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‘A most active, enterprising officer’: Captain John Perkins, the Royal Navy and the boundaries of slavery and liberty in the Caribbean

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Abstract:

John Perkins was the most senior black officer in the Royal Navy during the American War of Independence and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. He rose through the ranks from a carpenter's enslaved servant in 1759 to post captain in 1800, and went on to be one of the very first British officials to land in newly-independent Haiti in 1804. His career as a spy, gun-runner, naval officer and land owner was one of almost implausible adventure and speaks to the capacity of the maritime service to challenge and subvert race and slavery in the Caribbean. His very uniqueness, however, highlights the profound challenges for slaves and ex-slaves in trying to remake themselves as free people.

A few months after the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in May 1791 John Perkins, a Royal Navy lieutenant on half pay, was arrested by the French authorities in Saint Domingue and ‘confined in a dungeon ... under the pretext of his having supplied the people of colour with arms.’ His arrest promoted a vigorous response from the Royal Navy, and two ships – the *Diana* and the *Ferret* – entered Jérémie harbour in south-west Saint Domingue to negotiate his release.¹ Captain Thomas Russell of the *Diana* argued there was no evidence for the French accusations of collusion with the rebels. Instead he believed – somewhat implausibly – that Lieutenant Perkins was being held in revenge for his actions off Saint Domingue during the American War of Independence, which had ended nearly a decade earlier. Despite receiving formal requests from the governor and naval commander at Jamaica, the French refused to budge, informing the British that the ‘Law imperiously commands us to retain Mr Perkins’. Unofficially, Russell was told by the president of the Council of Commons at Jérémie that Perkins would be executed. After more than a week of fruitless diplomacy

and with time of the essence, Russell anchored off shore and dispatched the *Ferret* under Captain Nowell to intercede. With Perkins just hours from first the rack then the noose, Nowell demanded his immediate release on 24 February 1792, telling French officials that failure to do so would 'draw down a destruction you are little aware of'.² In the face of British aggression the French acquiesced and released Perkins who was taken back to the *Ferret* and then transferred to the *Diana* at sea.³

This episode raises a number of questions: what exactly was Perkins doing there? Why did the navy intervene to recover him when he was not there on official service, and why were naval officers prepared to open fire on a French colony with which Britain was not – yet – at war? Perhaps more significantly Perkins, then a lieutenant later a captain, was not just another gallant naval officer of eighteenth-century British imaginations. He was Jamaican and the most senior black mariner in the Royal Navy. Through a series of almost-improbable escapades, he rose from slavery to reach the rank of post-captain in the Royal Navy.

There is growing interest in the role of both the enslaved and free people of colour in maritime service. The literature is particularly well developed in relation to antebellum North America where African Americans appear as skilled watermen, pilots, traders and mariners, many of whom enhanced their own prospects of liberty as well as helping to secure freedom for others.⁴ In the Caribbean, it is also clear that maritime slaves were integral to the functioning of the island economies in a range of activities including inter-island trade, pilotage, salvage and fishing.⁵ The literature on black people in the Royal Navy also often emphasizes service afloat as a means by which the enslaved might serve under less brutal or exploitative conditions and could ultimately be freed. Olaudah Equiano and Robert Wedderburn – two of the most influential black figures of the abolition period – both used naval service in different ways as a means to escape their enslavement.⁶ Yet the relationship of slavery to the maritime world also created a new set of contradictions. The sea facilitated the movement of black people along the Atlantic littoral and presented enslaved pilots and coastal traders with a host of liberties almost unimaginable to plantation slaves, but enslaved mariners were not the legal equals of their white counterparts. Ashore, their freedom dissipated and – free or enslaved – they found their lives again governed by racial divisions.⁷

John Perkins' career brought him liberty, influence and wealth and, on the face of it, he seems to embody the capacity of maritime service to liberate. This article however, as well as reinscribing Perkins in the history of the black maritime Atlantic, suggests that Perkins experienced these contradictions in three ways as he navigated his route to freedom. Firstly, he shows that this transition from slavery to liberty was not a straightforward process and that even having secured his position, he remained acutely conscious of his uniqueness. Secondly, he was one of only a tiny

number of black officers in the Royal Navy and the only one promoted to captain. It is clear from the scholarship that Perkins was far from being the only highly-skilled black mariner in the Atlantic but no others reached his official rank. Naval and maritime service were not, therefore, straightforwardly a means of advance based on a meritocracy, and black mariners were confronted not so much with a glass ceiling but a wooden deck above which they were not expected to serve. Finally, his role allows an exploration of the complexity of the navy's relationship with slavery: Perkins was an ex-slave whose job involved protecting the British system of slavery in the Caribbean.

The navy in the Caribbean

The Royal Navy loomed large in the eighteenth-century Caribbean. Countless petitions to the Crown and Parliament throughout the eighteenth century attest to the planters' reliance on the navy for the defence of the islands and their trade routes. The Caribbean's place as a key theatre of war in the eighteenth century made the navy's military role essential. Even when eighteenth-century conflict went badly for Britain, as it did so catastrophically in the American War of Independence, its navy could be relied on to conjure up a Caribbean success at the Battle of the Saints in 1782.⁸ The relationship between the navy and Caribbean society is far less well understood, however.⁹ The Royal Navy's principal roles in the region were to provide security for the slave colonies and to protect British merchant shipping carrying – among other things – slave-grown commodities as well as enslaved Africans themselves. In this sense, the navy was integral to the maintenance of Britain's enslaved empire.

The navy had two squadrons in the Caribbean – on the Jamaica and Leeward stations – where fleets were constantly maintained.¹⁰ As a result, the British navy remained a prominent feature of life in these islands in war and in peace. In 1782, in the face of real and imagined invasions, some 34% of all the navy's ships of the line were stationed in the Caribbean, along with more than a quarter of its lighter cruisers and frigates. It also meant that more than 30,000 men were stationed there. This spike in numbers was unusual: the Jamaica station averaged 1652 naval personnel in peacetime between 1756 and 1813, rising to 4739 in the Seven Years War, 5519 in the American War and 7628 during the French wars. Even in peacetime, these figures suggest that naval personnel – the vast majority of whom were white – represented more than 9% of the white population of the island. During the French wars, the navy added more than 40% to the local white population.¹¹ The Leeward station fluctuated similarly in size, increasing from 1184 men in peacetime to 6625 in the Seven Years War, up to a peak of 14,655 in the American War. It fell back to 6990 during the French wars.¹² The population of Antigua, the home station of the fleet, amounted to fewer than 2000 white people and almost 39,000 slaves in 1774.¹³

The navy faced a constant battle to maintain these manning levels. Disease and desertion significantly reduced the number of crew available.¹⁴ On the Leeward station in 1762, for example, Commodore James Douglas noted 'the Seamen of his Majesty's Squadron have lately so frequently deserted from the Ships on this Station that there is a Risque in sending them on Duty ashore.'¹⁵ As a result, many officers were notably reluctant to allow crew on land at all, let alone permit them to remain there for any length of time. As late as the early part of the Seven Years War, some (but not all) naval commanders continued to argue against using slaves or free blacks as crew in the navy because of their colour. But the increasing demands of naval manning and the recognition of the extent of black involvement in the maritime economy of the region ensured a supply of skilled mariners were employed by the navy, particularly in time of war.¹⁶ By the later eighteenth century, unlike the recruitment of black soldiers, the widespread use of black mariners in the Caribbean was largely uncontroversial.¹⁷

Both Jamaica and Antigua maintained dockyards for supplying, refitting and even building ships. The work in these yards was usually undertaken by enslaved labour; indeed, the dockyards themselves were constructed by slaves.²² The restrictions on allowing crew ashore also limited some of the work that could be done by white crew. For Douglas, like other commanders, the solution was to order captains 'to hire as many Negroes as may be necessary to unload the Ships arrived with Stores for His Majesty's Service'.²³ The navy recruited slaves in two main ways: either by hiring slaves locally on a per diem rate or in buying their own, 'King's Negroes', sometimes locally, sometimes direct from Africa. The rationale was clear, as Admiral Charles Stewart at Port Royal put it in a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty: 'I am glad their Lordships are come to a resolution to buy Negroes ... as the King has been the only person in this country not served by them.'²⁴

The navy's relationship to slavery was therefore complex. It was a protector of slavery through its securing of trade routes and defence of the slave-based colonies and it actively recruited slave labour. Having done so, however, it tried to differentiate its treatment of the enslaved from that of the planters. In the 1720s and 1730s, Africans were sent to Navy Island just off the Jamaican town of Port Antonio to establish it as a naval base on the north coast. Those slaves were supplied with meat on a regular basis and were encouraged to form families: Admiral Stewart commanding at Jamaica, despite having no qualms about using enslaved labour, made a conscious effort to distinguish between slaves on naval property and plantation slaves. Later, in Antigua in 1800, John Duckworth included £50 for the 'King's Negroe artificers encouragement to industry' in his accounts for the year.²⁶ For some of the enslaved in its service the navy – and maritime service generally – might offer routes to freedom.²⁷

By securing official authority and status, Perkins represented this transition to liberty; he also posed a significant challenge to the Jamaican slave society from which he came. Like Equiano, he was aware of his dual identity as a man born a slave who rose to be a plantation-owning naval officer, his 'double consciousness' becoming apparent at key moments in his life.²⁸ Although Perkins has left few letters, his career can be pieced together from fragmentary evidence in a series of Admiralty records, from contemporary accounts of the events in which he participated, and nineteenth-century naval histories. His life allows us to consider the porosity of the boundaries between slavery and freedom in the Caribbean.

Captain John Perkins

John Perkins, once a carpenter's servant during the Seven Years War, was made post-captain in the Royal Navy in September 1800. In one respect, his career reflects the capacity of naval patronage to recognise and reward the careers of young men who excelled, not the least of whom was his contemporary on the Jamaica station, Horatio Nelson. Unlike Nelson, however, Perkins was a black Jamaican.³¹ He was probably born in the parish of Clarendon in or before 1750, the son of an enslaved woman.³³ As a child he was sent to Kingston and Port Royal where he became a 'servant' to a carpenter, William Young, who took him into naval service. On 22 June 1759, he joined the *Grenado*, a bomb vessel, as Young's enslaved servant, along with another boy, John Middleton. Both remained with Young when he transferred to the larger *Boreas* on 7 March 1760. Perkins was not the only black boy aboard: the muster book records five other servants who joined at the same time. They were joined in June by two more: Thomas Bacchus and John Othello, both of whom were captain's servants. On the *Boreas*, Perkins was present at two crucial moments in the Seven Years War: the capture of Martinique in 1762 and then at the siege and capture of Havana later that year.³⁴

Thus began a naval career spanning almost half a century, which took in service in the Seven Years War, the American War, and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. After the Seven Years War, he left Young's service and began work as a pilot.³⁵ He had become sufficiently adept to secure employment in the navy aboard HMS *Achilles*. This part of his career began inauspiciously: on 9 December 1771 he ran the *Achilles* ashore coming into Port Royal. He was blamed for the incident, it having been caused, as Admiral Rodney put it, 'thro' the unskilfullness of the pilot'. He was court martialled two weeks later. Found guilty, Perkins was thereafter 'rendered incapable of servg. as Pilot in any of His Majtys Ships.'³⁶ The verdict was enforced for a number of years and he returned to life as a civilian pilot, but as his knowledge of the seas around Jamaica increased, his expertise took precedence over the court's ruling. He re-emerged in the Admiralty's muster books as one of the

pilots in the *Antelope*, then Rear Admiral Gayton's flagship on the Jamaica station in late November 1775.³⁷ In 1778, he secured his first command, on the private schooner *Punch* in 1778, and he continued as a civilian to provide information and intelligence to the navy, particularly in relation to French shipping off Saint Domingue.³⁸ He entered the navy's pay as a lieutenant in the sloop *Endeavour* in 1781 and it was in this role that he first came to the attention of the British public through a series of newspaper reports about his exploits.

At the turn of 1782, the *Endeavour* sailed towards Port Royal with two prizes in tow when it was surrounded by French ships. Perkins escaped 'by dint of good sailing'. In these reports, Perkins was represented as an accomplished British naval officer, not as a black mariner. The prisoners on his prizes reported a significant mustering of French and Spanish ships of the line, which corroborated other news leaking out from Saint Domingue, confirming British fears about an assault on Jamaica.³⁹ When the French fleet sailed to meet the Spanish in April 1782 the Royal Navy was ready, and Admiral Rodney's fleet intercepted and defeated them at the Saints. Despite his earlier misgivings, Rodney was so impressed that he promoted Perkins for his 'behaviour in taking the French sloop with so many Officers on board her, and by your many services to His Majesty and the Publick'. The *Endeavour* was re-established as a sloop of war with 12 guns and was renowned for 'the superiority of her sailing to everything in these seas'. Rodney wrote to Perkins: '[I] hope you will have an opportunity of exerting yourself in the Service of your King & Country with as much applause now you are her Captain, as when you was only her Lieutenant and Commander'. Perkins' previous misdemeanour was clearly long forgotten, and he was sent on a series of cruises off Saint Domingue to reconnoitre French forces there.⁴⁰ Significantly, Perkins was brought into formal naval service on the basis of his experience and record. His particular expertise was more important to Rodney (who was much beloved by the Jamaican planter class) than his race or his enslaved past.

At the end of the war, the *Endeavour* was decommissioned and sold off, and Perkins was placed on half-pay. He spent most of his time in Jamaica but travelled to Britain, first in 1784 and then in 1786. On neither occasion did he enjoy the experience: 'I could not bear it', he wrote, 'I felt the cold to such affect [sic] that I was obliged to quit England in the month of October, and beleve [sic] it would have been the death of me had I not left'.⁴¹ By this time he had had nine children (at least six of whom survived) with three different women, one of whom was likely to be his wife.⁴² He remained available to the navy in a more or less unofficial capacity throughout the decade of peace between the American and French wars and very nearly succeeded in causing an international incident in February 1792.⁴³

The Saint Domingue revolt

There was great British concern about the slave rising in Saint Domingue not least in case ‘the contagion’ of revolt should spread to Jamaica little more than 100 miles to the west. In November 1791, the Committee of West India Planters and Merchants in London had persuaded the government to increase its military presence in Jamaica because ‘attempts have been made and are still making to create and ferment in the minds of the Negroes in our Colonies a dangerous spirit of Innovation’.⁴⁷ The British offered official support – short of military intervention – to the French authorities in Saint Domingue, but they remained anxious for detailed intelligence. To that end, they dispatched individuals there to send back information. Usually, they were white French planters, or Frenchmen who opposed the Revolution in France. In spring 1793, while Britain and France were still at peace, Venault de Charmilly, a planter and ‘a French Gentleman hostile to the present Government of that Country’, was to be sent to gather intelligence from Saint Domingue. Critically, the covert nature of his visit was emphasized: ‘too much care cannot be taken to secure the faithful conveyance of such intelligence, and at the same time to avoid the suspicion of it’s [sic] being transmitted.’⁵⁰

British officials in Jamaica, however, wanted intelligence offering more than one perspective on events in Saint Domingue. To secure it, they turned to the Royal Navy and to John Perkins. Even though the government’s public utterances declared support for the French planters and concerns about the slave revolt, a series of accusations were made that the British maintained connections to the insurgents as well as the planters. As early as September 1790, the Marquis de la Luzerne, the French ambassador in London, had warned that Britain had designs on Saint Domingue and had sent secret agents there.⁵¹ Perkins was more than just a spy, however. The French authorities had detained him ‘for his connexion with, and services to, the rebellious negroes’, including supplying them with arms and ammunition and ‘instigating them to rebellion, in order to effect their emancipation or liberty’.⁵² If true, Perkins adopted (or was placed in) a position diametrically opposed to the general view of the Jamaican elite and the official policy of the British government. But, as one later account put it, ‘the thing, indeed, is not impossible’ and, given the scale of the effort to get him back, it seems unlikely that he was there in a purely private capacity. It is probable that there was some official sanction (at least in the region) for his presence in the midst of the Haitian tumult.⁵³ Moreover, the British did not send just any naval lieutenant on half pay to gather information in Saint Domingue; they sent their officer with the greatest knowledge of the seas in the area, a fluent French speaker and their only officer of colour, that is, the only one who could more easily assimilate with the insurgent groups rather than with the white population.

Peter Chazotte, a merchant who escaped from Haiti to the United States in 1804, accused the British of waging ‘a disguised system of war’ against Saint Domingue through to February 1793.

It is true that he was a man who saw conspiracies around every corner: he argued, for example, that Galbaud as governor of Saint Domingue was ‘the principal agent of the British government’ and paid by them to foment revolution. He also – like Bryan Edwards – believed that British abolitionists, encouraged by Pitt, tried to instigate an end to slavery there. Yet his central argument that the British provided support to insurgents as well as the whites is not inconsistent with the accusations levelled against Perkins.⁵⁴ And as later incidents would show, naval commanders did not always follow precisely the official line in relation to Saint Domingue.

The French Revolutionary War

Saved from the French gallows by the Royal Navy in 1792 and safely restored in Jamaica, the renewed likelihood of official Anglo-French hostilities presented an opportunity for Perkins, who was still on half pay. Two months before war with France was declared, Commodore Ford, commanding the Jamaica station, wrote to the Admiralty in March 1793 praising Perkins as ‘a most active, enterprising, useful officer, who might be employed here in a small vessel with great advantage to the State, provided ... there arises an occasion for his Services’. A month later, and before he could possibly have had a response from London, Ford reported that he had given Perkins command of a newly-purchased schooner called the *Spitfire*, which was ‘a very fast sailer’. His specific role – much as in the *Endeavour* during the American war – was ‘to gain Intelligence of the Enemy’s Force and Movements at Port-au-Prince and Cape Francois [sic]’.⁵⁵ Most of the rest of Perkins’ naval career was focused on Saint Domingue and the waters around it and he became the navy’s most experienced officer in those seas. Newly restored to his official naval role, Perkins quickly attracted press coverage for his exploits. In November 1793, for example *The World* in London reported his ship’s repeated escapes from the clutches of larger French vessels.⁵⁶

Perkins was then promoted to a larger ship, the captured French prize *Marie Antoinette*, as ‘an officer of zeal, vigilance and activity’ as it was reported in the London press. None of his press coverage yet made any reference to the colour of his skin: he remained in the public mind an example of a brave, manly (and white) British naval officer. The *Marie Antoinette* was part of the squadron led by Ford that took Port-au-Prince in June 1794 before Perkins was again promoted to the 14-gun *Drake* in 1797 until it was taken out of commission in March 1799.⁵⁷ The *Drake* returned to Saint Domingue often, at first in support of the British invasion and then, in May 1798, to help the evacuation of what remained of the British forces. On 3 May 1798, 100 troops came aboard Perkins’ ship and on 8 May ‘at ½ past one got all the Troops Provisions and Ammunition off & all the Inhabitants that Choose to Evacuate La Archaye’ just along the coast from Port-au-Prince.⁵⁸ He was promoted post-captain in September 1800 and appointed to the 24-gun *Arab* with 155 men. He

spent much of the first six months aboard cruising the waters of the Caribbean, primarily around the Leewards, harrying French shipping.

In March 1801, the navy in the Caribbean received orders to detain all Scandinavian and Russian shipping. Within days Perkins attempted unsuccessfully to capture the Danish brig *Lougen* off Saint Thomas. The *Lougen* inflicted damage on the *Arab* and, with support from the battery at Charlotte Amalie, the *Arab* was driven back. It was a defeat downplayed by Perkins but celebrated by the Danes.⁵⁹ This setback aside, Perkins' stock remained high, particularly after his role in the taking of Saint Eustatius and Saba in April 1801. Perkins' role was widely reported in the London press.⁶⁰ Just as in 1782 and 1793, his success was reported without reference to his ethnicity. Indeed, his origin as a 'mulatto' was revealed only in 1803 in a piece again praising his accomplishments.⁶¹ This success was likely to have been important in his next promotion, but he also had the backing of an increasingly important patron in London. By 1801, John Markham was MP for Portsmouth and a member of the board of Admiralty, but he had known Perkins probably since the early 1780s when they both commanded ships at Jamaica. His brother, Colonel David Markham, with whom Perkins was also acquainted, had been killed in Saint Domingue in 1795. Through these personal and professional connections, Perkins secured his command of the largest ship of his career: the 32-gun *Tartar* with 264 men aboard in 1802.⁶²

Authority and slavery

Perkins' initial elevation to the officer class in 1782, although not formally recognised by the Admiralty for another decade, and his meritocratic rise was hugely significant because it put him, as a black man, in a position of real power and responsibility that cut right against the grain of Caribbean life. In June and July 1782, one of his first tasks as lieutenant was to support the manning of the Jamaica squadron by the impressment of sailors.⁶⁵ Impressment had long been a matter of great controversy. Not only had the American Declaration of Independence explicitly listed it among 'the long train of abuses and usurpations' perpetrated by George III, but it had also been the subject of significant periodical debate in Britain and America. Much of the language used to decry impressment in Britain described it as a violation of liberty and a 'most absurd and cruel tyranny towards the most meritorious branch of the community'.⁶⁶ In so doing, it aligned impressment with two distinct understandings of 'slavery' in Britain and its world: one was the result of arbitrary rule that breached the 'unalienable' rights of free men and the other, particularly in the Americas, meant the enslavement of Africans.⁶⁷ The Royal Navy relied on the impressment of mariners and was thus open (at least in the eyes of polemicists) to accusations of slavery, which in the Caribbean implied something that happened to people of African descent. Just as impressment further complicated the

relationship of the navy to ideas of slavery, therefore, so too did Perkins – the black Jamaican – whose official position cast him in the role of the black enslaver of white sailors and free men.

As the commander of his ship, Perkins was responsible for determining punishments for offences not serious enough for court martial. Under the Articles of War, naval captains could impose a punishment of up to 12 lashes, although this was often taken as meaning for each offence, and punishments of multiples of 12 were common. For more serious offences, courts martial were convened and dealt with matters of theft, desertion, mutiny, violence and refusal to follow orders. The courts martial had the power to impose capital punishment and corporal punishments up to 1000 lashes.⁶⁸ Naval punishments, therefore, for all the legitimacy vested in the courts martial at times looked little less brutal than those meted out to the enslaved.

In just over a year in command of the *Drake*, Perkins sentenced 14 of the 86 sailors to punishments of between seven and 18 lashes.⁶⁹ In the *Arab* he punished 11 men, including two masters, in eight months, mainly by whipping. One of the masters, James Tims, deserted along with five other men while the ship was at Martinique.⁷⁰ This did not make Perkins the most violent captain in the squadron, and there are recorded instances of far greater brutality, but neither was he unwilling to use the lash.⁷¹ Like all captains, he had the authority to have sailors whipped for things he judged to be misdemeanours. But it is striking indeed that he was a black captain imposing punishments on white sailors, even in Port Royal harbour at the heart of Britain's slave empire, where normally the implications for black-on-white violence were catastrophic.

It was only on the *Tartar* after 1802 that Perkins' use of punishments seems to have increased. In the year between June 1802 and 1803, he ordered the punishment of 46 crew and marines, including one midshipman, who was confined for insolence and neglect of duty. The *Tartar* had a much larger complement than the other vessels, so a greater number of punishments is not surprising. Perhaps more significant is the variation in offences being punished. On the smaller vessels the most common offence was drunkenness and, while the crew of the *Tartar* were not notably abstemious, more of them were punished for contempt, insolence and disobedience. There were also nine instances of neglect of duty, an offence which seems not to have occurred on Perkins' other ships.

Precisely why Perkins found discipline harder to maintain on the *Tartar* is unclear. This period coincided with the peaceful interlude after the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802 and the relative inactivity (and lack of threat) could have resulted in a less-disciplined crew. For the first time, however, Perkins appears to have struggled against directly racialized disobedience. In May 1803, he wrote to his patron John Markham at the Admiralty to complain that his lieutenants were too young, and that the first lieutenant 'is not more than 21 or 22 no sea man, & will never make an officer as

long as he lives'. This is likely to be the same officer – a 'smart and proud Englishman' – whom Peter Chazotte reported as saying it was 'a cursed disgrace for us British officers to be placed under the command of a blood-thirsty colored captain'.⁷² This is a very rare – perhaps the only – directly racialized comment recorded from one of Perkins' crew or officers and it is notable that it originated from the ship on which Perkins faced his greatest disciplinary challenges.

Haiti, again.

The resumption of war with Napoleonic France in 1803, soon after France's reinstatement of slavery in Saint Domingue, created what the British – and its navy in particular – regarded as a series of opportunities. As in his previous commissions, Perkins spent a great deal of time cruising the waters off Hispaniola in the *Tartar* and took part in the blockade of Saint Domingue, which was partly an attempt to ensure that economic damage was inflicted on France, and partly to ensure that the revolution and the revolutionaries were confined and kept away from British islands.

His most important role came in the aftermath of the declaration of Haiti as an independent republic on 1 January 1804. With Haitian independence, and despite their misgivings about the Haitian leader General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, whom they regarded as 'that monster', British merchants and officials in Jamaica were keen to reopen trade links to the new republic and, in particular, to establish Britain as its principal trading partner. British and Haitian leaders had long discussed commercial arrangements. Toussaint's complex diplomacy in the 1790s had involved discussions with British officers and officials about trade treaties within a year of the British withdrawal from Saint Domingue, and Dessalines contacted Lieutenant-Governor Nugent in Jamaica about re-establishing commercial arrangements in June 1803 in advance of Haitian independence and while Saint Domingue remained (in name at least) a French colony.⁷³ Edward Corbet was dispatched from Jamaica on 4 January 1804 (that is *before* news of Haitian independence reached Jamaica) as an envoy to negotiate a commercial treaty and to secure the long-term possession of the naval base at Saint Nicholas Mole in the north. He travelled there with Perkins on the *Tartar*, and carried a communiqué from Nugent to Dessalines.⁷⁴ This was merely the first of a succession of missions to independent Haiti, but it also highlighted some of the tensions between the two territories, the new official spirit of diplomacy notwithstanding.

Before reaching Port-au-Prince on 15 January, the *Tartar* called at Jérémie for two days from 10 January. There Perkins became embroiled in a dispute with the commander of the Jérémie district, General Laurent Férou. Férou learned that three white merchants and a French officer who had served with the *armées indigènes* had secretly boarded the *Tartar* in Jérémie harbour and planned to sail with it to Jamaica. Férou demanded the return of the officer whom he regarded as a

traitor; Perkins refused. In making his preparations to sail, Perkins sent a party of sailors ashore for water at Aux Abricots, just to the west of Jérémie, and they were promptly arrested. In the stand-off that followed, Perkins faced a dilemma: was he willing to sanction the deaths of his crew to save the life of a French officer? He was not, and the officer was sent ashore and promptly shot while Perkins' crew were released unharmed.⁷⁵ Thereafter, the mission continued to Port-au-Prince, where largely cordial if fruitless negotiations continued. Neither the emollience of Nugent's tone, nor Perkins' record of harrying the French, were sufficient to remove Haitians' mistrust of British intentions.

After the failure of this first mission, Edward Corbet made two further attempts to conclude a trade treaty with Dessalines in February and March, and on both occasions he went to Haiti on the *Tartar*.⁷⁶ During these visits, the *Tartar* took more than just the envoy, however. It also carried a significant cache of guns, which Perkins sold to the Haitians. When Corbet found this out on the second voyage, he wrote to Perkins in the strongest terms: 'I cannot but consider the selling to, & supplying those People with Arms, which may ere long be turned against the Island of Jamaica or the British Commerce, to be impolitic & improper in the extreme, & as such I now make my Solemn Protest against it.'⁷⁷ Corbet made his opposition known, in equally clear terms, to Nugent in Jamaica, who had been unaware of the transactions, which amounted to around 5000 weapons including 'musquets, carbines & swivels'. He seemed not to know that Perkins had already shipped 1800 weapons on the first trip.

These concerns were relayed to Perkins' commander, Admiral Duckworth, and perhaps reflect some mistrust – at least on Corbet's part – of the black naval officer who had been subject to previous French accusations of gun-running. Duckworth, however, vouched for Perkins. He wrote to Evan Nepean at the Admiralty to say 'if I don't comment on it, I consider the Transaction if not explained might operate against the Reputation of Captain Perkins with His Majesty's Ministers.' He went on to explain that these were prize weapons that had been seized during the French capitulation, which had been enabled by British naval blockade of Saint Domingue. It aided the rebel cause to such an extent that the British were allowed by Dessalines to occupy the naval bases at Saint Nicholas Mole and Tiburon. Although it is likely that the British were just as concerned to stop Haitians leaving Saint Domingue, the blockade also effectively prevented French forces under Rochambeau from gaining assistance from the sea. It meant they had no means of escape and they finally capitulated at Cap Français at the end of November 1803; the navy seized French ships and weapons as prizes.⁷⁸ The ships were auctioned in Jamaica, but the weapons were sold back to Dessalines in Haiti. Duckworth claimed the guns would have been returned sooner had he not wished to keep British forces out of disputes in pre-independence Haiti. With independence and Corbet's mission, 'I thought it my Duty to direct Captain Perkins to carry up 1800 [guns] which

General Dessalines received with great courtesy, paying his own Price, and requested Captain Perkins to bring the remainder, which I directed him to do on his second visit.' In other words, as far as Duckworth was concerned this was an entirely legitimate sale of French prize weapons to Haiti and he further justified it by saying 'Captain Perkins being directed to promote the object he might point out as being beneficial to the negotiations.'⁷⁹

Be that as it may, it is clear that neither Corbet, the British envoy to Haiti, nor Lt-Governor Nugent, the senior official in Jamaica, knew anything about this possible negotiations sweetener. Dessalines' response to Corbet's first mission had been to ask for, among other things, weapons. Nugent had refused official shipments arguing – somewhat disingenuously – that 'everything of that sort must be left to private merchants', albeit with the governor's permission.⁸⁰ Before Haitian independence, the French complained that the rebels had been supplied by the British in the short period of peace after Amiens, and it seems certain that private merchants had sold weapons to them. Even though there seems to have been little official oversight of weapon sales, Duckworth clearly went further in acting on his own initiative and only sought to justify the arms deal after its existence had been uncovered. His actions were not inconsistent with the navy's previous position of maintaining relationships with both sides of the Haitian revolution, but they suggest, in this case at least, that British policy towards Haiti was far from coordinated or coherent.

Perkins' role also reflects a British awareness of the politics of race in Haiti. Corbet noted Dessalines' apparent 'deference to the opinion of his Officers of Colour'.⁸¹ It was surely not coincidental, therefore, that Duckworth chose his only black captain – a free 'officer of colour' – who also happened to have huge experience of Haiti, both in having patrolled the seas and in having set foot in the new nation. In this context, it is worth speculating, too, whether the French accusations against Perkins in 1792 may have had some foundation, or whether his appearance in Saint Domingue in the months after the slave rising in 1791 afforded him connections with the new Haitian elite. Chazotte certainly regarded Perkins as 'an epauletted scoundrel' who acted as a 'regular agent of the Wilberforce Society', in particular through frequent meetings with General Férou in 1803 at which munitions and uniforms were supplied illicitly to the Haitians.⁸² Perkins, once a carpenter's servant now found himself at the heart of diplomacy between Britain and Haiti in the immediate aftermath of independence. He came into contact with Férou, later a signatory of the Haitian constitution, with Dessalines, and with the Jamaican governor, with whom he 'had much business'.⁸³

The trade negotiations were ultimately unsuccessful after the British took fright when Dessalines ordered the slaughter of the remaining white French inhabitants of Haiti in March 1804. Some of the news about the massacres came from Perkins, who warned Duckworth of their

imminence when he returned to Port Royal at the beginning of March. Duckworth ordered Perkins to 'call at the various Ports where the General [Dessalines] was likely to be, to use his Influence for the preservation of those poor unfortunate creatures'.⁸⁴ Duckworth clearly felt that Perkins had developed a sufficiently useful relationship with Dessalines to have some influence. It was to no avail and Dessalines embarked on a genocidal assault on the white population.⁸⁵

Perkins was one of the first British officials to see the aftermath of the massacres and he described them in detail in letters to Admiral Duckworth. In March and April 1804, Perkins reported the rape and massacre of white people across the country: 'such scenes of Cruelty & devastation have been committed it is impossible to imagine or my Pen to describe'. He believed that few of 450 people in Jérémie had survived and that 800 whites were killed in Port-au-Prince in eight days. His version is largely consistent with that of Chazotte, who was one of the few survivors.⁸⁶ The carnage was on such a scale that Chazotte, usually deeply critical of Perkins, wrote 'even that cold-blooded agent of Wilberforce' was 'horror struck by the abominable deeds of brutish lust, carnage and pillage'.⁸⁷ Perkins was ordered to help evacuate survivors, including some Spanish settlers close to the border between Haiti and Santo Domingo in Mancenille Bay on the north coast.⁸⁸

Perkins in Jamaica

Some months later, just before Christmas 1804, Perkins was replaced as captain of the *Tartar* by Edward Hawker, although the Admiralty's monthly 'Disposition of ships' records him as captain into 1805.⁸⁹ There is no record of Perkins continuing to serve in the navy after 1805. The initial problem was that the *Tartar* was redeployed to Nova Scotia, and Perkins refused to go. He suffered from asthma, which had afflicted him throughout his career, and he had been told that 'going to a cold country in the dead of winter ... would be the death of [him]'. He repeatedly wrote to Rear Admiral Markham to support his appointment to another command in the Caribbean, but it seems the Admiralty was unwilling to countenance officers with such specific demands.⁹⁰

By this time, Perkins was a well-known figure in Jamaica. His rank of captain had afforded him significant status, and his great experience of Caribbean waters and his exploits in two wars added professional respect.⁹¹ But perhaps as noteworthy is the fact that Perkins's status as an officer afforded him social status in official circles far beyond other free blacks or ex-slaves. Maria, Lady Nugent, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor and chronicler of social life during her time in Jamaica, included Perkins in her invitations to naval officers. Perkins, of course, had reason to see her husband, but some of his visits were social as well as professional.⁹² This may be even more remarkable than his naval career. It was one thing for him to rise through the naval ranks on the basis of his experience and expertise, but quite another for a black man – even as a free man of

colour – to enter the social world of the governor’s wife in early nineteenth-century Jamaica, where the particular whiteness of these social and naval functions has been emphasised by historians.⁹³ It is unlikely that the planter class received him as warmly. Local perceptions of his active role in the Haitian revolution may have undermined his position and it is possible that local white animosity may, in part, explain the Admiralty’s reluctance to appoint him to a ship in the Caribbean after 1805, his experience and expertise notwithstanding.

Perkin’s complex relationship with slavery – and to his place in Caribbean society – went one step further. Not only was he a naval officer, he was also a land and slave owner and it was to this occupation that he most likely turned after 1805. He was reputed to have been involved in the capture of 315 prizes and 3000 prisoners over the course of his naval career, and it is probable that he used at least some of his prize money to acquire property in Jamaica.⁹⁶ This was not an uncommon practice for naval officers: of the 41 commanding officers in the region in this period at least nine of them bought or inherited plantations, or acquired them through marriage. Officers of lower rank also bought estates or married into the planter class, the most notable being the young Horatio Nelson, who married Fanny Nesbit of Nevis.⁹⁷ The Jamaica Almanacs for 1811 and 1812 record Perkins as owning the Mount Dorothy estate in Saint Andrews parish, along with, respectively, 23 and 26 slaves. As a black plantation owner, he was not unique, but his status was predicated on his naval rank and career.⁹⁸ After his death in 1812, his estates passed to his children. Only one of his slaves was manumitted by his will – and by a codicil attached to it – a mulatto slave named John.⁹⁹

Conclusion

Perkins, of course, is not typical, but he and countless pilots and crew illuminate some of the complexities of the relationship between the navy and slavery in the Caribbean. Perkins was unquestionably a fine sailor who played a significant role in both the American and French wars. His status as an officer marked him as one of the elite, his race notwithstanding. His job required him to impress sailors and he thus was a descendant of slaves taking part in what many in the late eighteenth-century Atlantic regarded as a form of enslavement. As a black man ordering the punishment of white men in Port Royal, he turned the normal practice of Caribbean life on its head. His various roles in the Haitian revolution suggest that the British – from an early stage – saw value in either weakening a rival colony, or in maintaining relationships with both sides of the conflict as they planned for the post-revolution settlements. It is surely no coincidence that they turned to their only officer of colour in the Caribbean to be their main agent. Perkins himself seems to have been aware of his position, of his ‘double consciousness’ as a British naval officer moving among the

Caribbean elite and as a formerly enslaved ship's carpenter who was never fully accepted by that elite. He might well have been sympathetic to the Haitian revolutionaries' cause. This solidarity with black rebels sat uneasily with his official position, but even as he described the Haitian massacres which so horrified him in 1804, he was clear that only those immediately responsible should be blamed, rather than regarding the violence as being a characteristic of black people in general. He specifically noted attempts to save whites by 'a vast number of Black Men who possess some feelings of humanity'.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, perhaps, his uniqueness is most telling. There are no other instances of black officers reaching this rank, far less being invited to elite social gatherings. For all the countless pilots and crew on naval vessels, or the mariners in the merchant marine, only two other black men rose even to the rank of midshipman.¹⁰¹ As a result, it is clear that black mariners were systematically discriminated against. Maritime service unquestionably allowed the enslaved to 'resist the routinization of slavery' and played into patterns of slave resistance, but the fact that only one of the thousands of black mariners attained his rank reveals the limitations placed on black aspiration in the eighteenth-century Atlantic.¹⁰²

¹ Thomas Southey, *Chronological History of the West Indies*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1827) 3: 56; the movements of the vessels, as outlined in the Captains' Logs, accord precisely with later accounts of the navy's intervention to secure Perkins' release: The National Archives, Kew (TNA), ADM 51/4436 Captain's Log of HM Ship *Diana*; ADM 51/353 Captain's Log of HM Sloop *Ferret*. In both cases see the entries between 12 February and 24 February 1792.

² Southey, *Chronological History*, 3: 57.

³ TNA, ADM 51/4436 Captain's Log of HM Ship *Diana*; ADM 51/353 Captain's Log of HM Sloop *Ferret*.

⁴ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); David Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Charles S. Foy, 'The Royal Navy's Employment of Black Mariners and Maritime Workers, 1754-1783', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 28, 1 (2016), 6-35; Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000), 154-67; Julius S. Scott, 'Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network: The Case of Newport Bowers', in C. Howell and R. J. Twomey (eds) *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1991), 37-52.

⁵ N. A. T. Hall, 'Grand Marronage' from the Danish West Indies', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 42, 4 (1985), 476-98; Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, for the OIEAHC, 2010), 105-9. Angel Smith, 'An Anatomy of a Slave Society in Transition: The British Virgin Islands, 1807-1856', (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull, 2011), 51-2.

⁶ Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-made Man* (London: Penguin, 2005), 126-9, 133, 148; Ryan Hanley, 'A Radical Change of Heart: Robert Wedderburn's Last Word on Slavery',

Slavery and Abolition, 37, 2 (2016), 424; Robert Wedderburn, *An Address to the Rt Hon Lord Brougham and Vaux, Chancellor of the Exchequer by the Descendent of a Negro; Suggesting an Equitable Plan for the Emancipation of the Slaves* (London: John Ascham, 1831), 3; Iain McCalman, 'Anti-slavery and Ultra-radicalism in Early Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of Robert Wedderburn', *Slavery and Abolition*, 7, 2 (1986), 99-117.

⁷ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 129-30, 140-3.

⁸ Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies 1739-1763* (London: Frank Cass, 1963); Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 49-50. See also Douglas Hamilton, 'Rivalry, War and Imperial Reform in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean' in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and its People*, ed. S. Palmié and F. A. Scarano (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 261-72; N.A.M. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean* (London: Penguin, 2004), 353-4.

⁹ Important developments in this respect are John McAleer and Christer Petley (eds), *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c. 1750-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Sian Williams, 'The Royal Navy in the Caribbean, 1756-1814' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Southampton, 2014).

¹⁰ Pares, *War and trade*, 273-4.

¹¹ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island*, 3 vols. (1774; London: Frank Cass, 1970), 1: 377.

¹² TNA, ADM 8/34-37, 39-72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82, 84, 86, 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98-100. These figures represent the Admiralty's official figures for a full complement on ships; they need to be used with caution, therefore, because they do not always reflect the number actually aboard, nor do they necessarily mean that all personnel were white.

¹³ R.M. Martin, *History of the British Colonies*, 5 vols. (London: Cochrane and McCrone, 1834), 2: 361-2.

¹⁴ David Cordingly, *Billy Ruffian: The Bellerophon and the Downfall of Napoleon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), 168; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 622-5. For a discussion of the issues of recruitment see Richard Pares, 'The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-63', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20 (1937), 31-60.

¹⁵ National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM), DOU 6/4 no fol. Orderbook, James Douglas to John Patterson, Storekeeper, 2 June 1762.

¹⁶ Pares, 'The Manning of the navy', 32. For an alternative view: Foy, 'The Royal Navy's Employment of Black Mariners', 5, 33; David Barry Gaspar, *Bondsmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 109-13.

¹⁷ Philip D. Morgan and Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, 'Arming Slaves in the American revolution' and David Geggus, 'The Arming of Slaves in the Haitian Revolution', in Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Arming Slaves from Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 181-2, 211.

²² Foy, 'The Royal Navy's Employment of Black Mariners and Maritime Workers', 25.

²³ NMM, DOU 6/4 no fol. Orderbook

²⁴ Admiral Charles Stewart to Admiralty Secretary, 29 December 1730, in Daniel A. Baugh (ed), *Naval Administration, 1715-1750* (London: Naval Records Society, 1977), 357.

²⁶ Stewart to Navy Board, 11 November 1729, *ibid.*, 351; NMM, DUC/6 Estimate of money wanted for carrying on the service of His Majesty's Yard here up to 30th November next, Antigua Yard, 1 Sept 1800.

²⁷ Kevin Dawson, 'Enslaved Ship Pilots in the Age of Revolutions: Challenging Notions of Race and Slavery between the Boundaries of Land and Sea', *Journal of Social History*, 47, 1 (2013), 71-100; Charles S. Foy, 'Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713-1783' *Early American Studies*, 4, 1 (2006), 46-77; Michael J. Jarvis, 'Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 59, 3 (2002), 585-622;

²⁸ For an important discussion of Du Bois' notion of double consciousness see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 2002), 1-40; Caretta, *Equiano*, 292-3.

³¹ Isaac Schomberg, *Naval Chronology, or an Historical Summary of Naval and Maritime Events from the Fall of the Romans to the Treaty of Peace, 1802*, 5 vols. (London, 1802), 5: 378; Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 389; for Nelson's career in the Caribbean see Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 43-61, 82-105; *Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, 13 November 1803. Perkins is discussed briefly by O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided*, 180 and N. A. M. Rodger *Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1986), 272. See also N. A. M. Rodger, 'Perkins, John [Jack Punch] (c.1745–1812)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50232>, accessed 30.03.2015].

³³ <http://search.ancestryinstitution.com> [accessed 02.07.2015]; for the alternative accounts of his origins see Anon., 'Nautical Rambles', 462.

³⁴ TNA, ADM 1/2333 Captain's Letters: Perkins to W. W. Pole, Admiralty, 16 October 1808; ADM 36/5690 Muster Book, *Grenado Bomb*; ADM 36/5045 Muster Book, *Boreas*; ADM 33/606 Pay Book, *Boreas* 1759-1762.

³⁵ For a discussion of the importance of pilots, see Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 131-9; Dawson, 'Enslaved Ship Pilots'.

³⁶ TNA, ADM 51/1/5 Captain's log of the *Achilles*, 16 April 1771 to 9 April 1772, fols 22-23, 9 December and 23 December 1771; David Syrett, *The Rodney Papers: Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral Lord Rodney, Vol. 2, 1763-1780*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 71, 75, 86-7, 90: letters from Lord Rodney to Philip Stephens, 12 December 1771; Rodney to Stephens, 29 January 1772 and Stephens to Rodney, 17 April 1772.

³⁷ TNA, ADM 36/7753(238) Muster book of the *Antelope*. Perkins' rehabilitation was not unique. Thomas Jeremiah of Charleston experienced a similar mishap and redemption: Dawson, 'Enslaved Ship Pilots', 78.

³⁸ TNA, ADM 1/242(15) Philip Affleck to Joshua Rowley, 20 June 1780.

³⁹ *London Chronicle*, 7 March 1782; *London Courant, Westminster Chronicle and Daily Advertiser*, 9 March 1782; and *Whitehall Evening Post*, 13 August 1782.

⁴⁰ Anon., *Letter-books and Order Book of George, Lord Rodney, Admiral of the White Squadron, 1780-1782*, 2 vols. (New York: Naval History Society, 1932), 1: 490; 2: 745, 851; TNA, ADM 1/242(172) Rowley to Stephens, 28 February 1783.

⁴¹ TNA, ADM 51/311 Captain's Log of the *Endeavour*, 12 July 1782-16 July 1783, entry for 16 July 1783. Quote from NMM, MRK 102/5/13 Markham Papers: John Perkins to John Markham, 8 May 1803.

⁴² <http://search.ancestryinstitution.com>. The evidence here can be corroborated by detail in Perkins' will, proved in 1819: TNA, PROB 11/1617/236(291v-292v).

⁴³ Anon., 'Biographical Memoir of Thomas Macnamara Russell Esq', *Naval Chronicle*, 17 (1807), 456-461; Southey, *Chronological history*, 3: 55-6. The *Naval Chronicle's* account, published during Perkins' lifetime, was the first in a series of nineteenth-century recollections of the story. It was followed, almost verbatim, by the obituary of Russell in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 19 (1825), 372-3, then by Southey in 1827, and then by an anonymous chronicler in the *Nautical Magazine* in 1842: 'Nautical Rambles', 390, 461.

⁴⁷ TNA, CO 137/91(17) Resolution of the West India Planters and merchants, 3 November 1791.

⁵⁰ TNA, CO 137/91(116) Henry Dundas to Lieutenant-Governor Adam Williamson, 4 April 1793. A version of Charmilly's version of events is recorded in Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* (London: James Cundee, 1805), 401-2.

⁵¹ Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783-1793* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 249.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 390.

⁵³ Anon., 'Nautical Rambles', 461.

⁵⁴ Peter S. Chazotte, *Historical Sketches of the Revolutions, and the Foreign and Civil Wars, in the Island of St. Domingo, with a Narrative of the Entire Massacre of the White Population of the Island* (New York: Wm. Applegate, 1840), 9; Bryan Edwards, *An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of St. Domingo*, (London, 1797), 85.

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 1/245(4) Commodore John Ford to Philip Stephens, 10 March 1793; ADM 1/245(6) Ford to Stephens, 14 April 1793.

⁵⁶ *The World*, 4 November 1793.

⁵⁷ *London Packet, or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 9 December 1793; *The World*, 11 December 1793; Schomberg, *Naval chronology*, 4: 483.

⁵⁸ TNA, ADM 51/1278 Captain's Log of the *Drake*, 18 September 1797 - 17 March 1799. Entry for 17 March 1799.

⁵⁹ Maritime Museum of Denmark, Elsinore, M/S 1915:0570 'Briggen Lougen ... angrebet under St Thomas af 2de Engelske fregatter'; TNA, ADM 51/1406 Captain's Log of the *Arab*, 13 September – 17 May 1801; entries for 1 March and 4 March 1801; entries for 21-22 April.

⁶⁰ *British Gazette*, 2 June 1801; *Bell's London Weekly*, 1 June 1801.

⁶¹ *British Gazette*, 13 November 1803.

⁶² NMM, MRK/102/5(14) Perkins to Markham, 18 May 1806; J. K. Laughton, 'Markham, John (1761–1827)', rev. Roger Morriss, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18069, accessed 09.05.2016]. Perkins' career can also be traced through the Admiralty's monthly 'Disposition of ships': TNA, ADM 8/69, 70, 71, 72, 76, 78, 80, 82, 88, 90. See also NMM, Warship Histories database:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Spitfire_\(1793\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Spitfire_(1793)),

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Marie_Antoinette_\(1793\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Marie_Antoinette_(1793)),

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Drake_\(1779\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Drake_(1779)), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Arab_\(1798\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Arab_(1798)),

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Tartar_\(1801\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Tartar_(1801)). [Accessed 30.03.2015]

⁶⁵ Williams, 'The Royal Navy in the Caribbean, 1756-1814', 128-9.

⁶⁶ 'The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America' http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html [accessed 26.05.2016]; Nauticus, *The rights of the Sailors Vindicated* (London, 1772), 24, 59.

- ⁶⁷ Nauticus, *The Rights of the Sailors*, 24; Christopher P. Magra, 'Anti-impressment Riots and the Origin of the American Revolution', *International Review of Social History*, 58 (2013), 140-1; Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 157-8; Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 214-6.
- ⁶⁸ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 218-29; A.G. Jamieson, 'Tyranny of the Lash? Punishment in the Royal Navy during the American War, 1776-1783', *Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* 9, 1 (1999), 53-66; J.D. Byrn (ed), *Naval Courts Martial, 1793-1815* (Farnham: Ashgate for Naval Record Society, 2009), xvii-xxvii; Captain Frederick Hoffman, *A Sailor of King George: The Journals of Captain Frederick Hoffman, RN, 1793-1814* (London: Chatham, 1999), 78.
- ⁶⁹ TNA, ADM 51/1278 Captain's Log of the *Drake*, 18 September 1797 - 17 March 1799.
- ⁷⁰ TNA, ADM 51/1406 Captain's Log of the *Arab*, 13 September 1800 - 17 May 1801.
- ⁷¹ Niklas Frykman, 'The Mutiny on the *Hermione*: Warfare, Revolution, and Treason in the Royal Navy', *Journal of Social History*, 44, 1 (2010), 166-7.
- ⁷² NMM, MRK/102/5/13 Perkins to Markham, 8 May 1803; Chazotte, *Historical Sketches*, 61
- ⁷³ Philippe R. Girard, 'Black Talleyrand: Toussaint Louverture's Diplomacy, 1798-1802', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 64, 1 (2009), 100-9; Julia Gaffield, 'Haiti and Jamaica in the Remaking of the early Nineteenth-Century Atlantic world', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69, 3 (2012), 584-7, 591; Julia Gaffield, *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World: Recognition after Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
- ⁷⁴ TNA, CO 137/111(5-5v) Nugent to Dessalines, 3 January 1804.
- ⁷⁵ NMM, ADM/L/T/26 Lieutenant's Log of the *Tartar*; TNA, ADM 51/1447 Captain's Log of the *Tartar*, entries for 10 January and 12 January 1804; Thomas Madiou, *L'Histoire d'Haiti* (Port-au-Prince: J Courtois, 1849) 3: 126-7.
- ⁷⁶ For a full discussion of the negotiations see Gaffield, *Haitian Connections*, chapter 2.
- ⁷⁷ TNA, CO 137/111(131), Corbet to Perkins, 6 February 1804.
- ⁷⁸ Hubert Cole, *Christophe: King of Haiti*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), 136-9.
- ⁷⁹ NMM, DUC 10/1 Duckworth to Nepean, 9 March 1804.
- ⁸⁰ Quoted in Gaffield, 'Haiti and Jamaica', 602.
- ⁸¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 597. Original emphasis.
- ⁸² Chazotte, *Historical Sketches*, 30-1, 38, 64.
- ⁸³ Frank Cundall, (ed.), *Lady Nugent's Journal, Jamaica one hundred and thirty-eight years ago* (London: West India Committee for the Institute of Jamaica, 1939), 223; Perkins makes reference to marking the arrival of Dessalines in Jérémie Bay, in western Haiti, with a 15-gun salute: ADM51/1447 Captain's Log of the *Tartar*, entry for 27 February 1804.
- ⁸⁴ TNA, ADM 1/254 Duckworth to William Marsden, 15 April 1804.
- ⁸⁵ Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 336-40.
- ⁸⁶ TNA, ADM 1/254 Perkins to Duckworth, 17 March 1804; Perkins to Duckworth, 8 April 1804; Chazotte, *Historical Sketches*, 39-49.
- ⁸⁷ Chazotte, *Historical Sketches*, 64.
- ⁸⁸ TNA, ADM 1/254 Dacres to Duckworth, 19 May 1804.

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- ⁸⁹ NMM, ADM/L/T/26 Lieutenant's Log of the *Tartar*, 21 December 1804; TNA, ADM 8/90.
- ⁹⁰ NMM, MRK/102/5/14 Perkins to Markham, 18 May 1806.
- ⁹¹ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 387-8.
- ⁹² Cundall (ed.), *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 72, 223, 250.
- ⁹³ Gad Heuman, 'The Free Coloreds in Jamaican Society', in Gad Heuman and James Walvin, *The Slavery Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 66; Sian Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society during the Eighteenth Century', in McAleer and Petley (eds), *The Royal Navy*, 35-9.
- ⁹⁶ Rodger, ODNB.
- ⁹⁷ Williams, 'The Royal Navy in the Caribbean', appendix; Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, 96-8.
- ⁹⁸ Heuman, 'Free Coloreds', 662-3.
- ⁹⁹ www.jamaicanfamilyhistorysearch.com/Samples/Almanacs.htm [accessed 02.07.2015] *Jamaica Almanac*, 1811, 1812; TNA, PROB 11/1617/236(291v-292v).
- ¹⁰⁰ TNA, ADM 1/254 Perkins to Duckworth, 17 March 1804.
- ¹⁰¹ Foy, 'Black Mariners and Maritime Workers', 15-16.
- ¹⁰² Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 133.