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Source: *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Apr., 2008), pp. 205-232

Published by: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25096784>

Accessed: 07-04-2016 20:25 UTC

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The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire

Maya Jasanoff

ON the first day of summer 1779, a small merchant vessel bobbed around Chebucto Head, drifting past Micmac canoes and the fortifications of George's Island into the crowded port of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It had survived a buffeting two-week voyage from Maine across the Bay of Fundy, and its passengers—the Reverend Jacob Bailey and his family—were grateful to touch land again. They were especially relieved to reach a land where they saw “the Britanic colours flying” because the Baileys were refugees from revolutionary America: loyalists who had fled to Nova Scotia after years of persecution. They reached British safety with just the rags on their backs. Bailey vividly described his costume of rusty black trousers speckled with lint and pitch stains, stockings a threadbare lattice, an oversize coat swinging loose around his ankles, and a “jaundise coloured” wig topped by a limp beaver cap. So many people came to gape at the strange party that Bailey delivered an impromptu speech from the deck: “Gentlemen, we are a company of fugitives . . . driven by famine and persecution to take refuge among you, and therefore I must intreat your candor and compassion to excuse the meanness and singularity of our dress.” He thanked God, he later wrote, for guiding “me and my family to this retreat of freedom and security from the rage of tyranny and the cruelty of opposition.” But he had also “landed in a strange country, destitute of money, clothing, dwelling or furniture,” and his future was in the hands of chance.¹

Maya Jasanoff is an associate professor in the History Department at Harvard University. She would like to thank the anonymous readers for the *William and Mary Quarterly*, colleagues who offered suggestions on earlier versions of this piece, and audiences at Cornell University, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, the New School for Social Research, and the New York Public Library for their comments. The author is also grateful to her former colleagues and graduate students at the University of Virginia for many illuminating conversations on this topic.

¹ Jacob Bailey, “A Journal containing a variety of incidents,” vol. 4: 4–31, in Jacob Bailey Fonds, MG 1, vol. 95 (reel 14900), Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax. On Bailey’s persecution in Maine, see “Letters to Various Persons March 21st 1777 to Decr 30 1778,” *ibid.*, vol. 91, item no. 21 (reel 14895); “Rev. J. Bailey’s explanation of his conduct in sending political notice,” Mar. 1, 1775, in Jacob Bailey Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Series, Volume LXV, Number 2, April 2008

Bailey belonged to a large yet little-studied group of British subjects in revolutionary North America: loyalists who were exiled or fled from the thirteen colonies and sought a haven in Britain and its empire. Loyalists have long been relegated to the margins of mainstream history; they are often seen as losers, backward, and wrong. Books on the American Revolution usually mention that one in five members of the white colonial population sympathized with Britain during the war, passing over them with little further notice. Even the number of loyalists will likely always remain elusive, since "loyalism meant different things to different persons in different situations." Though academic interest in loyalism seems to be on the rise, the bulk of scholarship on the topic was produced in the bicentennial 1970s and tends to focus on the ideology of well-known figures such as Thomas Hutchinson and Joseph Galloway rather than the everyday experiences of ordinary loyalists. Similarly, though the labels applied to them—Tory and loyalist—emanated from British politics (like so much American revolutionary discourse) and continued to resonate on the eastern side of the Atlantic, loyalists have figured little in the major treatments of British politics and identity in the war. (Nor, as David Armitage justly laments, have British historians engaged with American historiography in anything like the way that historians of colonial America have with that of contemporary Britain.) To bend Gary B. Nash's label for the Revolution-era slave population, the loyalists constitute another, perhaps even more "forgotten fifth" in the history of these years.²

² Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 25, no. 2 (April 1968): 259–77 (quotation, 261). Smith uses the strength of loyalist regiments to develop a plausible estimate that 19.8 percent of the white population remained loyal. For the Nash label, see Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006). The marginal status of the topic of loyalism is underscored by the predominance of antiquarian and genealogically oriented studies. Some are gold mines, however, from the first serious study of the loyalists, Lorenzo Sabine's *Biographical Sketches of the Loyalists of the American Revolution with an Historical Essay* (Boston, 1864), to "The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies," maintained by Nan Cole and Todd Braisted, <http://www.royalprovincial.com>. Major scholarly treatments include Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* (New York, 1974); John E. Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind: Joseph Galloway and the American Revolution* (University Park, Pa., 1977); Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); and the indispensable work of Robert McCluer Calhoon, including Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America* (New York, 1973); Calhoon et al., *The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia, S.C., 1989); Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Loyalists and Community in North America* (Westport, Conn., 1994). But there is little on loyalists in works that have looked in detail at the British response to the war: H. T. Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the American Revolution* (Harlow, Eng., 1998); Stephen

Indeed, for all that scholars have attempted to correct bluntly patriotic portrayals of American independence, it remains surprisingly controversial in the United States today to count loyalists among the victims of republican chauvinism. It must be remembered, though, that the American Revolution really was a civil war and was clearly seen as such by contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic, some of whom experienced its divisive effects within their own families, as in the conspicuous example of William Franklin, loyalist governor of New Jersey, and his patriot father, Benjamin. Loyalists expressed their views passively and actively: they refused to swear loyalty oaths to the new assemblies; they moved to cities and regions under British control; and nineteen thousand joined loyalist regiments to fight for their vision of British colonial America. In retaliation they faced harassment from their peers—most vividly, if rarely, by tarring and feathering—and sanctions from state legislatures, which could strip them of their land and possessions or imprison or formally banish them.³

Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford, Eng., 2000); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000). More work has addressed British radicalism in this period than British conservatism, such as John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769–1782* (Kingston, Ontario, 1987), but see Linda Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760–1820,” *Past and Present*, no. 102 (February 1984): 94–129; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995); J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Régime*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 2000). For David Armitage’s lament, see Armitage, “Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 427–45, esp. 435.

³ See for instance a published response by G. Fiske Brown to my essay, “Loyal to a Fault” (*New York Times Magazine*, July 1, 2007), taking issue with the attempt “to foment sympathy for what amounted to America’s first losers” (Letters, *New York Times Magazine*, July 15, 2007). On Benjamin Franklin and William Franklin, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 2004), 160–63. On contemporary perceptions of the Revolution as a civil war, see among others T. H. Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in Need of Revising,” *Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (June 1997): 13–39; Dror Wahrman, “The English Problem of Identity in the American Revolution,” *American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (October 2001): 1236–62; Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600–1850* (New York, 2003), chap. 7; Edward Larkin, “What Is a Loyalist? The American Revolution as Civil War,” *Common-Place* 8, no. 1 (October 2007), <http://www.common-place.org/vol-08/no-01/larkin>. An estimated nineteen thousand loyalists served in forty-two different provincial regiments and militias. See Smith, *WMQ* 25: 266; Calhoun, *Loyalists in Revolutionary America*, 502; Stephen Conway, *The War of American Independence, 1775–1783* (London, 1995), 46. Legal measures against the loyalists are summarized in Claude Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (1902; repr., Bowie, Md., 1989), app. B–C.

Ultimately, at least sixty thousand loyalists with fifteen thousand slaves in tow left the thirteen colonies to build new lives elsewhere in the British world. This figure represents roughly one in forty members of the population (compared with one in two hundred who emigrated from revolutionary France). Seven thousand or so went to Britain, often to find themselves strangers in a strange land. By far the largest group, more than half the total, fled to Canada and settled in the present-day provinces of the Maritimes, Ontario, and Quebec. Notably, about three thousand black loyalists moved to Canada, some of the thousands of former slaves who had gained freedom by fighting for the British. Among the immigrants to the north were also several hundred of Britain's long-standing Indian allies, the Mohawk of upstate New York. Another large contingent of loyalists traveled to the Caribbean, chiefly Jamaica, and to the Bahamas. In perhaps the most intriguing migration, nearly twelve hundred black loyalists moved a second time in 1792 from Nova Scotia to the experimental free black colony of Sierra Leone. Loyalists scattered as far afield as India: the East India Company army would soon be sprinkled with American-born officers, including two of Benedict Arnold's sons. And some black loyalists would even travel to the end of the earth, among the first convicts transported to Australia's Botany Bay. Following Bernard Bailyn's observation that "Atlantic history is the story of a world in motion," loyalist refugees remind readers that the history of the modern British Empire involved an even wider world in motion.⁴

⁴ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 61 (quotation). Standard estimates of the loyalists who left range from sixty to one hundred thousand. My research thus far has allowed me to document the migration of roughly thirty thousand loyalists to the Maritimes (including three thousand black loyalists), six thousand to Quebec (including several hundred Mohawk), five thousand to Florida (from whence many would later move to the Bahamas or the Caribbean), three thousand to Jamaica, one thousand to the Bahamas, and seven thousand to Britain; to this total must be added a further five to seven thousand black loyalists not included in these tallies. I have also found evidence to support an estimate of fifteen to seventeen thousand slaves exported by loyalists. Slaves were not loyalists but should be counted in aggregate figures of the number of people dislocated by the war. (I will supply full documentation for my estimates in my forthcoming book on the loyalist diaspora.) For comparison with France, see R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800: The Challenge* (Princeton, N.J., 1959), 188. For black loyalist numbers, see Cassandra Pybus, "Jefferson's Faulty Math: The Question of Slave Defections in the American Revolution," *WMQ* 62, no. 2 (April 2005): 243–64. The *Book of Negroes* recorded nearly three thousand black loyalists embarking from New York for Nova Scotia, whereas Simon Schama indicates that thirty-five hundred blacks ultimately settled there. See Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (London, 2005), 223. For Mohawk loyalists, see Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York, 2006). On the loyalist immigration to the Caribbean, see Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Legacy of the American Revolution to the*

Some have explored these individual episodes. Mary Beth Norton's *The British-Americans* offers an unsurpassed account of the loyalist exiles in Britain; Simon Schama and Cassandra Pybus have traced the black loyalist movements to Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone; and the loyalist experience in Canada—where loyalists are hailed by some as founding fathers—has been the subject of numerous works since the mid-nineteenth century. Yet no comprehensive study has ever been made of the diaspora as a whole. The result is that historians of this period have not yet appreciated the full imperial extent of these migrations around and beyond the Atlantic. Nor have scholars looked in detail at white, black, and Indian loyalists together to consider where their experiences converged or differed. Only one recent essay, by Keith Mason, has placed the loyalist exodus in a wider, Atlantic context. As Mason rightly observes, “outside Canada” the loyalists’ place in the historiography resembles that of the Jacobites: “a people whose story merits inclusion in the larger narrative but who are usually represented as having little impact on the course of Anglo-American history.”⁵

Loyalist émigrés demand a larger, more significant narrative of their own that extends, as the refugees did, across the globe. They had a transformative effect on those parts of the empire where they constituted the majority of the population—the Maritimes, the Bahamas, and Sierra Leone—and shared parallel experiences across those domains. Their greater value as historical subjects lies in the perspective they grant onto

British West Indies and Bahamas: A Chapter Out of the History of the American Loyalists (Columbus, Ohio, 1913); Michael John Prokopow, “To the Torrid Zones: The Fortunes and Misfortunes of American Loyalists in the Anglo-Caribbean Basin, 1774–1801” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1996). The black loyalist migration to Sierra Leone has most recently been studied by Schama, *Rough Crossings*; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston, 2006). Benedict Arnold’s sons Edward and George appear in V. C. P. Hodson, *List of the Officers of the Bengal Army, 1758–1834* (London, 1927), 1: 52. Arnold’s son Edward Shippen Arnold went to India “under the Patronage of Lord Cornwallis,” and his son James (born just after the Revolution in Saint John) followed three years later. See Benedict Arnold to Jonathan Bliss, Sept. 19, 1800, in Benedict Arnold Papers, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John. For loyalists in Australia, see Pybus, *Epic Journeys*.

⁵ Keith Mason, “The American Loyalist Diaspora and the Reconfiguration of the British Atlantic World,” in *Empire and Nation: The American Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. Eliga H. Gould and Peter S. Onuf (Baltimore, 2005), 239–59 (quotation, 239). For loyalists in Britain, see Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774–1789* (London, 1974). For loyalists in Canada, see Alan Skeoch, *United Empire Loyalists and the American Revolution* (Toronto, Ontario, 1982); Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783–1791* (Kingston, Ontario, 1986); Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women* (Montreal, Quebec, 1993); Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto, Ontario, 1997).

the wider British world in a moment of crisis and change. For American historians the loyalist diaspora should offer an important reminder that the story of American independence cannot be confined within the borders of the nation. As such it extends the argument made by Alan Taylor, whose work on "the late loyalists" has situated the early Republic in its continental context.⁶ Simply acknowledging the scale of the postrevolutionary exodus emphasizes that American independence was messy, with rippling international and human consequences.

At the same time, loyalist migrants help shed new light on an old question in British imperial historiography: how did the American Revolution affect the British Empire? Historians no longer routinely view the Revolution as marking a neat dividing line between a first, largely Atlantic, empire of trade and settlement and a second territorial empire of direct rule, anchored in India and encompassing millions of nonwhite subjects. Indeed, as P. J. Marshall has compellingly demonstrated, the collapse of British rule in the thirteen colonies was underpinned by the same metropolitan policies that encouraged the creation of that multiethnic land empire, which survived and grew after 1783. Most imperial historians would agree, however, that the loss in America clarified and strengthened empirewide impulses toward increasingly authoritarian rule, as well as supplying new rhetoric and in some cases new means of accommodating non-British subjects. "Never again," Eliga H. Gould has observed, "would the British think of any part of their empire as an extension of their own nation." Colonial subjects were henceforth to be embraced in a humanitarian, ostensibly inclusive empire but subordinated to metropolitan Britons, partly by elaborate hierarchies of difference.⁷

Loyalist émigrés offer a concrete population through which to see how these changes developed across the British world. How neatly did

⁶ Alan Taylor, "The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 1–34.

⁷ Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, 181–214 (quotation, 214). P. J. Marshall's argument is laid out in Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c. 1750–1783* (Oxford, Eng., 2005), esp. 353–79. On authoritarianism and inclusion, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992), chap. 3; Wilson, *Sense of the People*, chap. 5; Eliga H. Gould, "A Virtual Nation: Greater Britain and the Imperial Legacy of the American Revolution," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 476–89; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006). Brown argues that the American Revolution played a key role in crystallizing British abolitionism. On the notion of difference in the empire, see esp. Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002); Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003); Wilson, "Introduction: Histories, Empires, Modernities," in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660–1840*, ed. Wilson (Cambridge, 2004), 1–26.

they actually conform to the new metropolitan ideas of colonial subjecthood? As migrants from one part of the British Empire to others—at home neither in the United States nor for the most part in Britain—loyalist refugees constitute an especially intriguing group through which to think about the meanings of imperial belonging. By explicitly affiliating themselves with Britain, they help illuminate a defining peculiarity of Britishness: its unusually portable and flexible quality. The loyalists, like millions of imperial subjects well into the twentieth century, laid claim to being British though they did not live within the British nation-state. This is why Bailey's heart swelled when he saw the British flags in Halifax harbor. But what did loyalists mean and expect by associating themselves with the empire and how did the British respond? Looking at loyalists suggests that, though the 1780s marked a decided refashioning of the empire's extent, population, and self-image, the decade also laid the groundwork for persistent tensions within that empire. Enduring contests about how far to incorporate and how far to assimilate, about who did and did not count as British and how to make such a determination would inflect conceptions of British subjecthood and imperial governance for at least a century to come.

Following the loyalists into the British Empire affords the chance to consider how Britain coped with this mass migration and how successful it was at accommodating different types of refugees. Fitting the picture many scholars have drawn of the late-eighteenth-century empire, the benevolent treatment of some loyalists certainly bolsters an image of the British Empire as a diverse, multiethnic entity. Yet the experiences of other loyalists point to the limits and self-contradictions built into such an empire: differences between who mattered and who did not and questions of how British rights and liberties at home might differ from rights and liberties abroad. Though Britain made an effort to reach out to blacks, white loyalists, and Indians in some areas, in others it appeared to fall short of its seemingly inclusionary mission. Meanwhile loyalists in several settings explicitly challenged imperial authority in terms uncannily like those of their rebel peers. This political disposition was the most striking of several American (or provincial) inheritances they brought with them to their new British (and also provincial) homes. Significant as it was in aggregate, this migration was composed of thousands of individual lives disrupted, dispossessed, or displaced. Probing one family's experiences on the move demonstrates how this migration affected the people caught up in it. Attachment to Britain cost thousands their homes and livelihoods, but might they have gained anything from their British affiliations as well?

Losses are intrinsically depressing, and British historians have traditionally painted the immediate aftereffects of the American Revolution in dismal colors: sunk morale, spiraling deficits, and a king reduced to blubbing madness. Yet, as Linda Colley has shown, the loss in America encouraged a stronger sense of British national unity and a similar strengthening of imperial purpose, as British administrators concluded that government authority in the colonies had if anything been too weak. In keeping with the emerging scholarly consensus that discards a tidy division between first and second British empires, the diffusion of loyalist refugees underscores how the war reinvigorated a global empire that was at once Atlantic and Pacific, American and Asian, and was supervised increasingly from a British center.⁸

As a forceful reminder of why the American Revolution should be set in global context, consider the astonishing range of imperial reforms that unfolded in its wake. The end of the war was rapidly followed by a remarkable series of changes in British imperial policy and public perceptions of empire. In 1782 the Irish Patriots, led by Henry Grattan, successfully established a measure of parliamentary independence for Ireland. In 1784 Parliament undertook a major overhaul of Indian administration, aimed in part at staving off the abuses of power that Edmund Burke and others had identified at the heart of the American crisis. Continuing anxieties about the nature of imperial rule in India were played out a few years later in the dramatic impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, governor of Bengal. In 1787 the British antislavery movement consolidated with the founding of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. American independence cut the number of slaves in the British Empire in half, but equally important, as Christopher Leslie Brown has splendidly demonstrated, the Revolution allowed abolitionists to draw a moral contrast between Britain and the United States.⁹ Meanwhile, in 1788, an entirely new arena of imperial activity opened with the arrival of the first convicts in Australia. Taken together these developments demonstrated a turn toward centralized authority coupled in places with the promotion of humanitarian inclusiveness.

The loyalist migration not only took place against this backdrop but also directly intersected with it, most tangibly across Canada, whose population, political structures, and civic institutions were transformed.

⁸ Colley, *Britons*, esp. 132–45. For an excellent concise analysis of the war's effects, see John Cannon, "The Loss of America," in Dickinson, *Britain and the American Revolution*, 233–57.

⁹ Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), xii, 238; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 26–27.

Americans and Britons easily forget that the loss of America was actually the making of Anglophone Canada, a demographic and cultural shift clearly expressed in the 1791 Canada Constitutional Act, which divided formerly French-majority Quebec into two parts and extended the reach of English law and Protestantism. Elsewhere in the empire, loyalists doubled the population of the Bahamas and the arrival of black loyalists in Sierra Leone revived the fortunes of the faltering colony. And it seems no coincidence that an early proponent of Australian settlement was himself a loyalist who suggested relocating his fellow refugees there.¹⁰ Mapping out the loyalist migration emphasizes how Britain responded to the lost war with expansion, restructuring, and renewed senses of national and imperial purpose.

It is possible to gauge these effects in detail by inspecting how Britain coped with the mass migration. Though it was not the first such episode, the loyalist exodus constituted the widest-ranging and probably the largest refugee crisis Britain had ever faced. The word "refugee" entered the English language with the arrival of up to fifty thousand Huguenots in England after 1685; thousands more immigrated to Ireland and North America. A more concentrated refugee influx descended on England in the summer of 1709, when more than ten thousand "Poor Palatines" sought to settle in Britain under a new law allowing easy naturalization to foreign Protestants. They were supported by ad hoc government and private charity—some were housed in army tents pitched on the various commons south of the Thames—before being mostly dispersed to Ireland and the transatlantic colonies. The naturalization act was repealed soon thereafter.¹¹

Where these earlier refugee populations had made their way to England from the Continent, often to settle or emigrate from there, most loyalist migrants began and ended their journeys on British colonial soil. Many of the loyalist exiles in England had left the colonies in 1775 with the fall of Boston. But tens of thousands of civilians had moved during the war, either fleeing over northern and southern borders

¹⁰ James Mario Matra, "A Proposal for establishing a Settlement in New South Wales," Aug. 23, 1783, in Alan Frost, *The Precarious Life of James Mario Matra: Voyager with Cook, American Loyalist, Servant of Empire* (Carlton, Australia, 1995), 111–16.

¹¹ Robin D. Gwynn, *Huguenot Heritage: The History and Contribution of the Huguenots in Britain* (London, 1985), 1 ("refugee"), 5, 24; H. T. Dickinson, "The Poor Palatines and the Parties," *English Historical Review* 82, no. 324 (July 1967): 464–85. I am grateful to Noah McCormack for the Dickinson reference. Loyalist émigrés also routinely referred to themselves as refugees. Their status conforms to the *Oxford English Dictionary's* first definition of refugee as "one who, owing to religious persecution or political troubles, seeks refuge in a foreign country" (*OED*, s.v. "refugee").

like Jacob Bailey or traveling to the British strongholds of New York, Charleston, Savannah, and Saint Augustine. With the evacuations of those cities from 1782 to 1784, British authorities decided to assume responsibility for the loyalists' relocation. While Commander in Chief Guy Carleton coordinated this massive effort from his headquarters in New York, officials on the receiving end, from Nova Scotia to Jamaica, struggled to produce shelter and food for the new and impending arrivals. In Quebec, for instance, more than fifty-six hundred loyalists settled in townships formed so hastily they were known only by number. Government-appointed inspectors regularly mustered the refugees (a practice followed across Canada as well as in Florida and the Bahamas), tallied them by gender and age, and distributed rations with parsimonious exactitude. One inspector was urged never to give excess supplies unless "necessities *absolutely* require it" and advised that considerable savings might be made "by striking off many young people who ought to earn their Livelyhood and Girls who marry." Such savings had their own price; the end of a long winter found many Quebec refugees "very sickly," and "several died owing as they think for the want of provision & Cloathing."¹²

A longer-term challenge of apportionment concerned distributing land, which the Crown had promised to loyalist settlers. Ex-soldiers received lots according to rank, ranging from one hundred acres for a private to seven hundred for a captain. In an almost direct reversal of the enclosures of common lands occurring in contemporary Britain, Canadian land was escheated from large absentee owners and redistributed to thousands of small proprietors. Faced with some thirty thousand applications for lots, the surveyor general of Nova Scotia unsurprisingly saw his job as "next to Egyptian Slavery." During the long winters of the mid-1780s, teams of surveyors struggled through woods clogged by snow to assess the forests, measure lots, and issue warrants of survey. Whitehall dispatched nails and hammers as well as wood rasps and hoes

¹² Robert Mathews to Abraham Cuyler, Quebec, Nov. 18, 1782, in Haldimand Papers, British Library, Add. MSS 21825, fol. 25 ("necessities *absolutely* require it"); Stephen DeLancey to Mathews, Apr. 26, 1784, *ibid.*, fols. 233–234 ("very sickly"). Some lucky refugees were equipped with supplies in advance: wool and linen, shoes and mittens, and an ax and spade for men. See "Memorandum by Brook Watson, commissary general," June 14, 1783, in Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans* (New York, 1969), 199–201. In Jamaica local authorities' efforts to cope with the refugee influx are reflected in the Kingston Parish Vestry's expenditures of £2131 8s. 2d. in 1783 and 1784 in pensions and other support for loyalists. See Kingston Vestry Minutes 2/6/6, fol. 118, Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town. For loyalist settlement in Quebec, see "Return of disbanded Troops & Loyalists settled upon the King's Lands in the Province of Quebec in the Year 1784," in Haldimand Papers, Add. MSS 21828, fol. 141.

by the hundreds. New sawmills churned out boards and shingles for houses. By the spring of 1785, refugees such as New Yorker Henry Nase had rediscovered their old lives as farmers, sowing rye, "blue nose" potatoes, butter beans, and cabbages in the Canadian soil.¹³

The hardest consideration was what to do about the property losses, from vast estates to humble oxcarts, that nearly every loyalist refugee had sustained. In hundreds if not thousands of instances, the American states had officially confiscated loyalist property. To what extent could or should the United States indemnify loyalists? This question turned out to be a major stumbling block in the Treaty of Paris peace talks. The heavily negotiated result, enshrined in article 5 of the provisional Anglo-American treaty, determined that "Congress shall earnestly recommend it to the Legislatures of the respective States, to provide for the Restitution of all Estates, Rights, and Properties, which have been confiscated, belonging to Real British Subjects."¹⁴ In other words Congress would ask the states nicely to restore British property, but it was entirely up to the states to decide whether to comply.

In Westminster, which had been fiercely factionalized throughout the war, this article struck many as a complete betrayal of British interests, proving so controversial that it helped bring down the Earl of Shelburne's government in the winter of 1783. But even those sympathetic to the loyalists soon found that pushing the matter further would lead to a total breakdown of negotiations. The article stood. Instead, in a rare (and quite possibly unprecedented) assumption of financial responsibility for overseas subjects, Parliament undertook to supply British government compensation for the loyalists. In June 1783 a commission of five members of Parliament was set up "to Enquire into the Circumstances and former Fortunes of such Persons as are reduced to

¹³ MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 96 ("next to Egyptian Slavery"); Diary of Henry Nase, 20 ("blue nose"), in Nase Family Papers, New Brunswick Museum. For acreage allotments, see "Muster Roll of the following Disbanded officers, Discharged and Disbanded soldiers and their respective families of His Majestys late First Battalion of Kings Rangers that are now settled and preparing to settle in the Island of Saint John, taken 12th day of June 1784," in RG 1, vol. 376, pp. 83–87 (reel 15436), Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia. A list of escheats in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick can be found enclosed in a letter from Governor John Parr to Lord Sydney, June 3, 1786, in National Archives, CO 217/58, fol. 159. The travails of surveying are documented in the letters of Sir John Wentworth, Surveyor General of the King's Woods, in Letter-book of Sir John Wentworth, 1783–1808, RG 1, vol. 49 (reel 15237), Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia. For supplies from Britain, see "List of items sent out to Nova Scotia" (accompanies Lord North's letter to Parr of May 1783), in Carleton Papers, box 32, item no. 7631, New York Public Library.

¹⁴ John Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, Services, and Claims of the American Loyalists, at the Close of the War between Great Britain and Her Colonies, in 1783* (1815; repr., Boston, 1972), 38.

Distress by the late unhappy Dissentions in America.” The Loyalist Claims Commission, as it was known, took oral and written evidence from loyalists and determined appropriate recompense. Within its first nine months, it received more than two thousand claims amounting to property losses of just more than £7 million—“an alarming sum,” recalled one of the commissioners, John Eardley-Wilmot—and more loyalists were waiting to file. Parliament extended and widened the commission’s brief: in 1785 two of the commissioners even traveled to Nova Scotia and Quebec to take evidence there. An agent was also dispatched to the United States to research property values. The commission’s work ended up consuming more than six years, in which time it had received 3,225 claims, examined 2,291 in detail, and awarded more than £3 million, or about one-third the total amount of losses claimed, with the funds supplied in part by national lotteries.¹⁵

Historians are indebted to the Loyalist Claims Commission for the testimony it gathered. Now housed in two huge series in the British National Archives, the evidence accumulated by the commission forms the biggest single collection of material on loyalist refugees. Most of the loyalist claimants were less grateful: unhappiness at the small amounts most of them received forms a sad thread through their writings. “If you have one that is satisfied with his dividend on your side of the Water,” reported one loyalist in London to his brother in New Brunswick, “it is more than I can say on this, the pittance is so small to many that they refuse, & despise it with contempt, while others die with broken hearts . . . Some have run mad with despair & disappointment.”¹⁶

But the point is what the very existence of this institution suggested about how the British state conceived of its responsibilities. It deserves note simply as an early example of state welfare at a time when pension schemes, for instance, were only just beginning to take shape. Even more strikingly than the distribution of overseas land, the Loyalist Claims Commission reflected a sense that Crown and Parliament had a duty to protect British subjects and their property at home and abroad. As such the commission foreshadowed the kind of Pax Britannica later envisioned by Victorian Liberal Henry John Temple, 3d Viscount Palmerston, who asserted the rights of British subjects to receive British protection no matter where in the empire they were or of what background. (For Commissioner Eardley-Wilmot, it also foreshadowed later relief efforts on behalf of French revolutionary émigrés: he established a committee that raised more than £400,000 for French refugees.) The

¹⁵ Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission*, 37–40 (“Enquire into the Circumstances,” 40), 50 (“alarming sum”), 90–91.

¹⁶ William Jarvis to Munson Jarvis, July 9, 1787, in Jarvis Family Papers, folder 27, New Brunswick Museum.

Loyalist Claims Commission pulled a sort of victory from the jaws of defeat. In Eardley-Wilmot's words, "Whatever may be said of this unfortunate war, either to account for, to justify, or to apologize for the conduct of either Country; all the world has been unanimous in applauding the justice and the humanity of Great Britain . . . in compensating, with a liberal hand, the Losses of those who suffered so much for their firm and faithful adherence to the British Government."¹⁷ Britain may have lost the war, but its treatment of the loyalists showed that, in principle at least, it would try to protect its overseas subjects from the consequences.

In 1812, about the time he wrote his *Historical View of the Commission* and some twenty-five years after concluding his work on it, John Eardley-Wilmot sat for a portrait by renowned American-born history painter Benjamin West. For historians the most striking feature of the Eardley-Wilmot portrait is a picture on the wall behind him: an allegorical painting, also by West, titled *Reception of the American Loyalists by Great Britain in the Year 1783*. The painting itself no longer survives (and may never have existed), but a contemporary engraving appears as the frontispiece to Eardley-Wilmot's memoir (Figure 1). It shows Britannia—big, bland, benevolent—extending her hand to a throng of loyalists led by William Franklin and Sir William Pepperell of Massachusetts. To Britannia's left stand West and his wife, their protected position perhaps reflecting that they had established themselves in Britain well before the war began. Allegories usually need explanation, and the average viewer probably would not guess that the figures holding Britannia's mantle represent "Religion" and "Justice" or that the cherubs at the top left are binding up the fasces of the Anglo-American relationship. (This image was created in 1812.) Another emblem speaks for itself: a crown, lodged prominently beneath Britannia's shield, represents that focal point of imperial loyalty, the king. Equally legible on the engraving's central axis is the preferred eighteenth-century representation of America: a statuesque Indian chief, in this case resembling someone jolted by an electric shock. He shelters a "Widow and Orphans, rendered so by the civil war" and behind him huddle figures apparently

¹⁷ Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission*, 98–99 (quotation). A parallel may be drawn, however, with the distribution of £60,000 among more than five thousand "indigent" Royalist officers in the Restoration. See P. R. Newman, "The 1663 List of Indigent Royalist Officers Considered as a Primary Source for the Study of the Royalist Army," *Historical Journal* 30, no. 4 (December 1987): 885–904. On John Eardley-Wilmot's later support for French refugees, see Robert Tombs and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (New York, 2007), 213.



FIGURE I

Benjamin West pictures the loyalists in British care. Engraving by H. Moses, circa 1815, after an inset in the portrait of John Eardley-Wilmot from 1812. Frontispiece from John Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission for Enquiring into the Losses, Services, and Claims of the American Loyalists, at the Close of the War between Great Britain and Her Colonies, in 1783* (1815; repr., Boston, 1972).

of African origin, “looking up to Britannia in grateful remembrance of their emancipation from Slavery.”¹⁸ One presumes they also remembered, gratefully, the abolition of the slave trade in 1807.

An Indian chief, war widows, and former slaves all under the looming protection of Britannia and the Crown: it is hard to imagine a more straightforward image of an inclusive British Empire that had managed to mint moral capital out of its wartime defeat. At some level this alle-

¹⁸ On the portrait of Eardley-Wilmot and the *Reception of the American Loyalists* image depicted on the wall behind him, see Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), 219–22 (quotations, 219), 565–67.

gory corresponds with documented reality. The identifiable white loyalists in this picture, for instance, each got money from the Loyalist Claims Commission. Hundreds of widows and orphans got material support from the British government. The Mohawk received their land and black loyalists made their exodus, however much against the odds, from American slavery to British freedom. In all these ways, as West's image celebrates, the British Empire held out a tangible promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to whites, blacks, and Indians excluded from the political life of the nascent United States.¹⁹

But self-images can be misleading, and West's image of Britannia was itself a construct. If the treatment of some loyalists shows British conduct as humanitarian and liberal, the fates of others demonstrate ways in which it rested on and perpetuated forms of exclusion. Scholars have not fully explored these cases. Consider the figure of the Indian. If West had any individual in mind for this image, it was likely Joseph Brant, the Mohawk chief who presided over his tribe's Canadian relocation and whom West may well have met when Brant visited London in 1776. Brant was an effective negotiator, and his success demonstrates the importance of indigenous leadership in extracting concessions from the British. Yet the Mohawk experience was not shared by Britain's southern Indian allies. West could not have had them in mind because Britannia did not "receive" those loyalists at all. At a conference in Saint Augustine in May 1783, Creek and Cherokee chiefs were horrified to learn that, according to the terms of the peace, Britain had agreed to cede Florida to their enemy Spain. "We took up the Hatchett for the English . . . The King and his Warriors have told us they would never forsake us," lamented one chief. "Is the Great King conquered? Or does he mean to abandon Us? . . . Do you think we can turn our faces to our Enemies[?]. . . No. If he has any Land to receive us (We will not turn to our Enemies) but go [to] it with our friends in such ships as he may send for us." So vigorous was Indian opposition to the cession that the British briefly floated the idea of relocating them to the Bahamas, though Sir Guy Carleton scotched the scheme on the grounds that the islands would not suit their way of life. Unfortunately for the southern Indians, their loyalty to Britain, unlike that of the Mohawk, ended in relative abandonment to the pressing encroachments of the United States.²⁰

¹⁹ John Eardley-Wilmot said that pensions were granted to 588 people, "chiefly Widows, Orphans, and Merchants, who had no means of livelihood, but had lost no real or personal Estate." See Eardley-Wilmot, *Historical View of the Commission*, 95. Keith Mason and Christopher Leslie Brown interpret the image in much the sense conveyed by Eardley-Wilmot. See Mason, "American Loyalist Diaspora," 245–46; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 313.

²⁰ On the treatment of the southern Indians, see "Substance of Talks delivered at a conference by the Indians to His Excellency Governor Tonyn, Colonel

A similar reality needs to be exposed regarding the other nonwhite group featured by West: African Americans. Eight to ten thousand black loyalists went on to enjoy their freedom in the British world; hundreds even received small acreages in Nova Scotia. Though historians have justly celebrated these remarkable tales of freedom, it should be stressed that at least as many blacks also discovered firsthand how slavery was preserved if not reinforced in the British Caribbean domains where it mattered most. As many as two thousand blacks were even taken to Canada as slaves, offering a moving counterpoint to those black loyalists digging out their shelters in the frozen ground. Far more slaves were exported to Florida, the Caribbean, and the Bahamas. Records of British evacuations suggest that at least fifteen thousand blacks were removed from the former colonies, most as slaves. Up to eight thousand went to Jamaica, and the slave population of the Bahamas, according to contemporary figures, increased by at least thirty-six hundred with the loyalist influx. A list of 129 loyalists who filed for tax exemption in Jamaica under a 1783 law gives a telling insight into patterns of loyalist slave exportation. Of these loyalists, 51 slave owners brought a total of 1,522 slaves from the colonies; that is, an average of 30 slaves per white slave owner, a ratio due in part to the fact that some of these slaves had been consigned to loyalists by their friends for sale.²¹

McArthur, and the Superintendent," May 15, 1783, in National Archives, CO 5/560, pp. 617–18 (quotations). Compare with the report in Bernardo del Campo to Conde de Floridablanca, London, Aug. 9, 1783, in Joseph Byrne Lockey, *East Florida, 1783–1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of Them Translated*, ed. John Walton Caughey (Berkeley, Calif., 1949), 138–39. Joseph Brant sat for a portrait by George Romney, and his Mohawk companion David Hill appeared in West's portrait of Guy Johnson. See Leslie Kaye Reinhardt, "British and Indian Identities in a Painting by Benjamin West," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 31, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 283–305. On the misbegotten Bahamas scheme, see Wilbur Henry Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida, 1774 to 1785: The Most Important Documents Pertaining Thereto, Edited with an Accompanying Narrative* (Deland, Fla., 1929), 1: 139. Many Iroquois, too, were abandoned on the American side of the border. See Taylor, *Divided Ground*, 111–13.

²¹ Slaves were listed on musters as "servants" to help stave off possible property claims from the United States. Incomplete records suggest that loyalists brought some 300 slaves to Upper Canada, 1,269 to Nova Scotia, and 441 to Saint John. See Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2d ed. (Montreal, Quebec, 1997), 34–43 (quotation, 37). Wilbur H. Siebert says that about 5,000 blacks went to Jamaica from Savannah and 2,613 from Charleston. See Siebert, *Legacy of the American Revolution*, 7–8, 15. A report presented to the Bahamas House of Assembly in April 1789 estimated that twelve hundred whites and thirty-six hundred blacks arrived in the Bahamas in 1784 and 1785. See Journal of the House of Assembly of the Bahamas, Apr. 28, 1789, p. 248, in Department of Archives, Nassau. I draw figures for Jamaica loyalist slave owners from "A List of Loyalists in Jamaica, prepared by George F. Judah," in MS 1841, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston. The list appears to have been prepared for Wilbur H. Siebert.

Even by conservative estimates, 50 percent more blacks left the colonies as slaves of loyalists than as loyalist freemen. Moreover the British government sanctioned and facilitated the export of slaves by loyalists, giving them passage on ships, granting the slave owners land, and maintaining slavery in the West Indies. (When Lord Dunmore, whose 1775 proclamation as governor of Virginia had inspired many slaves to run to the British for freedom, became governor of the loyalist-dominated Bahamas in 1787, however, he promptly managed to alienate some white loyalists by honoring the claims of black loyalists who had been wrongly reenslaved.) For every case of British Freedom (the stunningly self-named black loyalist featured in Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings*), the loyalist emigrants carried with them more than one human reminder of persisting British slavery.²²

Britons could (and did) congratulate themselves that slavery had been effectively abolished in Britain proper in 1772, as it would be in Canada by the century's end. But comparing different sites of exodus makes clear that though the expanding British Empire may in some ways have acted inclusively—granting land to the Mohawk and freedom to black loyalists—it also practiced forms of exclusion: neglecting its subjects and allies in Florida; enabling continued slave ownership; and even, for that matter, failing to meet the expectations of so many petitioners to the Loyalist Claims Commission. Local imperatives could explain such differences between British practices in various domains. The Mohawk lived on the new Anglo-American frontier, so their allegiance remained of palpable strategic importance, whereas the Creek and Cherokee, however much British agents wanted to retain their goodwill in general and the valuable Indian trade in particular, now lived in a Spanish province bordering the United States. By the same token, slavery operated on a vastly greater scale in the West Indies than it ever had in Canada, and sending free blacks to Canada or to Sierra Leone did not seriously compromise the institution in the islands where

²² Loyalists also tried to smuggle slaves out of the United States, which was one of the points of conflict between Governor John Maxwell and the loyalists in the Bahamas. Maxwell feared that runaway slaves were being sold in the Bahamas to loyalists, when "the poor Slave [had] obtained his Freedom by doing an Act, which all Nations protect, which is, most of these Wretches deserted from their masters in the Field: our General gave them Protections, and in Shifting for themselves, the Masters deceive them." He also worried that the slaves' true American owners would cause trouble trying to get them back. See Maxwell to Assembly, "Message," May 10, 1784, in National Archives, CO 23/25, fol. 205. On Dunmore in the Bahamas, see Whittington B. Johnson, *Race Relations in the Bahamas, 1784–1834: The Nonviolent Transformation from a Slave to a Free Society* (Fayetteville, Ark., 2000), 4, 42, 69. Lord Dunmore's rampant self-aggrandizement did nothing to restore his popularity. See Michael Craton, *A History of the Bahamas* (London, 1968), 173–80.

it mattered to Britain most. Indeed one could interpret the hasty export of poor black loyalists from London to Sierra Leone as a somewhat self-serving attempt to remove an awkward, conspicuous minority from mainland British soil.

As these examples imply, image and reality, like theory and practice, do not always match up. British policy was not an either-or proposition: either Britain was as West showed it—liberal, tolerant, and accommodating—or it was not. It was both. Such apparent contradictions between inclusion and exclusion resurfaced time and again in nineteenth-century British history, and scholars have identified them as a central paradox of British liberalism from the 1830s.²³ Yet as mapping out the loyalist diaspora indicates, similar tensions were already evident in the aftermath of the American Revolution. They emerged in tandem with the postwar empire, suggesting that the competing pressures of imperial liberty and authority boast a long genealogy.

And what of the white loyalists? They tend to be portrayed as either bad citizens or good subjects, as British counterrevolutionaries and subversives or as good Americans who refused to betray the British Crown. Leaving value judgments to one side, these characterizations correctly indicate that loyalists were two things at once, both British and American. Formally, they were British subjects in their own eyes, in British opinion, and even in some American courts.²⁴ As natives or long-term residents of the American colonies, they were also American, following widespread late-eighteenth-century usage, and often referred to themselves as such. This double identification meant that loyalist refugees carried a mixed legacy with them, infusing their new British colonial settlements with inheritances from their former American colonial homes.

Loyalist imports extended from the material to the spiritual. In Nova Scotia they ranged from the pancake and codfish recipes used by the governor's wife (who had come from New Hampshire with her husband) to the founding of Canada's first chartered university by emigrants from King's College in New York. Some loyalist transmissions can

²³ See for example Catherine Hall, "The Nation Within and Without," in *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867*, ed. Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall (Cambridge, 2000), 179–233.

²⁴ On the citizenship status of loyalists, see James H. Kettner, "The Development of American Citizenship in the Revolutionary Era: The Idea of Volitional Allegiance," *American Journal of Legal History* 18, no. 3 (July 1974): 208–42. For more perceptual distinctions, see Stephen Conway, "From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739–1783," *WMQ* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 65–100.

be traced back to single points of origin. The Wells brothers, loyalist printers of Charleston, South Carolina, fled with their printing press to Saint Augustine, where William Charles Wells published the region's first newspaper, and then to Nassau, where John Wells did the same; their brother-in-law Alexander Aikman settled in Kingston and became the publisher of the *Royal Gazette* and printer to the Jamaica House of Assembly. Another remarkable minidiaspora emanated from the black Baptist community that later coalesced into the First African Baptist Church in Savannah. This single flock produced black loyalist preachers including David George, George Liele, and Moses Baker, who went on to establish congregations in Canada and Sierra Leone and founded the first Baptist churches in Jamaica and the Bahamas some twenty years before the arrival of white missionaries.²⁵

The most striking and perhaps unexpected American legacy concerned politics. As Bernard Bailyn has demonstrated, American debates of the 1760s and 1770s echoed contemporary British contests about virtual representation, arbitrary power, and perceived tyranny.²⁶ Loyalists were accordingly styled Tories in contrast to the radical rebel Whigs. They shared some basic traits with Tories across the ocean: Anglican clergy in America (such as Jacob Bailey) were overwhelmingly loyal and, fundamentally, all loyalists upheld the supremacy of the king and Parliament. Allegiance to the monarch, in particular, formed a consistent link—probably the only one—among white, black, and Indian loyalists and joined educated elite loyalists with the humble rank and file, whose expressions of support for the king survive in their sometimes barely literate petitions pleading for support. The Crown sits

²⁵ "Memorandum of Cash Expended for the use of Mrs. Wentworth's House," September 1786, in "Records Relating to the Town of Halifax, 1758–1828," RG 1, vol. 411, item no. 10 (reel 15457), Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia. On the Wells family, see Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1: 189, 205; Louisa Susannah Wells, *The Journal of a Voyage from Charlestown to London* (New York, 1968), 87, 111–12. For Baptists, the central figures in Jamaica were George Liele and Moses Baker. See David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, and Other Parts of the World* (Boston, 1813), 2: 189–92, 194–206; Clement Gayle, *George Liele: Pioneer Missionary to Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1982); John W. Puls, ed., *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York, 1999). In Nova Scotia Baptist congregations were established by David George, who moved to Sierra Leone (George had been baptized by, and taken his name from, George Liele). John Marrant, a free black who had been a missionary to the Cherokee before the war and pressed into naval service as a musician during it, founded Methodist congregations. See Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black . . .*, 6th ed. (London, 1788). See also Alexander Pringle, *Prayer for the Revival Of Religion In All The Protestant Churches, and for The Spread Of The Gospel Among Heathen Nations, Recommended . . .* (Edinburgh, Scotland, [1796]), 101–11, 127–50.

²⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

prominently in Benjamin West's picture for a reason. Just as the Revolution ultimately strengthened the image of the king in Britain proper, so it bolstered the role of the monarch as emperor, a position that if anything outpaced and outlasted the monarch's significance as a figurehead at home.

Yet "Tory," still widely used as a synonym for loyalist, is a misleading designation. (It was also "always the term of reproach," as Thomas Hutchinson observed, and its negative connotations meant that loyalists rarely applied it to themselves.) Most people's choices in times of stress do not come down to pure ideologies alone, and the political label Tory tends to obscure the personal, pragmatic factors that may have influenced their decisions. It also corresponds only loosely with the diverse range of opinions loyalists held. For evidence of the variations in loyalist thought and practice, one need only point to that majority of loyalists who did not leave the United States or to those who returned to the United States in later years. Among loyalist refugees who left, pledging loyalty to the king was just about the only thing they could be counted on to accept. Even in Shelburne, Nova Scotia—the veritable loyalist capital, founded by refugees and settled by more than ten thousand of them—an oath of allegiance to the king had to be "explained as not to extend to taxation," suggesting some rather un-Tory principles among the town's residents. In the long run, as Alan Taylor has acutely observed, "Although we cast the Loyalists as losers, they ultimately won the original goal of the colonial resistance: exemption from British taxation while remaining within the empire."²⁷ And in many settings, the American loyalists turned out to be far from English Tories, as imperial governors learned to their peril.

The most pronounced contest between loyalists and imperial authorities unfolded in the Bahamas. Not long after arriving from East Florida, a group of refugee "Gentleman Loyalists" beset Governor John Maxwell with demands for more provisions, better land allocation, and greater political voice. How appropriate that the motto of loyalist John Wells's *Bahama Gazette* should be "not bound in loyalty to any masters," since the loyalists evinced little allegiance to Maxwell. Forming a committee "to preserve and maintain those Rights and Liberties, for which they left their Homes and their Possessions," they proceeded to circulate libelous handbills, run riot through the streets of Nassau (ringing the church bell at eleven o'clock at night "as if the Town had been on Fire"), and let loose "a Torrent of Billingsgate Language" when challenged in

²⁷ Thomas Hutchinson, in Brown, *Good Americans*, 30 ("Tory"); Benjamin Marston, in MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 118 ("explained"); Taylor, *Journal of the Early Republic* 27: 7 ("we cast the Loyalists").

court. Driven to his wit's end by these "most tormenting, dissatisfied People on Earth," Maxwell may have been relieved to hand over the governorship to James Powell at the end of 1784. Powell fared no better with the loyalists, whose mounting demands for political representation he found as "seditiously mad" as ever those of the American colonists had been. Only under Lord Dunmore did the "violent spirit of Party" in the islands begin to subside, and the loyalists gained seats in the assembly. By the early 1790s, they had helped introduce racial laws on par with those in the old southern American colonies; in 1807, Bahamian loyalists vehemently opposed the ending of the slave trade.²⁸

Severe clashes between loyalist settlers and government also took place in New Brunswick, a new province split off from Nova Scotia in 1784. If the American Revolution inspired an authoritarian turn among imperial administrators, that turn was personified by New Brunswick's first governor, Sir Guy Carleton's decidedly unpopulist brother Thomas, who believed "that the American Spirit of innovation should not be nursed among the Loyal Refugees" and held off on calling elections until the fall of 1785. Whereas the rowdy loyalists in the Bahamas were primarily well-off slave owners from the American South, Carleton's opponents were chiefly, in his words, "motly" ex-soldiers, "habituated" to "disorderly conduct . . . during a long Civil war." A "violent party Spirit" erupted among them, cultivated by agitators who plied them with liquor, promised redress "for all their former Grievances & supposed wrongs," and triggered riots, or at least so Carleton saw it. But another observer, William Cobbett, later recalled the election as an all-too-familiar effort by a ruling elite to suppress the voices of ordinary people. Cobbett, who had just arrived in New Brunswick as an army corporal, went on to be one of the leading British radicals of his generation. In the event the Carleton faction won, and the new assembly promptly passed a bill suppressing mass petitions and, by extension,

²⁸ Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Loyalists and Their Slaves* (London, 1983), 58 ("not bound"); printed handbill enclosed in John Maxwell to Lord Sydney, June 29, 1784, in National Archives, CO 23/25, fol. 154 ("to preserve and maintain"); Maxwell to Sydney, Aug. 26, Sept. 4, Oct. 9, 1784, *ibid.*, fols. 165 ("as if the Town"), 171 ("Torrent"), 229; Maxwell to Sydney, May 17, 1784, *ibid.*, fol. 111 ("most tormenting"); James Powell to Grey Elliott, May 11, 1785, *ibid.*, p. 193 ("seditiously mad"); Sydney to Maxwell, June 1786, *ibid.*, fol. 418 ("violent spirit"). On the loyalists' political demands, see their petition to Powell, enclosed in Powell to Sydney, May 11, 1785, *ibid.*, pp. 321–24. "It is not a little extraordinary," replied Sydney, "that Men who profess to have suffered for their Loyalty to the Crown, and adherence to the British Constitution, should so far forget themselves, and the Duty they owe to His Majesty, as to be guilty of the most daring attempts against His Royal authority, and that Constitution" (Sydney to Maxwell, June 1786, *ibid.*, fols. 418–19). On loyalists and race laws, see Siebert, *Legacy of the American Revolution*, 31–32; Saunders, *Bahamian Loyalists and Their Slaves*, 45, 68–69.

public dissent. So it was that Britain's newest colonial province dealt with a confrontation between political ideals that were at once emphatically American and familiarly British.²⁹

Even in utopia loyalists struggled with British authority. The black loyalists who traveled from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone in 1792 landed in a mock-Saxon polity dreamed up by abolitionist Granville Sharp where they were represented by community-chosen "hundredors" and "tithingmen." In practice, however, they were governed by the London-based Sierra Leone Company and its agents, which repeatedly failed to make good on promises. From their first months on African soil, settlers plagued the colony's superintendent, John Clarkson, with demands to honor their "civil rights" and the promise that "all should be equal." Extended delays about land allotment sparked a riot in 1794, competently suppressed by twenty-six-year-old Governor Zachary Macaulay, who set up cannon outside his house and offered free passage back to Nova Scotia—on a former slave ship—for anybody who wished to go. (None did.) Discontent mounted again with the imposition of quitrents in 1796. Then a dispute over the appointment of judges in 1800 triggered what amounted to a loyalist coup. Some of the hundredors and tithingmen issued their own legal code, setting themselves up as a government independent from the company-appointed governor and council. An armed uprising followed and for one steamy week in September black loyalists had to choose again between staying loyal or joining the rebels. But the British company soon prevailed; a month later, a formal charter strengthened the imperial grip in the colony. Among the rebel leaders banished was one Henry Washington, who had run away from George Washington's Mount Vernon twenty years earlier.³⁰

The great abolitionist William Wilberforce snidely commented that black loyalists in Sierra Leone were "as thorough Jacobins as if they had been trained and educated in Paris," a reminder that by 1800 the con-

²⁹ Thomas Carleton to Lord Sydney, June 25, 1785, in Thomas Carleton Letterbooks, ser. A, RG 1, RS33, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick ("American Spirit"); Carleton to Sydney, Nov. 20, 1785, *ibid.* ("motly"). For William Cobbett in Saint John, see D. G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783–1786* (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1983), 130–31, 142–44. The election is treated in detail on 104–15. Neighboring Nova Scotia also suffered considerable disruption in its November 1785 elections; the first result was nullified, the second conducted in an environment of great "bitterness [and] rancour," though the central line of tension in that province was between loyalists and preloyalists (settlers who were there before the loyalists). See MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 120–21 (quotation, 120).

³⁰ "Clarkson's Mission to Africa," pp. 222 ("civil rights"), 319 ("all should be equal"), in John Clarkson Manuscripts, New-York Historical Society. On Sierra Leone government and rebellion, see Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 38–87; Pybus, *Epic Journeys*, xiii–xvi, 169–202.

suming contest with France superseded the American Revolution in British consciousness. (Wilberforce might better have pointed to Saint Domingue: one of the ex-slave leaders of the Haitian Revolution, Henri Christophe, had been armed by the French to fight in the American war.) Nevertheless the African rebellion, echoing the disturbances in New Brunswick and the Bahamas, reflected an important and enduring colonial legacy among these British subjects. The loyalists had chosen to remain British and were happy where possible to reap the “passive benefits of British subjects: cheap land and low taxes.”³¹ But as these incidents showed, they continued actively to demand or assert what they saw as the rights of British subjects too.

The theme of loss hangs heavily over the loyalists’ story: Britain lost the colonies and the loyalists lost their possessions and homes. Great histories are made up of small ones, and to understand the full effects of the loyalist migration, those small stories deserve examination. One of the many documented lives disturbed by this war was that of a middle-class refugee from Georgia named Elizabeth Johnston, who wrote up her experiences in 1836. Johnston’s narrative is a valuable source not only because it is one of relatively few refugee accounts by a woman to survive but also because she experienced the trauma of migration in more places than most by moving to Florida, Scotland, Jamaica, and finally Nova Scotia. And yet, mirroring the way that in a larger sense Britain bounced back from the loss, the fortunes of the Johnston family suggest how, for some individual loyalists, the empire for which they had lost so much could also supply longer-term rewards.

Johnston spent most of the war in Savannah while her husband, William, fought in a loyalist regiment. When Savannah was evacuated in July 1782, she moved to Charleston with a toddler son in tow, eight months pregnant and just eighteen years old. Six months later Charleston was evacuated, and the Johnstons moved again, south to Saint Augustine, among twelve thousand loyalists and slaves who had flocked to the British province of East Florida expecting it to be a permanent new home. So when news reached them in the spring of 1783 that Florida was to be handed over to Spain—that they would have to move yet again—they felt utterly betrayed. “The war never occasioned half the distress which this peace has done, to the unfortunate Loyalists,” she wrote to her husband. Loyalists frantically tried to sell off their houses and land, glutting the market when there were only a few

³¹ Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, 87 (“thorough Jacobins”); Taylor, *Journal of the Early Republic* 27: 18 (“passive benefits”). On Henri Christophe, see O’Shaughnessy, *Empire Divided*, 181.

Spanish buyers. Some dismantled their houses hoping to carry them to the Caribbean, only to find there was not enough room on the crammed transport ships to accommodate them. So the twice-over refugees sailed away from beaches strewn with the lumber of their broken homes.³²

The Johnstons were comparatively lucky: Elizabeth's father-in-law, Lewis Johnston, formerly speaker of the Georgia House of Assembly, successfully sold his and William's slaves and was able to evacuate with at least some money in hand. The family returned to "his native land," Scotland, not least because it was the best place in the Anglophone world for William to resume the medical training he had commenced in Philadelphia before the war. But like so many loyalists, the Johnstons found life in Britain expensive, uncomfortable, and depressing. Old Dr. Johnston, "a poor Loyalist who had lost so much by the war," could not even afford a carriage to take him to church. And when William finished his training, he does not even seem to have considered practicing in Scotland. Instead he accepted an offer from one of his wartime patrons to go to Jamaica. (He turned down an offer to go to India from another patron, Archibald Campbell, just appointed governor of Madras.) The Johnstons moved to Kingston in 1786, leaving their eldest children to be educated in Scotland, and William became the attending physician on the estates of prominent planter James Wildman.³³

Elizabeth had by now given birth to four children in four places—Savannah, Charleston, Saint Augustine, and Edinburgh—and would

³² Elizabeth Johnston to William Martin Johnston, Apr. 20, 1783, in Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist* (New York, 1901), 211 (quotation). The original manuscript of this book, along with many letters between Elizabeth and William (only some of which are published, in abbreviated form, with the memoir), can be found in Almon Family Papers, reel 10362, Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia. The letters document their wartime travails, which were compounded by William's gambling problem. For the evacuation of Saint Augustine, see Siebert, *Loyalists in East Florida*, 1: 177. Siebert's description is wonderfully evocative, though, alas, not footnoted.

³³ Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, 75 ("his native land"), 78 ("poor Loyalist"). The Johnstons' departure from Florida is described in Elizabeth Johnston to William Martin Johnston, Jan. 2, 15, Feb. 3, 12, 1784, in Almon Family Papers, reel 10362. William's slaves were sold for £450 (*ibid.*). Among the convoys leaving Saint Augustine in 1784 and 1785 for Nova Scotia, England, Jamaica, and the Bahamas, Admiralty records list one ship headed for Glasgow with the property of Lewis Johnston aboard. See Carole Watterson Troxler, "Loyalist Refugees and the British Evacuation of East Florida, 1783–1785," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (July 1981): 1–28, esp. 28. The list indicates "Lewis Johnston, Jr.," but given that Lewis Johnston Jr. went to the Bahamas and Lewis Johnston Sr. went to Glasgow, the entry must surely be an error. William Johnston's subsequent journey to Jamaica was clearly not unique. Another Scottish doctor in Jamaica complained in 1787 about the "overabundance of physicians," which he attributed to the "vast number of Medical people who were . . . refugees." See Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740–1800* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), 55.

bear five more in Jamaica. But alongside this living record of exodus would come a trail of gravestones. A son died of thrush in Scotland at three months. A two-year-old daughter died of scarlet fever in Jamaica, and another baby girl died of smallpox. These losses weighed severely on Elizabeth, who felt profoundly isolated in Jamaica's alien environment. "I was much exhausted in mind and body," she recalled, "having no female relation to be with me, only black servants." In 1796 the Johnstons made the difficult decision for William to stay in Jamaica while Elizabeth returned to Scotland with the children. "On the morning of that sad day when I heard that the boat was come to take us on board . . . I hardly think I was in my senses," she wrote. "I uttered screams that distressed my poor husband to such a degree that he . . . begged me . . . to let him go on board and bring our things back, but all I could say was, 'It is too late!'"³⁴

Separation had become a defining feature of the Johnstons' family life. It also cast long, unanticipated shadows. Elizabeth was reunited in Edinburgh with her two eldest children, who were eighteenth-century-style wayward teenagers. Andrew was now fifteen and had run off to join the navy only to be marched home again by a family friend and cajoled into studying medicine, but his heart was not in it, and he regularly cut classes to go ice skating. Elizabeth packed him off to his father in Jamaica for disciplining. Her daughter Catherine, meanwhile, was now fourteen and had developed a "wild and giddy" streak encouraged, according to her mother, by unfettered access to a lending library and an unsuitable taste for novels.³⁵

In 1801 Elizabeth returned to Jamaica to join William, whose health was failing. Back in the family house at Halfwaytree, their Jamaican travails began again. Two daughters barely survived yellow fever, the Caribbean killer. William's own health was so bad that they arranged this time for him to leave; he stayed away two years. For once the family was all together in December 1805, when Andrew, now a qualified doctor, traveled from his practice in the mountains of Clarendon Parish to visit. But the day before he arrived he felt unwell, and he vomited black in the night, the fatal sign of advanced yellow fever. Within a week he was dead. Shortly afterward Catherine lapsed into a complicated "nervous illness, combined also with symptoms of yellow fever," for which the only cure was a change of climate. "Worn down as I was with sorrow of various and trying kinds," wrote Elizabeth, "I told her father that . . . hard as another separation from him and my beloved boys was, I myself would go."³⁶

³⁴ Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, 85 ("much exhausted"), 90 ("On the morning").

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 91–95, 105–7 (quotation, 105).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 107, 108 ("nervous illness"), 110 ("Worn down").

William went to the docks and arranged a passage for his family to Nova Scotia, much to Elizabeth's alarm: "Send us to Nova Scotia! What, to be frozen to death?" Jamaica was one thing; Canada really seemed like exile. What she had not considered, however, was that Nova Scotia had become home to so many loyalist exiles that it would be the most congenial haven she had yet encountered. Though they arrived there nearly "perfect strangers to every one in that place," they promptly made friends among the large community of fellow loyalists. William died in Jamaica in 1807 while the rest of the family flourished in Canada. Two of Elizabeth's younger daughters soon married loyalists and produced seventeen children between them, many of whom went on to enjoy successful professional careers and hold offices in provincial government. Elizabeth's three surviving sons also came to Nova Scotia, where they traced glittering paths in medicine and the law; one ascended briefly to the position of governor.³⁷

"Little did I . . . think that I and all my children would ultimately settle in Nova Scotia," Elizabeth later observed. After decades on the move, she had reason to be surprised. What comes through clearly in Johnston's narrative—as in the writings of other loyalist women—is the sheer physical and psychological hardship of migration. Whereas four male members of her family detailed their property losses to the Loyalist Claims Commission, Elizabeth's memoir illuminates the extended emotional consequences of losing a home and a homeland.³⁸ Moving affected the relationships between parents and children and precipitated illness and death. The Johnstons' story also foregrounds a feature of refugee life that may not occur to readers at first glance, namely the multigenerational consequences of upheaval. War and its aftermath reverberated across three generations of the family. Their parents had propelled them into the loyalist cause, yet Elizabeth and William's children, especially the two eldest, born during the war, paid the price of migration at least as heavily as they had.

It is easy when reading loyalist letters, petitions, and memoirs to be overwhelmed by the tragedies of refugee lives and to get caught up in

³⁷ Ibid., 108–111 (quotations, 111). The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* includes detailed entries on Elizabeth Johnston's sons-in-law Thomas Ritchie and William Bruce Almon (and their fathers) as well as several of their sons and grandsons; there are also entries for Elizabeth herself (s.v. "Elizabeth Lichtenstein") and for her son James William Johnston.

³⁸ Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, 110. For loyalist women's responses to migration, see Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *WMQ* 33, no. 3 (July 1976): 386–409. The Johnston family members who presented claims to the Loyalist Claims Commission were Elizabeth's father, John Lightenstone; her father-in-law, Lewis Johnston Sr.; her husband, William Martin Johnston; and her brother-in-law Lewis Johnston Jr., who settled in the Bahamas and filed the largest claim of all, for a house in Savannah, 1,650 acres, and 400 cattle. See Peter Wilson Coldham, *American Loyalist Claims* (Washington, D.C., 1980), 263–64, 288–89.

the emotional language loyalists used to describe their plight. Johnston's narrative, like Jacob Bailey's, speaks to migration as the loyalists felt it: vivid, poignant, and real. And yet many tales of loyalist loss, especially those of middle-class families, had constructive, even happy, endings. The Johnston family unquestionably attained a degree of prominence in Nova Scotia they would not have had if they had remained in Britain or returned to the United States. Even Bailey was recognized in his rags within moments of his arrival, taken in by friends, and awarded a Nova Scotia parish by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. This contrast between the vicissitudes of empire and its rewards is reminiscent of the way that imperial servants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often talked about suffering for the empire when that empire was the source of their family's success. By moving on to other British colonies and rebuilding lives, these loyalist imperial pioneers paralleled and in some cases contributed to the larger arc of Britain's postrevolutionary ascent.

All aspects of these loyalist migrations—how Britain materially coped with the exodus; how it incorporated, and saw itself incorporating, various kinds of others; how the refugees responded to new settings—offer insight into how Britain and the empire rebounded from the lost war. All underline the value of a global and comparative study of this topic. Only by looking at the exodus across different settings can one fully appreciate the innovations that the Revolution sparked in British state conceptions of responsibility. Only by comparing regions such as Canada and the Caribbean can one identify the coexistence of inclusive multiculturalism in some places with exclusive practices in others or fully see the collision of provincial and metropolitan political ideas. Only by taking a global approach can one account for and describe the intrinsically transnational experiences of many loyalist refugees, such as Elizabeth Johnston. In all these respects, the loyalist migrants are an unusually valuable group through which to investigate imperial history in this decade of change, particularly as it was lived and experienced.

They also suggest two ways in which the historiography of the American Revolution and the British Empire needs revisiting. One concerns the global nature of the Revolution, which has for so long been treated by Americanists in an almost exclusively national context or at best a transatlantic one. Loyalist refugees direct attention, rather, to the repercussions of American ideology elsewhere in the British world and to the circulation of colonial political, religious, and cultural influences around the British Empire. Looking forward into the nineteenth century, it seems plausible to speculate that such connections might have relevance for understanding the resilience of the Anglo-American relationship and the emergence of the concept of a greater Britain that would include Americans as well as Anglophone subjects overseas.

The other area for reappraisal involves the nature of the British imperial state. The treatment of loyalist refugees appears at one level to support the picture of an increasingly authoritarian, centralized, and expansionist imperial regime, trends that the French Revolutionary–Napoleonic Wars would magnify. Indeed the existence and extent of the loyalists' empire-wide diaspora call attention to the widening networks of war, commerce, culture, peoples, and opportunities that linked the colonies to one another as well as to Britain. Yet the ad hoc and varied receptions loyalists encountered also signal the continued significance of contingency and local circumstance in the modern British Empire, which could behave differently in different places as metropolitan policies confronted colonial realities. And as the clashes between loyalists and British authorities suggest, imperial rule was no more an uncontested top-down affair after the American Revolution than it had been previously. Historians of the British Empire interested in power relationships have tended to look at forms of resistance posed by nonwhite subjects. Yet templates for home rule and decolonization as well as for the idea of a federal greater Britain were established not in Ireland or India but in Canada, the American loyalist stronghold.³⁹

The degree to which loyalist claims to British rights echoed those of their American patriot peers points to another important line of continuity between the pre- and postwar British empires. White, black, and Indian loyalists together encountered several emerging contradictions in the British Empire: gaps between liberal promises and paternalist realities, competing impulses toward liberty and authority, and tensions between what it meant to be British at home or abroad. As twentieth-century historical events would demonstrate, the multiethnic empire championed after 1783 proved no more able to overcome such internal contradictions than that older empire, with its struggle over “how to reconcile the exercise of authority over the empire with the aspiration that it be free.”⁴⁰ So perhaps it is no wonder that these émigrés—postcolonial migrants of the eighteenth century—should have voiced concerns that anticipated those of a wide range of other imperial subjects. As they lived out the consequences of Britain's first major imperial defeat, it seems only too apt that the loyalist refugees should alert modern readers to oppositions in the greater British world that would contribute to the larger anti-imperial and postcolonial movements to come.

³⁹ On Canada's role as a template for decolonization, see Robin W. Winks, *The Relevance of Canadian History: U.S. and Imperial Perspectives* (Toronto, Ontario, 1979), 38–39.

⁴⁰ Marshall, *Making and Unmaking of Empires*, 161.