVith.³⁹ Another report, this time from Philadelphia, expressed anger at news that the new French Ambassador had pushed his “French politics” on Congress by offering the following solution for a diminishing army, ‘Press your people hard with taxes, the more beggars, the more soldiers.’⁴⁰ In May 1779, residents of Kingston read of riot that had taken place in Hampton, Virginia between French and American soldiers. At one point during the riot, a French officer was said to have encouraged his soldiers to continue the fight, proclaiming, ‘*That the King’s marine troops should not be insulted with impunity by his AMERICAN SUBJECTS.*’⁴¹

Stories such as these not only played upon traditional anti-French rhetoric in order to highlight the baseness of the American cause, but they were also intended to renew the loyalty of the rebellious American colonists to Great Britain. After 1778 British popular political culture throughout the Atlantic Empire depicted an alliance that was based upon a self-interested American Congress and an arbitrary and deceitful French nation, both of whom intended to subjugate the American colonists once they had defeated Great Britain. It was then hoped that these stories would serve as wakeup call to the American colonists, reminding them of all the dangerous consequences associated with allying themselves with the Catholic French Empire. At the same time, these reports served to convince loyal Britons that fighting the war in the American colonies was absolutely necessary, for they were defending the rights and freedoms of Britons who had been artfully deceived into fighting an illegitimate war. These reports also suggested that the broader colonial American public was gradually realizing the mistake they had made, which only further strengthened the beliefs of Britons that they were fighting a just and necessary war.

Less is known about the response of Haligonians to the loss at Saratoga and the reported American alliance with France. No Halifax newspaper survives for the period between 1778 and 1780, and I have not been able to locate reports of Halifax affairs in other British newspapers during this critical period. However, based upon a series of orders issued by the Provincial Secretary, Richard Bulkeley, to the Reverend McBourg in the autumn of 1778, it becomes clear that French entry into the war heightened the concerns of the local government and inhabitants. McBourg was licensed to preach to

³⁹ ‘From the New York Gazette’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 1 April 1779.

⁴⁰ ‘Extract of a letter from Philadelphia’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 29 June 1780.

⁴¹ *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 8 May 1779.

the Indians and French Acadians in the province, and in August 1778 Bulkeley informed McBourg that he was not to allow any of them to celebrate 'divine Service or... any participation whatever of the Rights and Ceremonies of the Romish Religion.' Bulkely gave further orders to McBourg that he should punish any person 'who shall Refuse to take the Oaths of Allegiance and Fidelity to His most Gracious Majesty King George the third', and that McBourg should be active in discounting 'to the utmost of your power, every person who shall in any manner... abett this unnatural Rebellion now Subsisting in America.' Another order enjoined McBourg to periodically report to the Secretary's office the 'temper of your several Congregations... taking Care to have a Watchful Eye Over them, that they may not be led astray from their Duty to the King by Idle Rumours which are daily and frequently Spread for that purpose by His Majestys Deluded & Disaffected Subjects.' Finally, Bulkeley ordered McBourg to 'Endeavour to Inculcate proper Sentiments of Morality & Subordination to His Majestys Government, and to remove as much as possible any prejudice they may have imbibed with Respect to His Majestys Loyal Subjects who are of a different Communion with them [so] that they may be form'd & brought into a disposition truly Catholick.'⁴²

Very few French Acadians had actually remained in Nova Scotia after their expulsion in 1755. The few who did often lived in the out settlements, far away from the rule of the Halifax government. Moreover, for all the trouble they had caused the first British immigrants to the colony in the 1730s and 1740s, these French survivors were of little concern to the government by the 1770s. The Executive Council Minutes for the duration of the American war contain surprisingly few references to the Acadians, with the exception of Bulkeley's instruction to McBourg. Yet the American alliance with France had reminded Britons living in Nova Scotia of the trouble the Acadians and the French army had caused during the settling of the colony. And it had brought back the horrible memories of the alliance between the French Acadians and their Mi'kmaq allies and the distress they caused to the British settlements. Thus France's entry into the war had important local implications for residents of Halifax. It illustrated the precarious situation of a colony that had so recently been French, and the potentially tenuous loyalty of some of its inhabitants. Whereas Britons elsewhere in the Empire could readily, and often willingly participate in a language of loyalty steeped in Britain's

⁴² Executive Council Minutes, 27 August 1778, PANS, RG 1, 170: 264-268.

Protestant whig heritage, there were still some British subjects in Nova Scotia that had yet to see themselves as part of this shared past.

For many Britons, the French alliance fundamentally undermined American claims of a superior whig identity. From 1765 on, American colonists had questioned the legitimacy and authority of British imperial rule through traditional forms of British Protestant whig ideology and protest. In the press and on the streets they had attacked the king and government as oppressive, tyrannical and arbitrary, and at times had used traditional anti-Catholic language and symbols illustrate their case. Not only American colonists but also supporters elsewhere in the Empire believed that the various imperial policies of the 1760s and early 1770s were part of a government conspiracy to strip the colonists of the rights and liberties guaranteed to all subjects of Great Britain.

After 1778, however, American claims for their rights and liberties seemed impossible, if not ridiculous, when contended for in alliance with the arbitrary and tyrannical French Empire. Consequently British Atlantic popular political culture began to envision their American opponents as alien and even French rather than British. The consequences of this shift were enormous. Loyal Britons in the Caribbean, across North America and on the British mainland were finally able to construct and identify the rebellious colonists in a language of loyalty familiar to all ranks of people. In so doing, Britons were able to reassert the superiority of their own identity, proclaiming the illegitimacy of the American revolutionary ideology, while also reaffirming the supremacy of a previously contested Protestant whig heritage.

Yet this new popular articulation of loyalty was also more narrowly defined. In order to perceive of their former British brethren in the American colonies as no longer British required an intense and aggressive reassertion of Britain's Protestant whig heritage. Consequently, popular conceptions of Britishness after 1778 were more confrontational and rested on a stricter – though not geographically limited – interpretation of Protestant Britishness. In the prints and on the streets, loyal Britons throughout the Atlantic world expressed a more radical and strident language of loyalty and patriotism. This was especially true on the British mainland, where local and imperial events during the years of 1779 and 1780 combined to illustrate the extent to which the American Revolution had affected the loyalty of ordinary Britons.

No Popery Riots (1779)

On 14 May 1778, less than two months after news of the Franco-American alliance had arrived in London, the British Parliament passed the English Roman Catholic Relief Bill. The bill repealed some of the penal laws that had restricted Catholics living in England. It stipulated that Catholics would still face imprisonment for holding mass, but removed the £100 reward for anyone who reported on them. Furthermore, the law stated that Catholics could teach at schools so long as they took an oath of allegiance to the king and renounced their beliefs in the pope's temporal powers within the British Empire. Catholics were also freed to buy, sell, inherit and bequeath land at any point in the future. The Relief Act applied only to England, but the government planned to pass similar bills for both Ireland and Scotland in the following months.⁴³

Some historians have argued that the passing of this legislation exhibited the increasingly tolerant attitude of the British government.⁴⁴ However, it is just as likely that the government was guided by self-interested motives. The expansion of the war brought about by the Franco-American alliance had stretched British military resources already weakened in the Seven Years' War, requiring the British government to find new ways of recruiting additional soldiers and seamen for service. Even after the success of the recruiting drives in the late months of 1777 and early in 1778, the British army and navy were still well undermanned for a world war against France, the Americans, and ultimately Spain as well. Consequently, Lord North and his supporters in the government sought to remove certain penal restrictions in order to gain access to the population of Catholics, first in England, and then in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands.

The Government had plenty of reasons to believe the large population of Scottish Highlanders would make good soldiers in the war, reasoning that life in the Highlands was at least as hard as life in the military. Furthermore, clan loyalty made it easier to recruit soldiers who were willing to follow their clan leaders into service. In February 1778 Lord Suffolk, the Secretary of State for the Northern Department, ordered a

⁴³ Robert Kent Donovan, 'Voices of Distrust: The Expression of Anti-Catholic Feeling in Scotland, 1778-1781', *The Innes Review*, XXX (1979), 62-63.

⁴⁴ The government's motives for relieving Catholics in England and then Scotland were similar to those that led to the passing of the Quebec Act in 1774. Doll, *Religion, Revolution, and National Identity*.

Minister in Dumfriesshire named John Walker to travel throughout the Highlands in order to gauge the loyalty of the inhabitants. His findings offered a great deal of encouragement to the North ministry, concluding that there was 'good Reason to think, that of the 327,904 Inhabitants contained in the Highlands, all the Men between 18 and 30, might be drawn out to the War... without any essential Prejudice... They quickly make good Soldiers & their natural Ardour is at present, happily and strongly directed against the American Rebellion.'⁴⁵

Loyal Britons in Scotland were outraged to learn that the government intended to introduce a Catholic Relief bill similar to the one passed in England. From the summer of 1778 onward, Scottish newspapers trumpeted the misguided intentions of the government in an effort to encourage public opposition to the bill. The situation was made even more tense by rumours of a possible French invasion, along with reports that the infamous American privateer John Paul Jones was poised to attack the west and east coasts of Scotland and England.⁴⁶ In the autumn of 1778, committees of correspondence and associations, modelled on those created by the American revolutionaries during the 1760s, were formed to coordinate and express the public's outrage. In Glasgow and the city's hinterland, members of trade incorporations, elite merchants, politicians, prominent clergymen, and citizens from all levels of society organized themselves as 'the Eighty-five Private Societies in and about Glasgow'.⁴⁷ Within a matter of months they drew up petitions against the proposed legislation, utilizing the local press in Glasgow and Edinburgh to list their grievances and print their proclamations.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ John Walker to Lord Suffolk, 7 February 1778', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/79-82. Also quoted in Robert Kent Donovan, 'The Military Origins of the Roman Catholic Relief Programme of 1778' *The Historical Journal*, XXVIII (1985), 90.

⁴⁶ The situation was especially tense in Scotland, where there was very little military protection and no local militias. 'Oughton to Lord Suffolk, Edinburgh, 27 April 1778', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/131; 'Oughton to Lord Suffolk, Edinburgh, 19 May 1778', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/135; 'Oughton to George III, Edinburgh, 7 September 1778', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/187; 'W. Hamilton to Lord Viscount Weymouth, Edinburgh, 29 October 1779', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/346-47. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, 204-207.

⁴⁷ Robert Kent Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778-1782* (New York: Garland, 1987), 58; *Transactions of the eighty-five societies, in and about Glasgow: United... to oppose a repeal of the penal statutes against Papists in Scotland* (Glasgow, Printed by William Smith, 1779).

⁴⁸ Many of the public declarations made in opposition to the Catholic Relief Act mentioned France's alliance with the Americans. See *The Glasgow Mercury*, 7 January 1779, 14 January 1779, and 21 January 1779; *The Scots Magazine*, February 1779. Also see 'Supplement to the Glasgow Journal, No. 1957', TNA: PRO SP 54/47/210-211.

The speed, extent and vehemence of the Scottish response were remarkable. From October 1778 to January 1779, over three hundred and fifty petitions from churches, towns, and societies throughout Scotland were published, and in the Glasgow area alone organizers claimed to have collected over eighty-eight thousand signatures.⁴⁹ For many, fears of the proposed legislation centred less on the religious consequences of enabling Catholics to fight for Britain, and more on the broader socio-political threat of Catholic relief in Scotland. *The Scots Magazine* reported that a meeting in Glasgow of ‘many hundreds of the friends of the *Protestant Interest*... declared it as their unanimous opinion, that such a measure would be highly prejudicial to the interest of the Protestant religion in Scotland, dangerous to our constitution civil and religious, a direct violation of the treaty of Union, inconsistent with the King’s honour, and destructive of the peace and security of his best subjects.’⁵⁰ The ‘Paisley Ayr Shire Society’ warned that relief would ‘give the death’s stab to our civil and religious liberties’, while the ‘Society of Weavers in Pollockshaws’ reminded readers that nearly five years earlier the government had made similar allowances for Catholics living in Canada, which had set off a chain of events that ultimately led to the revolted American colonists allying themselves with those ‘under-handed, double-dealing, perfidious Papists, our natural enemies, THE FRENCH.’⁵¹ The actions of the government threatened to undermine the Protestant whig foundations of the loyalty of British subjects, and thus challenged the revived and reinvigorated sense of British identity. France’s involvement in the war had brought about a renewed spirit of loyalty amongst the broader population, encouraging many to profess their patriotic support for the British cause and vow to defend their Protestant nation against a Catholic enemy.

By legislating in favour of Catholics, the King and Parliament thus risked betraying this identity. Their policies harkened back to monarchs who had threatened national security through pro-Catholic concessions, and their actions even led some to wonder if Lord North’s government was embracing the enemy’s Catholic, absolute form of rule in order to continue the war in America. In a letter to Lord Suffolk the fears of the ‘Eighty-five PRIVATE SOCIETIES’ were expressed that such a bill ‘would actually overthrow the *union*, dissolve the *claim of right*, renew the pretences of an abdicated,

⁴⁹ Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, 67.

⁵⁰ *The Scots Magazine*, XLI (1779), 107.

⁵¹ ‘Address of the Paisley Ayr Shire Society’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 28 January 1779; ‘Address of the Society of Weavers in Pollockshaws’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 4 February 1779.

Popish family, to the crown, and break down the legal barriers against that arbitrary religion, so pernicious to the interest of Princes, as well as to the freedom of a brave and virtuous people.⁵² The petition from the heritors and heads of family in the parish of Carluke, printed in *The Glasgow Mercury*, drew upon a familiar rhetoric of loyalty in order to express their deep anger at the actions of the government.

Great Britain hath long been considered as the bulwark of the Protestant cause. The power of her arm, and the terror of her right arm, kept the Popish nations in awe. To annihilate, therefore, or diminish her power, is giving a mortal blow to Protestantism.---It fills our breasts with indignation, to behold a set of men entrusted by their King and country, effectuate in a few years by ***** (we are at a loss to give it a name,) what the united force of the Popish powers have attempted so often in vain.--- They have lost America.---The West Indies in danger.---Trade and manufactures in a ruinous state.---Protestant alliances neglected or despised, while the Popish powers are closely united, and our internal safety thereby rendered very precarious.⁵³

It was the threat of Catholic toleration that brought lower sort Glaswegians on to the streets. Violence ensued in early February 1779, ironically just days after Parliament had withdrawn the bill from consideration. A crowd burnt and destroyed the home of an English Catholic named Robert Baynal, popularly believed to be the site where Catholics met to worship. The crowd continued to wreak havoc in the city until a regiment of the Western Fencibles disbanded the angry citizens.⁵⁴ A similar and even more violent riot occurred at the same time in Edinburgh, where a newly built Catholic church was demolished and local Catholics roughly treated.⁵⁵ The situation could have become much worse had it not been for the efforts of local newspaper printers to assure the public that the government had concluded not to bring the proposed legislation to a vote.

⁵² 'Letter to Lord Suffolk', in *Transactions of the eighty-five societies*, 7.

⁵³ 'Address from the heritors and heads of families in the parish of Carluke, Lanerk County.', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 28 January 1779.

⁵⁴ J. Oughton to Lord Suffolk, Edinburgh 12 February 1779, TNA: PRO SP 54/47/228; *The Glasgow Mercury*, 11 February 1779; *The London Evening-Post*, 16 February 1779. His surname also appears as Bagnal, Bagnall, and Baynall in various publications. See James D. Marwick and Robert Renwick, eds., *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow with Charters and other Documents*, VIII (Glasgow: Scottish Burgh Records Society, 1876-1916), 547-553.

⁵⁵ James Boswell was in Edinburgh during the rioting and attempted to stop the mob from burning the chapel. He says in his diary that one person in the mob cried 'They (papists) bunt us. We'll burn them.' While another shouted, 'Think what they did to our worthy forefathers.' Quoted in Frank Brady, *James Boswell: The Later Years, 1769-1795* (London: Heinemann, 1984), 183. For reports of the riot in Edinburgh, see: *The Glasgow Mercury*, 11 February 1779; *The Newcastle Chronicle Or, Weekly Advertiser*, 6 February 1779; 'London', *The London Evening-Post*, 9 February 1779.

Keppel and Liberty (1779)

While Glaswegians rioted in protest against the proposed Scottish Catholic Relief bill early in 1779, Londoners were busy celebrating the recent acquittal of Admiral Augustus Keppel. Keppel's story had gripped the attention of Britons throughout the Atlantic world, especially Londoners.⁵⁶ The decorated naval officer had refused to participate in the war against the American Patriots because of the sympathy he felt toward their cause, which had won him many friends in the radical whig circles of London politics. However, when news of France's alliance with America reached England in March 1778, Keppel was said to have immediately raised his flag on board the *Prince George* in Portsmouth harbour.⁵⁷ For him, as for so many other loyal Britons, France's entry into the war had revived patriotism in the face of the ancient enemy.

By July of 1778 Keppel and the British fleet had been drawn into a contest with the French at Ushant, the most westerly of the islands off the coast of France. The London press followed the events of the battle in great detail, for Britons desperately hoped that a victory would save their coasts from a potential French invasion. Yet the battle resulted in little more than a draw, with Keppel successfully retaining control of the English Channel. It was during the following months, however, that the situation achieved broader political significance. Sir Hugh Palliser, one of Keppel's senior subordinate officers, remarked publicly that Keppel had mishandled the fleet and thus denied Britain an important victory. Keppel was court-martialled at Portsmouth in January 1779, and stood trial a month later.

The London press seized upon the event as a politically motivated spectacle, for Keppel was identified with the Opposition in Parliament, while his accuser Palliser stood with the increasingly unpopular North ministry. The newspapers covered each day of the trial in great detail as Britons of all rank eagerly anticipated the decision of the judges. 'Our whole thoughts & discourse is Taken up with Admiral Keppel's tryal', reported one resident, and 'the nation at large is employed about nothing else.'⁵⁸ In early February the court determined a verdict of not guilty, setting off wide-spread

⁵⁶ J. H. Broomfield, 'The Keppel-Palliser Affair', *Mariner's Mirror*, XLVII (1961), 195-205; Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 255-269. Rogers examines the popular dimensions of the affair. Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 122-151.

⁵⁷ Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 146.

⁵⁸ '[Crathorn] to John Kendall, 3 February 1779.' Mss. John Kendall, Correspondence and Papers: Vol. 2, Huntington Library.

celebrations in London and in communities throughout Great Britain. One correspondent in *The London Evening-Post* exclaimed that 'Never did the British flag receive so much true honour as it has by the trial of Admiral Keppel.'

Dependent men have asserted independency, and Scotchmen have become Patriots... Never was there a man more nobly assisted than Admiral Keppel has been by Scotch witnesses—never a man more generously tried than Admiral Keppel has been by Scotch Judges. Scotch, English and Irish—Foreigners and natives, have acted with one consent, spoke with one mouth, and dictated with one heart. They have unanimously agreed in their resistance to villainy.⁵⁹

In London, windows were illuminated throughout the city. It was reported that the Mansion House was lit up by upwards of three hundred glass lamps, while the wealthy homes in the west end of town 'were brilliant beyond description.'⁶⁰ The home of Sir George Savile in Leicester Fields was said to have been lit 'as thick as possible from the top of the house to the bottom... with a large bonfire before the door.'⁶¹ When Keppel returned to the city in the following days he was greeted with widespread celebrations and illuminations by a 'great concourse of people', reminiscent of the receptions Wilkes had received on several occasions in the 1760s and early 1770s.⁶²

For Hugh Palliser and his supporters the night was less enjoyable. Crowds marched through the streets, smashing windows and breaking lamps at the homes of supporters of Lord North's government. One of the several effigies of Palliser displayed that night was carried through the streets on a donkey and burnt at the Royal Exchange.⁶³ The windows of his home were smashed by a crowd that included soldiers who despised Palliser's disloyalty.⁶⁴ Before leaving a rioter left a note on his door that expressed the feelings of many of the city's inhabitants: '*This house to be lett.*'⁶⁵ The homes of Palliser's mentor Lord Sandwich, Lord Musgrave and Captain Hood were also attacked by crowds during the night's festivities. The window frames at Lord North's home on Downing Street were knocked out, and an attempt was made to gain entrance before the crowd was stopped by a group of soldiers. Samuel Curwen recognized the political

⁵⁹ *The London Evening-Post*, 13 February 1779. By Foreigners he was most likely referring to the Irish, which says a great deal about their place in the empire at that time.

⁶⁰ *The London Evening-Post*, 13 February 1779.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *The Morning Post, and Daily Advertiser* [London], 17 February 1779. Rogers notes that Keppel was very much the English aristocrat and as such refused to play to the crowd like his perceived counterpart, John Wilkes. Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, 135-136.

⁶³ *The Morning Chronicle, and London Advertiser*, 15 February 1779; *The Gazette and New Daily Advertiser*, 15 February 1779.

⁶⁴ *The London Evening-Post*, 13 February 1779.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

implications of the event when he noted in his diary that ‘Scarce greater rejoicings since the release of the Seven Bishops.’⁶⁶

Historians have shown how similar reports of celebrations occurring throughout England were printed and reprinted in London newspapers to illustrate the broad support for Keppel in particular, and more generally for opposition to the North ministry.⁶⁷ Yet the political significance of this event extended beyond the shores of the British mainland. In Kingston news of Keppel’s acquittal and of the no popery riots in Scotland arrived as residents were bracing for a rumoured French invasion of the island. The French threat encouraged local residents to express their own disdain for the imprudent and un-British behaviour of their government. A local newspaper reported on the riots and celebrations in a positive tone in order to articulate the support of Kingston residents for Keppel’s acquittal. ‘The concourse of people that surrounded the Court-House on the day when Admiral Keppel was so honourably acquitted was immense... The moment the sentence was pronounced, and acclamation of joy burst forth in the court, in the repeated peals, was communicated to the crowd without, and became general through the town... It is impossible to paint the joy that possessed every face. Holiday was expressed in every look, and the hearts of the people were in their eyes.’⁶⁸ In New York City a resident remarked that ‘the Honorable Acquittal of Mr. Keppel has given universal Satisfaction here, and altho’ our Joy has not been demonstrated by the Destruction of Windows or Houses, it may have been equally sincere.’⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 257. The seven bishops of the Church of England had been put on trial in 1688 by the Catholic King James II for seditious libel. The charge was in response to their petition to the king opposing his decision to suspend the penal laws against Catholics in England. Thousands of Londoners assembled in the city during the trial to express their support for the bishops and opposition to an arbitrary Catholic Monarch. All seven bishops were eventually found not guilty, which produced widespread celebration in London and elsewhere in England. Curwen’s comment thus speaks generally about the size of the celebration, and more specifically about how it was also a Protestant whig celebration in opposition to an arbitrary and seemingly pro-Catholic British government.

⁶⁷ *The London Evening-Post*, 16 February 1779. Kathleen Wilson has counted at least seventy-five provincial towns celebrating Keppel’s acquittal. Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 257. There were seventy-six demonstrations in favour of Wilkes between 1767 and 1771. Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics*, 175.

⁶⁸ ‘EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE. LONDON, FEBRUARY 11.’, *The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 8 May 1779. Also see: *The Jamaica Mercury*, 22 May 1779; ‘EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE’, *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 22 May 1779; ; LONDON, MARCH 26.’, *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 26 June 1779.

⁶⁹ ‘Major General James Pattison to Captain Blomfield, New York City, 3 May 1779’, in ‘Official Letters of Major General James Pattison, Commandant of Artillery’ in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society, for the Year 1875*. (New York: Printed for the New-York Historical Society, 1876), 51; Also see: ‘DUBLIN, February 27.’, *The Royal American Gazette*, 27 May 1779.

A writer in *The London Evening-Post* applauded the spirit of Britons who were willing 'to shew, at the hazard of their lives, their resentment to the persons of the Ministry; for their weak, odious, and oppressive measures, hath given much offence and uneasiness to a certain Personage.'⁷⁰ The writer appealed to the residents of London to continue expressing their views against a government that had led them astray.

This spirit of the people without doors, will do more towards rectifying the measures of the Ministry and restoring the constitution of the kingdom, than all the opposition within doors. Whilst Englishmen shall possess this spirit, it will not be in the power of the most despotic men to enslave them. This spirit cannot fail of striking terror into the breasts of those, who have wronged the nation. It will command justice. When corrupting Ministers shall bribe the representatives of the people to betray their rights and liberties, this spirit will do them justice, and set all things right again. We do not mean, nor would be understood, to encourage the people to exert a spirit contrary to the laws of their country, but in defence and support of them, and of the constitution of England. This spirit should ever be exerted in supporting good men, and in bringing the bad to punishment, for that is *the spirit of our laws*.⁷¹

For ordinary Britons, both in London and elsewhere in the empire, Keppel's victory carried enormous political consequences that were intimately connected with the American war. Britons had grown increasingly weary of the government's inability to quell the rebellion in the American colonies. Frustration had increased with the British loss at Saratoga and French entry into the war. Popular political culture in London and throughout the Empire had responded with a renewed sense of Britishness in the face of a more challenging war, yet the government had not appeared to exhibit the same determination as the British people.⁷² Not only had the government failed to defend Britain in a war against their long-time enemy, but in the eyes of many Britons the government had shown an increasingly un-British attitude in their policy-making. It is surely no coincidence that the same issue of *The London Evening-Post* that carried news of Keppel's acquittal also reprinted reports of loyal Britons rioting in the streets of Glasgow and Edinburgh.⁷³ The riots against the government, in London and in other British communities, articulated very similar defiant celebrations of Britishness to those

⁷⁰ *The London Evening-Post*, 16 February 1779.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Wilson has argued that the Keppel riots revealed strong pro-American sentiment in England. Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 255-269. Also see: Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 146-148. Rogers, however, correctly points out that there were only a small minority of protests that spoke in favour of the Americans and in several instances the rioters had actually called for 'a happy and speeding reconciliation with the Americans' but a 'severe drubbing to France.' *The London Evening-Post*, 23 February 1779. Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics*, 143-146.

⁷³ 'Extract of a letter from Glasgow, dated Feb. 9 eight at night.', *The London Evening-Post*, 16 February 1779

articulated by the Scottish in Glasgow and Edinburgh. In both cases, the decisions of ministers had provided proof of the government's inability to live up to the very Protestant whig ideals that defined Britain. In March of 1779, a month after the Keppel riots in London, *The London Evening-Post* reprinted a report from Belfast of a mock funeral procession for Sir Hugh Palliser. Included with the report was 'The last speech, confession, and dying words' for the man who had come to represent the antithesis of Protestant Britishness. 'I acknowledge the justice of my sentence, he reportedly stated, 'and as *Popery* is now a fashionable religion at Court, I die an unworthy member of the church of *Rome*, hoping for the mercy of Almighty God, and the prayers of all charitable christians.'⁷⁴

The Gordon Riots (1780)

Military failures and government policies made Britons increasingly concerned that the government was unable to wage a successful war against the confederated enemy, which now included the Catholic Spanish Empire as well. In each of these five communities, the alliance of Spain with France and the American colonies may have renewed the loyal convictions of Protestant British subjects, but it also expanded the disruptive empire-wide war. Throughout the Atlantic world Britons were faced with having to oppose the combined French, Spanish and American forces, while in London the government appeared to be weakening their cause. Of the five communities in this study, only the residents of Halifax were free from threats of invasion during 1779 and 1780, though their shipping was continually harassed by American privateers.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, events such as the no popery riots in Scotland and the Keppel and Liberty riots in London and throughout England, served to both refine and strengthen popular conceptions of

⁷⁴ *The London Evening-Post*, 9 March 1779.

⁷⁵ Martial law was declared in Kingston in the autumn of 1779 due to reports that the Comte d'Estaing and his French fleet were preparing an invasion of the island. 'EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCE.', *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, Saturday, 7 August 1779; 'KINGSTON, AUGUST 14.', *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 14 August 1779; *The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, 21 August 1779; 'St. JAGO DE LA VEGA, AUGUST 19.', *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 21 August 1779; 'KINGSTON, AUGUST 21.', *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 21 August 1779; 'KINGSTON, SEPTEMBER 4. *Extract of a letter from a person in high office to a gentleman in this island*', *Supplement to The Jamaica Mercury*, 4 September 1779. Also see: O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 185-210. During the winter months of 1779 and 1780 in New York City the temperatures dropped so low that the river froze over, causing concern that that the French and Americans would mount a ground attack on the city. 'NEW-YORK, February 1.', *The Royal American Gazette*, 1 February 1780; 'NEW-YORK, February 9.', *The Royal American Gazette*, 15 February 1780; *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, 14 February 1780. Also see: 'Extract of a letter from Major General Pattison to Lord George Germain, dated New-York, February 22, 1780.', *The London Chronicle*, Saturday, 2 May 1780; *The St. James's Chronicle; Or, British Evening-Post*, 2 May 1780.

Protestant British loyalty and patriotism while heightening the public's concern about a misguided and arbitrary British government.

In London the situation was especially tense during the autumn of 1779 and into 1780. By then the increased threats of a French invasion heightened the growing discontent of Londoners at the inability of their government to appropriately wage the war and defeat the Americans' French and Spanish allies. Additionally, the rising costs of a war now being fought against a confederated enemy led to calls for a reform of Parliamentary expenditure and voting rights in the early months of 1780. London newspapers carried petitions and addresses from across England that articulated discontent with a government no longer operating in the interests of the British people.⁷⁶ In a January issue of *The London Chronicle* a petition from the town of Huntingdon illustrated the destructive consequences of the long and arduous war against the American colonists and their allies. 'This nation hath been engaged for several years in a most expensive and unfortunate war', declared the petitioners 'that many of our valuable Colonies having actually declared themselves independent, have formed a strict confederacy with France and Spain, the dangerous and inveterate enemies of Great Britain, that the consequence of those combined misfortunes hath been a large addition in the national debt, a heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline in trade, manufactures, and land-rents of the kingdom.'⁷⁷ This was one of several petitions from communities throughout England that called for Parliamentary reform and attacked the government as inept and corrupt. It was within this unstable domestic atmosphere that Lord George Gordon and his Protestant Association began to gather momentum for the repeal of the English Catholic Relief Act of 1778.

Emboldened by the success of the Scottish protesters, a Protestant Association was formed in England in February 1779, and by the following November members had chosen Lord Gordon as their president. In the winter of 1779 and 1780 Gordon and the Protestant Association began petitioning parliament for the repeal of the pro-Catholic legislation, and Gordon held meetings both with Lord North and George III.

⁷⁶ 'LONDON.', *The London Chronicle*, 8 January 1780; *The London Chronicle*, 22 January 1780; *The London Chronicle*, 3 February 1780; 'LONDON.', *The London Chronicle*, 1 April 1780; *The London Evening-Post*, 9 May 1780. For more on the county association movement in 1780, see: Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary Organization, 1769-1793* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 164-178.

⁷⁷ *The London Chronicle*, Saturday, 25 January 1780.

In various petitions and addresses, often printed in both newspapers and pamphlets, the Protestant Association drew upon a language and rhetoric of loyalty that reaffirmed Britain's Protestant Whig heritage and transcended regional and ethnic diversities. "AN APPEAL FROM THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN" announced that "This Association is not formed to promote the views of party, or to embarrass the measures of government at this important crisis. It consists of Protestants, who will yield to none of their fellow-subjects, in loyalty to His Majesty's person, or in zealous attachment to our happy constitution."⁷⁸ Similarly, London newspapers carried an address from the Association that asked all "TRUE BRITONS" to unite against Popery. 'If we unite, like one man, for the Honour of God, and the Liberties of the People, we may yet experience the blessing of Divine Providence on this Kingdom, and love and confidence may again be restored amongst Brethren.'⁷⁹

On 29 May 1780 the Protestant Association held a meeting at Coachmaker's Hall in London that was attended by some two thousands supporters. In a passionate address to the crowded audience, Gordon declared that the only way to stop the dreadful consequences of the spread of Popery in England was 'by going in a firm, manly and resolute manner to the House, and there shew their representatives that they were determined to preserve their religious freedom with their lives.' Thereafter he moved 'That the whole body of the Protestant Association do attend in St. George's Fields on Friday next to accompany his Lordship to the House of Commons on the delivery of the Protestant Petition.'⁸⁰

On the following Friday, 2 June 1780 Lord George Gordon appeared at the head of a crowd of between forty to sixty thousand loyal Britons in London's St. George's Field.⁸¹ The crowd of men, women and children, rich and poor alike, was promptly organized into four battalions: the first was comprised of those from Westminster, the second of

⁷⁸ "AN APPEAL FROM THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION TO THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN" (London, 1779).

⁷⁹ 'ADDRESS OF THE PROTESTANT ASSOCIATION', *The London Evening-Post*, 11 May 1780.

⁸⁰ Quoted in J. Paul de Castro, *The Gordon Riots* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 24-25.

⁸¹ St. George's Field, located on the southern edge of Southwark, was notorious for its' bawdy houses and riotous residents and was a popular place for public demonstrations in seventeenth and eighteenth-century London. See, Henry B. Wheatley, *London Past and Present: Its History, Associations, and Traditions* (London: John Murray, 1891), II, 99-100. Castro reports that 40,000 Londoners assembled in St. George's Field on June 2, while Rudé puts the number more liberally at 60,000. Needless to say, either number far exceeds any previous public gathering in the city. Castro, *The Gordon Riots*, 28-29; Rudé, *Paris and London*, 270.

residents of the city of London, the third of people from Middlesex, and the last of Scots, presumably who were resident in or around London. The presence of the Scots illustrated the extent to which the cause transcended traditional regional identities. Along with their English brethren these Scots opposed legislation deemed inimical to the interests of all Protestant British subjects.⁸² Gordon had planned for the crowd to accompany him to Parliament, where he intended to present a petition signed by 20,000 Britons in favour of repeal of the legislation.⁸³ One newspaper reported that the crowd 'seemed determined to stand up for their religious rights against the introduction of Popery, and resolved to defend themselves at all hazards from the pernicious effects of a religion subversive of all liberty, inimical to all purity of morals, begotten by fraud on superstition, and teeming with absurdity, persecution, and the most diabolical cruelty.'⁸⁴

The protest remained peaceful while Gordon met with government officials. However, when he reappeared to inform the crowd that Parliament had refused to review the petition until the following Tuesday, the peaceable demonstration broke out into six days of violent rioting throughout the city. Obvious symbols of Catholic influence were targeted by the riotous mobs: Catholic chapels in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Moorfields, Charles Square and along Virginia Street were ransacked and then burnt to the ground.⁸⁵ Prominent Catholics were abused and assaulted by angry mobs, while crowds paraded through the streets with cheers of 'No Popery!'⁸⁶

However, as the riots progressed the crowds focused less on symbols of Catholicism and more on symbols of political and economic authority. Both Tory and Whig Members of Parliament who attempted to approach the House of Commons were torn from their coaches and assaulted by mobs. The homes of many prominent politicians

⁸² Colley, *Britons*, 23.

⁸³ Rudé, *Paris and London*, 270

⁸⁴ *The London Evening-Post*, 3 June 1780.

⁸⁵ My account of the rioting is taken from several newspapers: *The London Evening-Post*, 6 June 1780; *The London Evening-Post*, 8 June 1780; *The London Evening-Post*, 10 June 1780; *The Morning Chronicle*, and *London Advertiser*, 5 June 1780. The secondary literature on the riots is dated. For the most thorough account, see: Castro, *The Gordon Riots*; Christopher Hibbert, *King Mob: The Story of Lord George Gordon and the Riots of 1780* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1958). Rudé examines the social composition of the crowd: George Rudé, 'The Gordon Riots: A Study of the Rioters and their Victims' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, VI (1956), 93-114. Also see: Nicholas Rogers, 'Crowd and People in the Gordon Riots', in Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 39-55; Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels, and Revolts* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2003), 120-141.

⁸⁶ 'Extract of a letter from Edinburgh, dated Feb. 5', *The London Evening-Post*, 9 February 1779; *The Glasgow Mercury*, 11 February 1779; *The Newcastle Chronicle Or, Weekly Advertiser*, 6 February 1779.

and leading government officials were attacked and ransacked by drunken crowds and violent rioters. Prisons were broken open, prisoners released, and the buildings then destroyed.⁸⁷ The gates of Blackfriars Bridge were torn open, the toll houses destroyed, and the money poured into the river.⁸⁸ Many of the papers in the Sessions House and the Old Bailey were destroyed, but the buildings were saved. An attempt was even made to storm the Bank of England, the very symbol of economic power and stability in the city, but British soldiers led by John Wilkes were able to hold them back. Fire consumed buildings throughout the city as the mob paraded the streets, taking money and goods from people as they pleased. 'I remember the Excise and the Gin Act and the rebels at Derby and Wilkes' interlude and the French at Plymouth, or I should have a very bad memory', wrote Horatio Walpole, 'but I never till last night [June 7, at the height of the rioting] saw London and Southwark in flames!'⁸⁹

Broadsides and miscellaneous ephemera distributed throughout the city during the rioting illustrated the larger ideological significance of this event for popular conceptions of British loyalty and patriotism. A hastily-written broadside found lying on one of the city streets proclaimed on one side of the page that 'Georg 3^d is a Roman Catholick. No popery Down with it. Dethrone him or else he will Masacree you all. If your king's Not Dethron'd he will be your Utter ruin for he is a true Roman Catholick - it is - he should lose his Head.' On the opposite side of the page the writer exclaimed 'Lord George Gordon for Ever. No popery. Down with all them, that is. tho he is in the Tower - he will make them Rue. for a army of Scottch is Coming. 100,000 Men in arms. for Georg will Lose his Crown.'⁹⁰ Another printed sheet that was 'distributed in great Numbers every where' read 'Damn y^e King and y^e Pope' on one side, and 'Down with y^e King, Down with Popery. NB: No Popery' on the other side.⁹¹ A soldier by the name of George Peppit was arrested for proclaiming that 'there was no King, no

⁸⁷ One of the prisons was spared when the keeper posted a sign on the front gate that read: 'This is to Acquaint the Publick that the several Prisoners confind here for Suppos'd Riot are discharg'd by Order of the Lord Mayor & Alderman this day.' 'Correspondence and papers relating to [the Gordon] Riots in London, 1780', TNA: PRO PC 1/3097: 9 June 1780.

⁸⁸ The bridge was the quickest way into central London from the poor districts on the south-side of the river, yet many of the residents could not afford to pay the toll and thus were forced to make the longer trip across the London bridge.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Rude, *London and Paris*, 268.

⁹⁰ 'letter from Jn^o Mansel, L' Coll, 3rd Dragoon, Artillery Ground, Monday Morn^g June 12, 1780 to?', TNA: PRO WO 34/103/367-368.

⁹¹ 'Letter from Richard Worsley, Hyde Park Camp June 11, 1780', TNA: PRO WO 34/103/325-326.

Government, every man for himself.’⁹² When all was said and done, five days of violent rioting had resulted in the death of at least four hundred and fifty Londoners and two hundred and ten soldiers, while numerous shops, homes, government offices, chapels and prisons lay in ashes.⁹³

Even after the disastrous consequences of five days of rioting in London, Lord Gordon and the cause that he championed continued to be held in high regard by many Scots. In early February 1782 ‘The PRAESES of the 85 SOCIETIES in GLASGOW, and its Neighbourhood, and a Numerous and Respectable Company of the Friends of LORD GEORGE, and zealous Well-wishers to the *Protestant Cause*’ assembled at the Saracen’s Head Inn in Glasgow to celebrate the anniversary of Gordon’s acquittal of charges of treason. Toasts given throughout the evening not only honoured ‘The Protestant Interest’ and ‘LORD GEORGE GORDON’, but also ‘The Protestant Association at London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and all the Friends and Well-wishers to the Protestant Interest’, thereby linking the loyalty of Glaswegians with British subjects living in the two most important political centres on the British mainland.⁹⁴ Months later, during an annual celebration of the King’s birthday, *The Glasgow Journal* reported that, ‘a number of gentlemen well affected to government, and zealous wishers to the Protestant interest, assembled at the house of Mr. JOHN PATERSON, Praeses of the different Societies, in order to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of our most Gracious Sovereign.’ Besides the usual toasts to the King and Queen, those present also gave honour to ‘Lord George Gordon, [and] the Praeses of the 85 Societies.’⁹⁵

Elsewhere in the Empire, the Gordon Riots were less well received. Residents of both Kingston and Jamaica read of the rioting in London in great detail in their local newspapers.⁹⁶ Day by day accounts of the event filled several columns, and sometimes pages, illustrating the magnitude of the event. Unlike Glasgow, however, residents of Kingston and New York City were less inclined to support Lord George Gordon and

⁹² ‘Correspondence and papers relating to [the Gordon] Riots in London, 1780’, TNA: PRO PC 1/3097: 16 June 1780.

⁹³ Rudé, ‘The Gordon Riots’, 99, 105.

⁹⁴ ‘SARACEN’S-HEAD INN, 6th Feb. 1781. Ten o’Clock at Night’, *The Glasgow Journal*, 6 February 1782.

⁹⁵ ‘GLASGOW.’, *Glasgow Journal*, 6 June 1782.

⁹⁶ For Kingston, see: *The Royal Gazette*, 12 August 1780; *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, 12 August 1780; *The Royal Gazette*, 26 August 1780. For New York City, see: *Rivington’s Gazette*, 23 August 1780; ‘Letter from London, dated June 7.’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 26 August 1780; *The Royal American Gazette*, 31 August 1780; ‘New-York, September 6.’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 6 September 1780; *The Royal American Gazette*, 14 September 1780.

his Protestant Association. Such destructive and violent protests appeared dangerous in the extreme to Jamaicans and New Yorkers. In Kingston reports surfaced that similar uprisings were being planned for other parts of the Empire. However, a correspondent for *The Royal Gazette* was quick to reassure residents that these rumours of uprisings 'in different parts of the kingdom, on the idea that the Protestant Religion was in danger' were untrue.⁹⁷

In fact, it was later reported that residents of communities throughout the Empire were opposed to the violent riots in London. One correspondent reported that 'addresses were sent to his Majesty from all parts of his dominions, expressing the most loyal and firm attachment to his person, family, and government, and abhorring the riots and disturbances which then unhappily prevailed.'⁹⁸ Another account attempted to refute reports that the Scots participated in the lawless rioting, despite being avid supporters of Gordon's Protestant cause. One correspondent remarked 'that the Scots division (about 800) of the associators... were well dressed, decent looking people.' When these respectable Scots perceived 'the mob beginning to maltreat and obstruct the Members of both Houses from getting into the House... [the Scots] marched off in a body, and soon after dispersed.'⁹⁹

In New York City newspaper reports placed the blame for the London riots on non-Britons in the city, in order to convince readers that true British subjects could do no such a thing. Another report suggested that 'it is the Dissenters and Methodists who are secretly blowing up the flame.' Another characterized Gordon as a crazed fanatic 'at the head of his army of assassins and incendiaries.'¹⁰⁰ A letter from a Londoner reported that once the military arrived in the city 'all this commotion of French, Americans, Spaniards and Puritans was subdued in two days.'¹⁰¹ Reports such as these helped New York City's Loyalist community make sense of a rather troubling situation. Such aggressive and violent attacks against authority would have resonated in community of inhabitants who had experience similar situations over the previous decade, but who associated the British government with defending them against such

⁹⁷ *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, 12 August 1780.

⁹⁸ *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, 2 September 1780.

⁹⁹ 'London, June 20, 1780.', *The Royal Gazette*, 16 September 1780.

¹⁰⁰ 'New-York, September 6.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 6 September 1780.

¹⁰¹ 'Extract of a letter from a gentleman in London to his friend in New-York, dated July 5, 1780.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 6 September 6, 1780.

attacks. As such, it was vitally important that New Yorkers were able to define the rioters not as true loyal British subjects but as traitors.

Conclusion

The Franco-American alliance of 1778 transformed the popular political culture of loyalty and patriotism in the British Atlantic world. The alliance encouraged a diverse and divided British Atlantic public to unite in a shared language of loyalty that proclaimed the supremacy of Britain's Protestant whig heritage. It also allowed Britons to redefine their American foes as no longer being fellow Britons. The alliance revealed the hypocrisy and illegitimacy of the American revolutionary cause, which was supposedly based on a superior articulation and defence of whig identity, but was now allied with an oppressive and arbitrary French Empire. Britons throughout the Atlantic world could finally make sense of a war and an enemy who had been so difficult to define.

Yet this new Atlantic-wide articulation of Britishness was now more rigidly defined. In order to undermine the American revolutionary cause, Britons were required to develop and defend a more precise definition of Britishness. The very fact that the Americans could unite with the Catholic French seemed a theoretical impossibility to most Britons. After all, the Americans were fellow Protestants and had, until the alliance of 1778, also professed a whig identity that defined itself in opposition to the Catholic French. On the road to the Revolution the Patriots had regularly taken advantage of a rich vocabulary of anti-Catholic language and symbols to denounce the actions of the king and British government, and to assert their claim to a true British whig identity. Consequently, after 1778 loyal Britons were required to reclaim ideological ownership of a definitive whig identity that was rooted in British Protestantism. In print and on the streets, Britons rallied behind this new and defiant definition of Britishness in an effort to proclaim their ideological superiority over the American enemy and their new allies.

In October 1781, Lord Cornwallis and his British army were defeated at Yorktown by the combined French and American forces. Their surrender was only the second defeat of an entire British army, and marked a severe if not fatal blow to the already beleaguered hopes for a British victory in the American war. *The Glasgow Mercury*

reported that ‘The spirit of the nation is become an unfashionable expression.’¹⁰² Myles Cooper, formerly an Anglican minister in Connecticut, wrote from England that ‘I never felt such anguish of Mind upon any Occasion: And I am totally at a Loss what the Fate of all my Friends on your side of the water is likely to be. What measures are now to be adopted by this Country, it is utterly unknown to me... I fear y^e Cause is lost, I am tormented and distracted... I know not what Man can do for you.’¹⁰³ In London, John Wilkes and the city’s Livery petitioned the king to end hostilities in the American colonies, remarking quite frankly that ‘Your Majesty’s fleets have lost their wonted superiority. Your armies have been captured. Your dominions have been lost.’¹⁰⁴ While in Kingston, *The Cornwall Chronicle* offered a rather prophetic warning to Jamaicans upon the news of Yorktown. ‘The following intelligence is of too serious a nature’, the correspondent warned, ‘not to demand our utmost attention, and put us upon our guard against any sudden attack or invasion; for, after what has befallen the noble General... we may naturally conclude [that] we may have a formidable visit.’¹⁰⁵

In the years that followed Britons had to come to terms with the loss of the thirteen American colonies. Britons had to recognize the independence of a new nation that had formerly been part of their own. More importantly, Britons had to deal with defeat. The American war had begun on the heels of a monumental victory over the French in the Seven Years’ War. Just two decades later Britons found themselves having to accept defeat by their former countrymen in alliance with Britain’s enemies. Making sense of this loss had important implications for popular conceptions of loyalty in the British Atlantic world.

Yet we should not forget that while the loss at Yorktown marked the beginning of the end of the war in America, it also marked the opening of the war in the Caribbean. After 1781 Britain faced battle against the French in an effort to retain valuable sugar colonies in the Caribbean. The conflict came to a climax in the Battle of the Saintes near Jamaica in the spring of 1782. Facing numerically superior French forces under the Comte de Grasse, British Admiral George Rodney successfully defended Jamaica

¹⁰² ‘From the LONDON PAPERS, November 30.’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 6 December 1781.

¹⁰³ ‘Miles Cooper to Peter Stuyvesant, 4 December 1781’, NYHS, Stuyvesant-Rutherford Papers, Box 10, Folder 1.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots*, 160.

¹⁰⁵ ‘From the *Gazette of St. Jago De La Vega*, 6 December 1781’, *Supplement to the Cornwall-Chronicle*, 15 December 1781.

from French invasion and thus saved Britain's Atlantic Empire from complete ruin. The outcome of this battle proved vital in enabling Britons to come to terms with the loss of the American colonies. Rodney's victory over Britain's long-time enemy allowed Britons to reinvent the meaning of the American Revolution. By 1783 many Britons believed that the real threat to the supremacy of Britain's Protestant whig identity was not the Americans, but rather the French. The Americans were all but forgotten, while the French had just been defeated in the Battle of the Saintes.

Conclusion

Loyalty, Britishness and American Independence

Accepting Defeat, 1781-1783

After the Battle of Yorktown, Britons living in Kingston, New York City, Glasgow, Halifax and London, and throughout the British mainland and Empire were forced to confront the loss of the thirteen mainland American colonies. Cornwallis's defeat was the final blow for a government and a nation who had grown increasingly weary of a long, expensive and unsuccessful war against the American Patriots and their French, Spanish, and now Dutch allies. Yet, to admit defeat by their former colonists and fellow Britons was a difficult task for the British public. Most Britons had initially been confident that the colonial rebellion would last only a few months before the American colonists would either come to their senses, or be defeated by the superior British army. By 1781 that clearly was not the case. The war had evolved from a small colonial conflict into a full-scale European war, and Britons were fighting in battles throughout the Atlantic world and beyond. American alliances with Britain's European rivals had made it all but impossible for Britain to regain sovereignty over the rebellious American colonies after Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown.

Paradoxically, however, the American alliance with France and Spain that had helped them defeat Britain also made it somewhat easier for Britons to accept the loss of the thirteen American colonies. Continental European involvement in the war made it possible for British popular political culture throughout the Atlantic world to recast the ideological origins of the American Revolution and to thus reinvent the American enemy. For Britons throughout the Atlantic world, the Franco-American alliance illustrated the hypocrisy of a revolution that was supposedly based upon a radical whig interpretation of individual rights and liberties, but was now supported by the oppressive and tyrannical Catholic French Empire. Britons found it increasingly troublesome that fellow Britons in the thirteen American colonies, reared in a language of loyalty defined by shared Protestant whig values and traditions, could ally themselves with the avowed enemy of these values and traditions. In the later years of the War for Independence, most loyal Britons no longer regarded the American revolutionaries as compatriots, instead regarding them as foreign and 'other'. In other words, the Americans were no longer British.

This process of redefining the enemy also allowed Britons to reassert the superiority of their own Protestant whig identity. Beginning in the early 1760s, American Patriots had accused successive British governments, and finally the monarch himself, of undermining and betraying the British constitution, and thus eroding the rights and liberties of British subjects throughout the Empire. Given that Britons were committed to defending the constitution and their own rights and liberties under it, the Patriots' critique had been a troubling one, forcing them to question who best represented liberty, rights and justice. Yet when France allied themselves with the Americans in the spring of 1778, Britons were finally able to discount the legitimacy of the American revolutionary cause and reassert – often vigorously – the superiority of their own patriotic definition of Britishness. Loyal Britons throughout the Atlantic world articulated a renewed sense of shared identity that was redefined against the increasingly un-British character of both the Americans and the American revolutionary cause. Consequently, the Franco-American alliance made it easier for Britons to accept the loss of the American colonies, for many Britons believed that the Americans were no longer capable of being British.

In the final years of the war, Britons continued to utilize the Franco-American alliance to highlight the failure of the newly formed American government to live up to the ideals of which their revolution and republic were ostensibly based. Reports circulated throughout the Atlantic world of an American government and people who had succumb to the tyranny and oppressiveness of the Catholic French Empire. In a 13 March 1782 issue of *Rivington's Gazette* a correspondent observed that 'Victory to the French will be slavery to the Americans, and the more rapid the Gallic successes, the sooner will the power of the Congress be at an end. This is what many of the members of that body are already aware of; but they have proceeded too far to retract.'¹ A letter printed in a Halifax newspaper reported that 'the French alliance, which... was to have *emancipated* the colonies, is likely to bring them into fresh difficulties, and it is highly probable we shall have them very soon at the foot of the British throne, petitioning to be emancipated from the tyranny of Congress, and the wooden shoed slavery of France.' The writer continued to question the motives of the French in allying themselves with the American colonists. 'Altho' they mean to distress this country [Great Britain], the French have no more intention to establish American independence,

¹ *Rivington's Gazette*, 13 March 1782.

than they had to place the Pretender on the British Throne.² Establishing a connection between the American Revolution and the Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745 held enormous political significance. The connection enabled Britons to define the American Patriots and their cause as not only illegitimate, but a direct threat to very constitution that ensured and protected British rights and liberties. Furthermore, it revealed that the French had not allied themselves with the Americans out of support for their independence, but rather saw it as an opportunity to bring ruin to Great Britain. Consequently, as Britons were beginning to redefine the American Revolution as a war against France, stories such as these showed that the French were also using the American Revolution to fight a war against Great Britain.

A letter printed in *The Glasgow Journal* shortly after news had arrived of the Peace Treaty in 1783, played upon these popular perceptions in order to reassure the British public of the superiority of their own Protestant whig heritage. 'The Americans, desirous of consecrating their gratitude to our Monarch', the allegedly French writer proclaimed, 'propose to erect in the principal square of Philadelphia, facing the palace of the Congress, a statue of brass, with this inscription in French, "A Louis XVI. Libérateur des Américains."³ For Glasgow's proud Protestant community, whose inhabitants had toasted Lord Gordon and the Protestant Association and adorned their city's main thoroughfare with a statue of William of Orange, it was all but inconceivable that Americans would countenance the erection of a memorial to the French Catholic king.

Even George Washington, whose quintessential English gentleman's demeanour had earned him the respect of British newspaper writers and correspondents throughout the Empire, came under attack in the later years of the conflict for his growing attachment to the French.⁴ A writer in *Rivington's Gazette* reported that Washington had been ordered by King Louis XVI to pay his Continental Army in French money 'so that every American soldier of this alliance is now become in every sense a *Frenchman*.' The fact that Washington, rather than Congress was now in charge of paying his army also meant that the Americans 'will have no other choice to make of a Ruler, as their

² 'LONDON, May 15.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 16 October 1781.

³ *The Glasgow Journal*, 6 March 1783.

⁴ For more on the dilemma Washington presented for pro-British newspaper printers, see: Troy O. Bickham, 'Sympathizing with Sedition? George Washington, the British Press, and British Attitudes during the American War of Independence', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, LIX (2002), 101-122.

Congress's command and influence now exists in *the Frenchified* Mr. Washington alone.⁵ To recast Washington as a Frenchman illustrated the lengths to which the Franco-American alliance had redefined how loyal Britons understood and articulated their opposition to the American revolutionary cause.

The pervasiveness of this redefinition of both the war and the enemy enabled Britons throughout the Atlantic world to understand and articulate their opposition to the American Revolution in ways that also re-established the superiority of their Protestant whig heritage. In February 1783 a group of recently arrived Loyalists in Kingston addressed Prince William Henry, George III's second son, who had recently arrived in the city as part of his tour of duty with the British navy. The Loyalists were most likely from Charlestown, South Carolina, which had been evacuated by the British in December 1782.⁶ The address is conventional for the most part, with the group professing their loyal attachment to 'our most gracious Sovereign, and the Laws and Constitution of our Country.' Yet the Loyalists also took the opportunity to articulate a new history of the American Revolution, one that eliminated the radical republican origins of the revolutionary cause in favour of a new, decidedly less whiggish interpretation. 'To the perfidious machinations of French Policy, we impute our misfortunes', they proclaimed, 'but we trust that the supreme disposer of all events will not suffer them to prevail. – The former insidious attempts of France, to divide and seperate [sic] the British Empire ought to have guarded our Country men from so unnatural an Alliance – The present we hope will in the end prove equally vain and disgraceful.'⁷

A majority of the men who signed this address had likely resided in the thirteen American colonies throughout much of the revolutionary era. As such, they had not only observed, but had participated – willingly or otherwise – in the long process by which many Americans cast aside their attachment to the King and Empire in favour of a new patriotic loyalty to the United States. They had witnessed numerous riots and

⁵ *Rivington's Gazette*, 7 November 1781.

⁶ Seibert estimates that 1,200 white inhabitants and their 2,600 slaves emigrated to Jamaica from Charlestown. Wilbur H. Siebert, 'Loyalist Exodus to the West Indies: Legacy of the Revolution', in Charles W. Toth, ed., *The American Revolution and the West Indies* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1975), 212.

⁷ 'Address of the Loyalists from North America to his R. H. Prince William Henry presented at their request by A. Inglis- 27th February 1783 [in Kingston Jamaica]', TNA: PRO CO 5/43/453-454. The address was also printed in: 'HALIFAX, April 29.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 29 April 1783.

protests against imperial rule and authority, and they or their neighbours and friends were required to sign associations and answer to committees regarding their support for or opposition to the American cause. Many would have witnessed, and all would have read about the cries of 'No taxation without representation.' These Loyalists had seen with what eagerness the American Patriots read Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* and radical republican construction of whig ideals as the foundation of a rebellion against Great Britain. Yet despite these experiences, despite everything they had witnessed from 1765 to the early months of 1778, these Loyalists' understanding of the Revolution had subsequently been transformed. Their speech to the Prince exemplified with what power and persuasiveness British popular political culture had so successfully redefined both the American Revolution and the American Patriot community who supported it. For them, and for many other Britons throughout the Atlantic world, French participation in the conflict altered the ways in which they understood the war, the revolution and their own place within the British Empire.

The popular political culture of the British Atlantic world also took advantage of the chaotic situation in the new American nation after years of fighting in order to illustrate the illegitimacy of the revolutionary cause. Expressing apparent resentment of the colonies' earlier opposition to British taxation, British newspapers mistakenly reported that the new and unstable American government had resorted to excessive taxation to pay for their massive war debt. A correspondent for *The Glasgow Magazine and Review* wrote that 'The government of America have imposed such taxes on the people, as will enable Congress... to keep the whole country in the most perfect subordination and quietness.'⁸ The same issue carried a story supposedly taken from the *Virginia Gazette* that took the alleged tax crisis a step further, reporting that 'wherein several estates are held forth for public sale, for the payment of taxes levied upon them, and among which, however singular it may appear, is one of George Washington's, containing 3087 acres, which had been seized for eight pounds five shillings and threepence.'⁹

In Kingston residents read that in an effort to raise £150,000 to pay off wartime debts, the state of New Jersey had laid a tax on nearly every trade and every marketable good, including 'merchants, fisheries, saw mills, grist mills, furnaces, forges, rolling and slit

⁸ "MONTHLY CHRONICLE", *The Glasgow Magazine and Review; Or Universal Miscellany* (October 1783), 52.

⁹ *The Glasgow Magazine and Review; Or Universal Miscellany* (October 1783), 53.

mills, oil mills, stamping mills, still and breweries, tavern keepers, tan yards, ferries, all small vessels, every single man, slaves, carriages of all sorts, clocks and watches of all sorts, plate, stallions, and all kinds of horses, horned cattle, lands improved or unimproved, hogs, &c. &c.’¹⁰ Another report illustrated the incapability of the new American government to successfully enforce and collect taxes passed by their state legislatures. ‘Forty respectable inhabitants of the colony of Connecticut [were] confined in Hartford goal,’ for refusing to pay ‘the enormous taxes imposed upon them by Congress, and attempted to be levied by nominal officers acting under the pretended authority of the preposterous, whimsical state erected under the usurpation of Congress in that ill fated colony.’¹¹ Such accounts demonstrated to British readers the failures of the new American government to establish a stable, and free form of political governance, thus highlighting the superiority of the British constitution and rule of law.

British Atlantic newspapers also carried accounts of Loyalists being stripped of their rights and liberties in order to illustrate the evil and oppressive nature of the new American government and people. *The Glasgow Journal* testified that ‘three or four loyalists who had returned to their habitations in the United States on the proclamation of peace, had been treated with so much severity, that they thought themselves happy in getting back to New York with their families, and the loss of the greatest part of their property.’¹² A report from a frightened and dejected Loyalist gentleman in New York City recognized that all hope for reconciliation was lost. ‘This city swarms with those we lately called rebels,’ he lamented, ‘and daily accounts are brought in of the most violent resolves entered into by different associations to murder all those who shall be found here upon the evacuation by the King’s troops.’ As a result, he reported that ‘great numbers of people, with their families, are going to the deserts of Nova Scotia. What will be their fate, where they will find places to cover their heads, or how they will subsist, it is impossible even to conjecture. In my own opinion, I have already consigned two-thirds of them to the grave.’¹³

In the spring of 1782 *The London Chronicle* reprinted an article taken from the *South Carolina Gazette* of the rebels attacking and plundering Loyalists in Wilmington (North

¹⁰ ‘New York, July 18.’, *The Cornwall-Chronicle, and Jamaica General Advertiser*, 13 October 1781.

¹¹ ‘New York, Sept. 19’, *The Cornwall-Chronicle, and Jamaica General Advertiser*, 9 November 1782.

¹² *Glasgow Journal*, 10 July 1783.

¹³ *Glasgow Journal*, 19 June 1783.

Carolina) and the surrounding area. 'Numbers of the unfortunate Loyalists were taken by General Rutherford's militia brigade from Mecklenburgh', the correspondent reported, 'and were afterwards butchered in cold blood... To such a degree did they plunder, they even took the childrens shoes off their feet.' The correspondent then directed his attention to the treatment received by Loyalists from the Americans in his own state of South Carolina. 'When a Loyalist falls into their hands, he is in general stripped of his clothes, closely confined, and continually insulted.' In other cases 'Loyalists have been obliged to dig their own graves, in others they have been stripped naked, and tied with their arms stretched up to a tree, a black spot was then made upon their breasts, opposite to their hearts, at which the murderers fired as at a mark.'¹⁴

Between the Battle of Yorktown and the Treaty of Paris, British Atlantic newspapers were filled with reports of the French influence on the Americans, oppressive taxes, and violent, lawless attacks on Loyalists and their property. These reports, truthful or otherwise, helped in the construction of a shared history of the American Revolution that Britons in distant and quite different communities throughout the British Atlantic Empire could draw upon in order to articulate their own patriotic loyalty to Great Britain. All of this occurred against the backdrop of military defeats in the United States, and in a very real sense were necessitated by them. The success of British popular political culture in reinterpreting the revolution had made the war against France the main interest and objective of the broader British nation. Consequently, as the war with the American colonists drew to a close, Britons turned their focus to what many perceived to be the more important war being fought against the French. As the British government prepared to negotiate peace with the Americans in the early spring of 1782, it simultaneously prepared to defend the treasured West Indian island of Jamaica against a French invasion.

Rodney's Victory at the Saintes (1782)

Between 9 and 12 April 1782, just six months after Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown, British Admiral George Brydges Rodney engaged French Admiral François De Grasse's fleet at the Isles de Saintes, in the channel between the French islands of Dominica and Guadeloupe. De Grasse, and his fleet of thirty-four ships, had played a pivotal role in the French and American success at Yorktown the previous October. It was he who

¹⁴ 'AMERICAN NEWS. From the SOUTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE. Charlestown, March 27.', *The London Chronicle*, 25 May 1782.

had blocked up the mouth of the York River, keeping the British convoy from providing much needed supplies and reinforcements to Cornwallis and his depleted British army. And it was De Grasse's fleet, along with Washington's American and French army, that forced Cornwallis into submission on that memorable day. Following the victory De Grasse had rejected Washington's offer to stay in North America, recognizing that this was a perfect opportunity for the French to attack Jamaica, the most valuable of the British West Indian islands. De Grasse returned with his fleet to Fort Royal, Martinique, the French naval base in the Caribbean, where he began to make preparations and organize reinforcements for a combined French and Spanish invasion of Jamaica. In the meantime he unsuccessfully attacked the well-fortified British island of St. Lucia located just south of Martinique, before moving north to invade St. Kitts. For five weeks the British inhabitants of the small island bravely withstood constant bombardment from De Grasse before finally surrendering, which set the stage for an attack on Jamaica.

While De Grasse was making his preparations, Rodney was just returning from London where he had been since the late autumn of 1781. The Admiral had returned home to have surgery to ease his chronic case of gout, and more importantly to defend his plundering of the island of St. Eustatius. His actions on that island had appeared more selfish than patriotic, making him quite unpopular throughout the Empire. In his defence Rodney had argued that the island's residents had carried on a notorious trade with the rebellious American colonies and thus were 'Robbers, Adventurers, Betrayers of their Country and Rebels to their King [who]... had no right to expect a capitulation or to be treated as a respectable People.'¹⁵ Yet, despite these claims, his behaviour continued to make him an unpopular figure.

By March it had become clear to most Britons that De Grasse intended to invade the island of Jamaica, which lacked a significant British naval and military presence. In response, the Jamaican Assembly declared martial law on the island and the militia began making preparations to defend their coasts from De Grasse's fleet and army. One resident reported that '2500 regulars, with 16,000 militia, resolved to defend the place to the utmost in case it should be attacked.'¹⁶ On 9 March, just a month before the battle at the Saintes, *The Royal Gazette* in Kingston confidently asserted that 'The

¹⁵ O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 220.

¹⁶ 'LONDON.', *The London Chronicle*, 16 May 1782.

intended attack on this island is to take place early in April. We trust... that the vigorous preparations making for the reception of these confident invaders will effectually defeat their plans. Indeed', the correspondent threatened, 'a hostile visit is more to be wished than feared, as the certain miscarriage of an armament of such magnitude, might, in all probability, give a turn to the war.'¹⁷ Another writer also assured the public that while reports suggested that Rodney intended to retake St. Kitts, 'objects of still greater moment will first engage his attention; a regard to the safety of this island is said to be particularly contained in his instructions.'¹⁸

De Grasse led a convoy of thirty-four vessels and nearly 10,000 French soldiers from Fort Royal in the first week of April. His plan was to rendezvous with the Spanish Admiral Don Solano and his fleet before proceeding west to attack Jamaica. Rodney was stationed at St. Lucia with thirty-six vessels at his command and immediately disembarked to the north to engage De Grasse before he reached Jamaica. The chase and battle that ensued lasted for three days, before Rodney finally broke through the French line after a heated exchange on the morning of the twelfth. In doing so, Rodney captured De Grasse's flagship, the *Ville de Paris*, as well as four other ships containing the heavy artillery needed to invade Jamaica. The victory thus saved Jamaica from a French and Spanish invasion and guaranteed Britain's dominance of the Caribbean.¹⁹

News of Rodney's victory spread quickly, causing widespread celebration in British communities throughout the Empire. Residents of Kingston, overcome with a sense of relief that their island had been saved from the French, proclaimed 'The 12th of April, a Day! rendered memorable by your victory over the fleet of France, after a long and bloody conflict, in which the bravery of the enemy, added fresh laurels to the British arms; has been celebrated here, by every demonstrations of public joy.' To the gallant Rodney, they declared:

You have relieved us from the dread of the combined force of our enemies, from the exercise of military law, and restored us to the peaceable enjoyment of our civil rights... From this great event, the most brilliant in the annals of our

¹⁷ *The Royal Gazette* [Jamaica], 9 March 1782. Also printed in: 'PLANTATION NEWS. From the JAMAICA GAZETTE. Kingston, March 9.', *The London Chronicle*, 16 May 1782.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ A.T. Mahan, *Types of Naval Officers: Drawn from the History of the British Navy* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1902), 225-253; David Hannay, *Rodney*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 174-222; O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 227-237; Conway, 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past', 182-183.

country, we shall date its safety, and anticipate the prospect of seeing the British empire restored to its former grandeur.²⁰

In the small coastal community of Savanna la Mar, located on the north side of the island, ‘upwards of 50 gentlemen... assembled here... to celebrate the late most glorious victory obtained over the enemy by Sir George Brydges Rodney.’ In the evening an elegant dinner was prepared and ‘a standard (nicely contrived for the purpose) appeared, with a representation of the British flag above that of France.’ Toasts, both ‘royal and benevolent, were drunk’ to the King, Queen and royal family, along with ‘Jamaica’s protector, Sir George Brydges Rodney, and the glorious Twelfth of April, 1782... [and] Union to Great Britain and her colonies, and a successful war against the House of Bourbon and the Dutch.’²¹

Within a month news of Rodney’s monumental victory arrived in New York City, to the joy of the city’s beleaguered inhabitants. Rivington immediately had it proclaimed on handbill and distributed throughout the city so that residents could share in the joyous news.²² Later, he printed a detailed report of the action in his gazette, affirming that ‘*The unexampled splendor of Sir George Rodney’s victory over the French fleet, calls on the Printer to present every circumstance that may tend to particularize and illustrate it. His readers will be pleased to accept the following narratives, selected from original letters wrote by officers of distinction, who shared illustriously in the glory of that triumphant, and ever to be recorded day, the twelfth of April eighty-two.*’²³ ‘AN ODE, On SIR GEORGE RODNEY’S VICTORY over the COMTE DE GRASSE’, printed in local newspapers, also revealed the unifying effect of the victory over Britain’s eternal enemy.

No more shall Bourbon dare presume,
To grasp the Trident of the Main.
Great GEORGE shall now again resume
What loyal Britons will maintain!
Be Britain to herself but true,
Let Faction to the deep descend,
Her shudd’ring Foes her Arms shall rue,

²⁰ ‘KINGSTON (Jamaica), May 1’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 15 June 1782. Also printed in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post, and Public Advertiser*, 25 June 1782.

²¹ ‘NEW-YORK, June 15. *Extract of a letter from Savanna la Mar, dated May 8.*’ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 15 June 1782.

²² It being Sunday, the minister Ewald Schaukirk was upset that Rivington had the news proclaimed throughout the city. He recorded in his diary that ‘Last night news reached here of a severe engagement on April 12th, between the English under Admiral Rodney and the French fleet in the West Indies. Our vain chief printer had an account of it printed in hand-bills and cried about in the forenoon, while people were going to church—another catch-penny!’ Schaukirk, ‘Occupation of New York City’, 440-441.

²³ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 8 June 1782.

Wide as the distant Poles extend!’²⁴

In another report, the battle was added to the list of Britain’s other great ‘NAVAL VICTORIES’, which included Admiral Vernon’s victory at Porto Bello and Admiral Hawke’s triumph at Torbay in 1759, so that readers were made conscious of the historical significance of the event.²⁵

Despite the widespread elation that greeted news of Rodney’s victory, it was agreed in New York City to hold off on formal celebrations until the King’s birthday on 4 June. In doing so, New Yorkers could then link together their success over Britain’s eternal enemy with one of the most important celebratory dates on Britain’s festive calendar. On that day ‘A Feu de Joie was fired... amongst many thousands of rejoicing inhabitants, and the night was closed with perfect hilarity and harmony.’²⁶ A week later reports arrived of the celebrations that took place in Charleston on news of Rodney’s success. ‘Yesterday evening at sun-set, in consequence of the glorious victory obtained by the British fleet over that of France, a *Feu de Joie* was fired by the troops in garrison, in the camp and advanced posts’, a correspondent reported. ‘On the same evening a general and splendid illumination took place through the garrison.’²⁷

While it was common for newspapers to print reports of celebrations occurring elsewhere to encourage local residents to articulate their own loyalty and patriotism in a broader empire-wide context, this report held more significance than usual. It came from Charleston, the only other city in the American colonies still inhabited by Loyalists, who like New Yorkers had also sacrificed a great deal in their support of Great Britain. Consequently, reports of celebrations and illuminations in honour of Rodney’s victory would have resonated with the loyalist community in New York City, and would have provided proof that popular expressions of British loyalty and patriotism had been restored to Charleston. Loyalists in both communities did not feel that their city was alone. They were all too aware, however, that the victory had been over the French, and not the American Patriots who surrounded them.

²⁴ On SIR GEORGE RODNEY’S VICTORY over the COMTE DE GRASSE’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 8 June 1782.

²⁵ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 12 June 1782. Also printed in: *The Royal Gazette* [Charleston], 22 May 1782.

²⁶ ‘NEW-YORK’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 5 June 1782. Also see: Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, 509; Schaukirk, ‘Occupation of New York City’, 442.

²⁷ ‘Charlestown, May 16.’ *Rivington’s Gazette*, 15 June 1782.

Yet the fact that Loyalists in New York City (and Charlestown) celebrated a British victory in a battle that was neither fought in the American colonies, nor against the American army epitomized the transformation of the war in the British Atlantic world. They, like Britons elsewhere in the Empire, had redefined the war in traditional terms, so that the real enemy was no longer the rebellious Americans, but rather France. Loyal Britons in New York City could thus share in an empire-wide celebration of Rodney's defeat of De Grasse, because to many Britons that was the more important war being fought.

For Glaswegians Rodney's massive victory over the French ignited widespread celebrations of the supremacy of Britain's Protestant whig heritage, and thus illustrated the ways in which the Franco-American alliance had redefined the American Revolution. In fact as early as December 1781, when news of Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown had made the 'spirit of the nation' an 'unfashionable expression', a correspondent in *The Glasgow Mercury* lamented that 'It would be absurd to temporise in our present misfortunes.' Instead the writer suggested 'withdrawing our troops from America, and turning the whole strength of our fleets and armies upon the French, through whose aid rebellion has flourished, seems to be the only means left for a renovation of our glory.'²⁸

'Accounts of the gallant Admiral Rodney's complete victory over the French fleet in the West Indies' arrived in Glasgow towards the end of May. 'These tidings produced the greatest joy, which was visibly seen in ever countenance, from the highest to the lowest', declared a correspondent in *The Glasgow Mercury*. 'By order of the Magistrates, all the bells were set a-ringing, and the town illuminated' to a degree not known 'since the accession of his present Majesty.' In the evening the local magistrates and principal inhabitants of the city celebrated at the town-hall, where toasts were proclaimed to 'the King, Queen, Royal Family, Sir G. Rodney, and all the Admirals, Captains, &c. who bore a share of the glorious and important victory obtained on the 12th of April, 1782.' Reports of 'bonfires, illuminations, [and] convivial meetings' from towns throughout the west of Scotland were also reported, demonstrating the widespread loyalty and patriotism of the region.²⁹

²⁸ *The Glasgow Mercury*, 6 December 1781.

²⁹ 'GLASGOW, May 30.', *The Glasgow Mercury*, 30 May 1782; 'GLASGOW.', *Glasgow Journal*, 30 May 1782.

Glaswegians, like New Yorkers, were also able to celebrate Rodney's victory alongside George III's birthday as a resounding display of the Protestant British Empire's return to greatness. The Glasgow celebrations were intensified by their inclusion of commemoration of Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association. Not only were Glaswegians toasting the King and Queen, for they also honoured 'Lord George Gordon, [and] the Praeses of the 85 Societies... [and] Lord Rodney, Lord Hood... the whole gallant Captains and Officers under Lord Rodney, [and] the Brave Tars who gained the late glorious victory over De Grasse.'³⁰ All of the toasts drunk on the day, expressing loyalty to the King and Royal family, support of and identification with Britain's Protestant heritage, and a joyous celebration in honour of Britain's resounding victory over the Catholic French navy, expressed a proud and defiant Protestant Britishness that had defeated the threat of Catholicism at home and abroad.

News of 'The glorious victory of Sir George Rodney' arrived in London on 18 May and 'excited universal joy and congratulations' amongst the loyal inhabitants. 'At noon the Park and Tower Guns announced the triumph of the British flag, and in the evening there was a general illumination' throughout the city.³¹ Celebrations of important British military victories were a common occurrence in the nation's capital, especially when they involved Britain's despised enemy France. Yet this victory was especially important, for Londoners feared French invasion for the previous three years.

Rodney's victory would thus have signalled Britain's control of the Atlantic Ocean, and would have relieved the residents' concerns over a possible invasion by the enemy.

One Londoner even extended the importance of Rodney's naval victory to the broader British Atlantic world. In a letter published in *Rivington's Gazette* in New York City he expressed the critical importance of this event for Britain's Atlantic world inhabitants. 'By Sir George Rodney's success', he declared, 'all our possessions in the West Indies will be safe, and (what is of more real consequence) New-York, Charlestown, and Halifax, will be perfectly secure from being insulted by the French and rebels combined.' The author concluded by asserting that 'the solid advantages derived from this GLORIOUS EVENT' must, if properly managed, enable us always to retain the

³⁰ *The Glasgow Journal*, 6 June 1782.

³¹ *The London Gazette*, 18 May 1782; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London: Printed by J. Nichols, 1782), 259; 'LONDON. June 8.', *Rivington's Gazette*, 3 August 1782.

superiority in those seas; which we have gained by the gallant behaviour and judgment of our truly great Admiral.’³²

Some months later, London’s Common-Council thanked Rodney for his successes on the twelfth of April, highlighting the important role the victory had played in protecting Britain’s Atlantic empire from their French rivals. ‘The victory obtained by your Lordship’, they proclaimed, ‘was no less splendid and glorious, than attended with advantages of the greatest importance to this kingdom, and security of its valuable possessions and commercial interests, which we sincerely hope will be crowned with an honourable peace.’ Afterwards, Rodney was greeted in the streets by thousands of Londoners exclaiming ‘Rodney for ever! Rodney for ever!’ At Charing Cross the crowd removed the horses from his coach ‘and his Lordship had the honour of being drawn (in the manner as worthy and great men have heretofore been honoured) by the people.’ In the evening Rodney was honoured with a dinner at the London Tavern, while ‘The Citizens of London expressed their gratitude by a general illumination, and the whole town appeared one continued scene of harmony and satisfaction.’ Church bells throughout the city rung on occasion of the celebration ‘and bonfires, together with many beautiful fireworks, were to be seen in several parts of the city.’ Furthermore, the Common-Council resolved to commemorate the twelfth of April ‘by an Annual festival, in order to perpetuate the noble and gallant Rodney.’³³

No newspapers survive in Halifax for the period when news of Rodney’s victory would have arrived and been celebrated. However, according to advertisements in earlier issues of *The Nova-Scotia Gazette*, many of the residents had purchased subscriptions to *Rivington’s Gazette* and would thus have participated in a print celebration of Britain’s resounding success against the French, even if they had not taken to the streets themselves. Later in the summer, when we do have access to *The Nova Scotia Gazette*, we find that Haligonians were still reading of the joy Britons felt for Rodney’s decisive victory at the Saintes. In August nearly half of an entire issue of the gazette contained congratulatory addresses from various Members of Parliament on Rodney’s late achievements. Charles Fox declared ‘the late success of Admiral Rodney over the

³² ‘NEW-YORK, August 3. Extract of a letter from London, dated June 2’, *Rivington’s Gazette*, 3 August 1782.

³³ ‘LONDON, Nov. 20 to 29.’, *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 1 April 1783; ‘LONDON, November 23.’, *The Glasgow Mercury*, 28 November, 1782.

French fleet in the West-Indies, a victory the most brilliant of any since the commencement of the war; and taking it in the manner and consequence, was perhaps seldom equalled in the annals of this country... We had now', he observed 'no longer to fear the fate of the remainder of our West-India Islands—but on the contrary, a most sanguine and well-grounded hope of a decided superiority in that part of the world.'³⁴ Even by the end of 1782, more than seven months after Rodney's victory, the local gazette continued to harp on it as a defining moment in British history. A song was published entitled 'RODNEY'S VICTORY', and a report from London declared that Rodney's success had turned 'the scale of the war in our favour.'³⁵ Songs, poems, and the nearly endless number of reports and editorials that continued to appear in the Halifax newspaper, and British newspapers elsewhere in the Empire for that matter, allowed Britain's diverse and far-flung population to share in a common language and symbols of celebration for this critically important victory over the French.

* * * *

The Battle of the Saintes in April 1782 was the most celebrated naval victory in modern British history until Nelson's triumph at Trafalgar in 1805, and was constructed as the defining moment in the American War for Britain's Atlantic world inhabitants. Beyond these immediate celebrations were more long-lasting tributes to Rodney and his success in the Caribbean. Ballads and poems memorialized the event for years to come, mugs and teapots were adorned with his image and purchased by rich and poor alike, and several entertaining caricatures and cartoons depicting Rodney's triumph over De Grasse were drawn and sold almost immediately after news of his success, thus memorializing this event for years to come.³⁶

Unlike most celebrations of great British victories, this one had been won in a war that Britain lost. Rodney's victory may have saved Jamaica but it certainly did not save the thirteen American colonies, which the Americans were all too happy to point out. 'Britons of the present day, like person of a broken constitution,' remarked one such Patriot, 'are apt to be highly elated with only some casual abatement of the pressure of their illness. The accounts from Jamaica of Admiral Rodney's late success *modestly* speak

³⁴ 'HOUSE OF COMMONS, WEDNESDAY, May 11. THANKS OF THE HOUSE TO ADMIRAL RODNEY.', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 27 August 1782. Also printed in: 'HOUSE OF COMMONS, May 22.', *Glasgow Journal*, 30 May 1782.

³⁵ 'RODNEY'S VICTORY. A NEW SONG', *The Nova-Scotia Gazette: and the Weekly Chronicle*, 26 November 1782; 'LONDON', 3 December 1782.

³⁶ Conway, 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past', 183.

of the British arms as *ever invincible*, notwithstanding all the monuments to the contrary, particularly in the West-Indies and upon this continent.³⁷ This single success amid a war of blunders and defeats may also explain why this battle has received very little attention, until recently, from either British or American historians. American Revolution historiography has all but ignored the war fought after Cornwallis's capitulation, while British historians have neglected the enormous ideological consequences of Rodney's victory at the Saintes.³⁸

In many ways, however, it does seem somewhat paradoxical that loyal Britons throughout the Atlantic world would express so much jubilation over a victory in a war that had otherwise gone so bad. In fact, by the spring of 1782 Britain was a beleaguered nation in a war against much of western Europe. More significantly, after seven years of fighting, the British army – the supposed envy of all of Europe – had only gained control of New York City, Charlestown and Savannah, and the latter two were lost before the year ended. The French had recently retaken the Caribbean islands of St. Eustatius and St. Kitts, thus presenting a threat to Britain's other profitable island colonies. In the British Isles the Irish had recently secured parliamentary independence from a government unable to cope with balancing a war and domestic concerns. Lord North and his ministry had finally lost all public and private support, and the government collapsed just days before Rodney engaged De Grasse at the Saintes.

Yet it was these very setbacks that encouraged Britons throughout the Empire to rally around Rodney's success in the Caribbean. The loyalty of Britons in North America, the Caribbean and across mainland Britain had been tested in a war that challenged the very authority and legitimacy of Britain's Protestant identity. What emerged was an embattled sense of Britishness that was more resolute and determined in its opposition to the traditional enemies of France and Spain. After all, war against Britain's ancient enemy resonated with Protestant British subjects throughout the Empire, and provided an opportunity for Britons to articulate their shared loyalty to Great Britain in a war that had previously proven to be difficult to define. Thus when news arrived in each of these five communities of Rodney's resounding success over De Grasse and his French

³⁷ 'BOSTON, June 10.', *The Pennsylvania Gazette, and Weekly Advertiser*, 26 June 1782.

³⁸ Two recent studies have helped to draw this battle back into the history of the American Revolutionary Era. Stephen Conway examines the response of mainland British subjects to Rodney's victory. Conway, 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past', 180-199. Andrew O'Shaughnessy has looked at the battle from the Caribbean perspective. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divide*, 213-237.

fleet, Britons of all ranks throughout the Atlantic world could take to the streets in celebration, for they had defeated France and thus won the more important war.

Conclusion

Recent British and American historians have examined the ways in which the American Revolution affected British loyalty and identity. Linda Colley has argued that the Revolution produced a 'sharp move to the Right' as government officials took a more firm position on colonial rule in the aftermath of the war.³⁹ Eliga Gould has agreed, stating that the Revolution produced a 'counter-revolutionary turn' in Great Britain as the government and subjects alike moved toward a more conservative, authoritarian, and geographically-limited definition of Britishness.⁴⁰ In his examination of British identity and the Franco-American alliance, Stephen Conway has argued that the unfulfilled claims of the American colonists to the rights and liberties of British subjects had made 'an inclusive, Greater-Britain type of Britishness untenable.'⁴¹ In sum, these historians are in agreement that the war resulted in a more strictly defined identity that was limited to the shores of Great Britain.

Their conclusions, however, have been drawn from research of only mainland Britain, and in the case of Colley and Gould, predominately from elite political culture and government policy. They have sought to determine the nature and extent of Britishness in the wake of the American Revolution, yet they have done so from a metropolitan exceptionalist viewpoint. Each of these historians have argued for a geographically-limited definition of Britishness in the post-American Revolutionary era, but none have incorporated the experiences of the thousands of loyal Britons who lived throughout the British Atlantic world. They have not taken into account the ways in which the Revolution affected the political self-definition of Britons living in North America, the Caribbean and in mainland Britain and how a shared empire-wide popular political culture sought to refine and articulate a new British national identity in the face of a long and difficult war.

³⁹ Colley, *Britons*, 144-145.

⁴⁰ Eliga H. Gould, 'American Independence and Britain's Counter-Revolution' *Past and Present*, CLIV (1997), 108-112.

⁴¹ Conway, 'A Joy Unknown for Years Past', 194

My thesis illustrates that the American Revolution certainly produce a more determined and resolute sense of Britishness, as these historians and others have argued. However, this new identity was not confined to mainland Britain. Rather, the American Revolution and more importantly their alliance with France, strengthened and consolidated the identity of Britons throughout the Atlantic Empire. In the diverse communities of Halifax, New York City, Kingston, London and Glasgow ordinary Britons could share in an empire-wide language of loyalty after 1778 that proclaimed the superiority of Protestant Britain and denounced the illegitimacy of a rebellion that threatened to destroy it. In many ways, Britons were able to redefine the war, simply by reverting to tradition definitions of the French enemy, which they could also now apply to the American Patriots. In a very real sense, the American Patriots had thus been written out of the war that they started. The Patriot cause, and the challenge it presented to popular conceptions of British loyalty and patriotism all but disappeared in the face of this new war against Britain's old enemy.

The alliance also helped to shore up nearly two decades of a war and revolution that had aggressively undermined the very legitimacy of Britain's empire-wide Protestant whig heritage. From 1765 to 1778, opposition to British imperial policies and eventually rebellion against British rule had divided inhabitants of Britain's Atlantic Empire. Faced with an enemy and ideology that was not all that dissimilar from their own, Britons had struggled to come together in defence of their loyalty and patriotism. As such, the explicit challenge the Patriot ideology presented to the hegemony of Britain's Protestant whig identity was understood from an acute local perspective, rather than as part of a shared empire wide articulation of loyalty. Britons in the Caribbean, North America and in mainland Britain understood the war and the American revolutionary ideology in terms of how it affected their own local social, political and economic interests.

Consequently, in Kingston fairly widespread support for the American Revolution faded in the midst of a failed slave revolt in 1776 that was found to have been the result of the revolutionary ideology emerging in the American colonies. In Halifax, on the other hand, the Revolution failed to take hold in a community with a strong, if not arbitrary local political sphere that aggressively opposed the spread of an influential American patriot popular political culture. While in London, the radical nature of the

city's political sphere adopted the revolutionary cause of the American Patriots in order to reinvigorate their own Whig opposition to the British government that had been so strong during the Wilkes and Liberty cause of the 1760s. And in Glasgow, the Revolution threatened the prosperity of the city's emerging Atlantic economy, which relied heavily on the colonial tobacco trade. Thus their opposition to the rebellion, at least at first, was based upon distinct economic interests that affected their own political identity.

When these communities are examined as a whole we can begin to appreciate the broader implications of the Revolution on British Atlantic popular political culture. We can begin to see how the revolutionary movement in the American colonies forced Britons elsewhere to also reconsider their own self-definition of loyalty and patriotism to Great Britain. More importantly, repositioning the American Revolution in the Atlantic world allows us to reconceptualize the meaning and importance of Revolutionary and wartime events, such as the Stamp Act crisis, the formation of the Association in 1774, the Battle of Saratoga in 1777, and ultimately the decisive importance of the Franco-American alliance in 1778. These events affected and were understood by Britons throughout the Empire in quite different ways from one another.

My thesis also expands our understanding of the ways in which popular political culture functioned in the American Revolutionary Era. American historians, such as Simon Newman and David Waldstreicher, have shown how vitally important American popular political culture was to the American nation-building process.⁴² Popular protests, speeches, crowd actions, songs and toasts, all of which were reported upon in great detail in newspapers throughout the American colonies and then states, helped to shape and refine an emerging shared national American political identity. Yet neither of these historians have dealt with the presence of a competing loyal British political culture and how that ideology played an integral role in the construction of an emerging American national identity. During the critical period of 1774 to 1776, when American resistance turned to rebellion, British newspapers such as *Rivington's Gazette* proved troublesome to the American cause. Like the British, Americans were also forced to articulate and refine their emerging political identity in response to a British popular political culture that sought to illustrate the unnatural and illegitimate nature of the rebellion.

⁴² Newman, *Parades and Politics*; Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*.

While my thesis focuses specifically on British popular political culture, it does enable historians to begin to see just how contested loyalty and identity were during the Revolutionary era, not just in the thirteen American colonies, but throughout Britain's Atlantic Empire. Understanding the ways in which British subjects rejected the revolutionary ideology in favour of a patriotic imperial nationalism will also help us to better understand the formation of an American national identity.

This thesis also reorganizes Loyalist historiography within the broader context of Britain's Atlantic Empire. It shows that Loyalist popular political culture was actually part of and contributed toward a larger empire-wide articulation of loyalty and patriotism. We can finally move beyond the claims of at least one historian that 'Loyalist history is unusual, in that it is not the story of success, but of failure.'⁴³ Loyal Britons in New York City defined the enemy and refuted the ideas of the American cause as part of a shared empire-wide definition of Britishness. In many ways, in fact, it was the Loyalist popular political culture that defined the war for Britons elsewhere in the Empire. *Rivington's Gazette* in particular was widely read and was often the first newspaper in the American colonies to print a pro-British critique of war-time events and occurrences. While the existing historiography presents the Loyalists as outsiders in a country no longer their own, my research instead shows that they were participants in and members of a broader British Atlantic community that shared in an empire-wide popular political culture.

My thesis offers an entirely new and innovative approach to examining the ideological consequences of the American Revolution. It forces both British and American historians to reconsider the War and Revolution as part of a larger Atlantic world event that had consequences for people living in all corners of Britain's Atlantic Empire. It also allows historians to see that the Revolution created not one, but two new nations. To be British in 1783 was something quite different than it had been two decades earlier. The American Revolution had challenged and refined British imperial identity, forcing Britons throughout the Atlantic world to examine more closely their own self-definition of Britishness. In the midst of this process, the Americans allied themselves with Britain's eternal enemy France. In doing so, Britons were able to redefine both the Revolution and the American enemy, while at the same time articulate a new shared

⁴³ Wright, 'The New York Loyalists', 74.

national British identity that had become more determinedly British, but no less widespread. Britons in North America, the Caribbean and in mainland Britain expressed a renewed and assertive sense of Britishness in a war that had challenged the legitimacy of their own Protestant whig heritage. Thus Rodney's defeat of De Grasse in the Spring of 1782 assumes greater significance in the American Revolutionary war. For in some ways it allowed Britons to accept the loss of the American colonies, without having to relinquish the supremacy of their own British identity. They may have lost America, but they could still celebrate a more important victory over France.

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The Middlesex Journal: Or, Chronicle of Liberty
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The St. James's Chronicle; Or, British Evening-Post
The Westminster Journal: And London Political Miscellany
Bingley's London Journal

Glasgow:

The Glasgow Mercury
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The Glasgow Chronicle or, Weekly Intelligencer
The Caledonian Mercury
Edinburgh Evening Courant
Edinburgh Chronicle
Edinburgh Advertiser
Ruddiman's Weekly Journal
The Scots Magazine
The Glasgow Magazine and Review; Or Universal Miscellany
The Glasgow Museum, Or Weekly Instructor

England:

The Newcastle Chronicle Or, Weekly Advertiser

New York City:

Rivington's Gazette
New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury
The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser
The Royal American Gazette The New-York Gazette
The New-York Weekly Journal
The New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy

Kingston:

The Jamaica Mercury, and Kingston Weekly Advertiser
The Royal Gazette [Jamaica]
The Cornwall Chronicle and General Advertiser

Halifax:

The Nova-Scotia Gazette
The Nova Scotia Chronicle, and Weekly Advertiser

*The Nova Scotia Gazette, and Weekly Chronicle***American Colonies:***Boston Evening Post**Boston Gazette**The Boston News-Letter and New-England Chronicle**Massachusetts Gazette**Boston Post Boy**The Massachusetts Spy: Or, American Oracle of Liberty**The New Hampshire Gazette**Connecticut Courant**The Connecticut Journal**The New-London Gazette**The New-London Summary, or, the Weekly Advertiser**The Newport Mercury**The Providence Gazette; And Country Journal**Pennsylvania Gazette**Pennsylvania Journal**The Pennsylvania Gazette, and Weekly Advertiser**The Pennsylvania Ledger: or the Weekly Advertiser**The Pennsylvania Evening Post, and Public Advertiser**Virginia Gazette**South Carolina Gazette**The South-Carolina and American General Gazette**The Royal Gazette [Charlestown]**The Royal South-Carolina Gazette**Georgia Gazette**The Royal Georgia Gazette*