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HOW MANY AMERICAN LOYALISTS LEFT THE UNITED STATES?

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WITH THE WAR of Independence lost, some of the losers of the contest, the American loyalists (often called Tories), decided they had to leave their homes in the old thirteen colonies, now shorn off from the British Empire. On 12 July 1783, Brooks Watson, the commissary-general appointed by Sir Guy Carleton, predicted that “Upwards of Twenty Thousand Souls will surely go hence”—the still faithful colony of Nova Scotia—“to Settle in it this Year and some of them persons of property. . . .”¹ This is likely one of the first, if not the first, estimate of how many individuals would leave New York City in the fateful year 1783.

Watson thought it best that loyalists leave the United States, controlled by “Lawless wretches who now persecute them.”² Certainly, Watson predicted, “The People of this Independent Country are run amuck and will soon, become objects of Compassion” and so abandoning the “Suds of Liberty” was wise.³ He rejoiced that Nova Scotia would be peopled by those “carrying in their Hearts the most settled Love to the Constitution of England,” who would constitute “a Barrier against those of opposite principles, and become the envy of all their Neighbors.”⁴

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1. Brooks Watson to Joshua Mauger, 12 July 1783, Mauger Papers, GLC03902.33, Gilder Lehrman Collection, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York; E. M. Lloyd and John C. Shields, “Watson, Sir Brook,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, New York: Oxford UP, 2004, vol. 57, 603–4.
2. Watson to Mauger, 12 July 1783, Mauger Papers.
3. Ibid.
4. Watson to Mauger, 14 March 1783, in David Brion Davis and Steven Mintz, eds., *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War*, New York: Oxford UP, 1999, 215.

But how many “unhappy and Sacrificed Loyalists”⁵ would leave the United States? Nova Scotia would not be their only destination. The refugees journeyed to other parts of Canada, the British West Indies, and to Great Britain itself. These varied locales have not helped the determination of the total number of loyalist émigrés.

Recently, Maya Jasanoff wrote that “at least sixty thousand loyalists with fifteen thousand slaves in tow” deserted the United States to dwell in lands still flying the Union Jack, adding that, “I will supply full documentation for my estimates in my forthcoming book on the loyalist diaspora.”⁶ When the book appeared, the evidence was placed in an appendix entitled “Measuring the Exodus.”⁷ This estimate of Tory exiles was cited before the book’s publication.⁸ Early reviews of *Liberty’s Exiles* accepted this estimate without question.⁹ Yet, when the evidence is closely examined, this estimate appears to be badly flawed, tantamount to being unusable. However, before the estimate is deconstructed, it is necessary to show how Jasanoff’s work fits into the historiography of the loyalists.

5. Watson to Mauger, 17 June 1783, Mauger Papers, GLC03902.32, Gilder Lehrman Collection.
6. Maya Jasanoff, “The Other Side of Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 2, 2008, 205–32: 208, 208n4. For comparison, it would be helpful to know the number of Americans resident in the United States in 1783. Unfortunately, the first federal census was only in 1790. A scholar has extrapolated back to 1780 and guessed that there were 2,780,000 non-Indians populating the rebellious colonies (see Edwin G. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War*, New York: Basic Books, 2008, 202).
7. Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, New York: Knopf, 2011, 351–8.
8. Julie Flavell, *When London Was Capital of America*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2010, 242, 286n33.
9. Both Jane Kamensky and Pauline Maier call Jasanoff’s book “lyrical” (see Kamensky, “Liberties of Empire,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 68, 2011, 486; Maier, “Maya Jasanoff’s ‘Liberty’s Exiles,’ on British Loyalists after the Revolution,” *Washington Post*, 13 March 2011, available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/maya-jasanoffs-libertys-exiles-on-british-loyalists-after-the-revolution/2011/02/22/ABWFyAR_story.html, accessed 3 February 2014. Although Linda Colley read Jasanoff’s manuscript and advised and encouraged her well before its publication, she nonetheless wrote an exuberant review of it (see Colley, “Review of *Liberty’s Exiles*,” *The Guardian*, 18 February 2011, available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/feb/19/libertys-exiles-maya-jasanoff-review>, accessed 3 February 2014; and Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 359). See as well for example Liam Riordan, “Review of *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* by Maya Jasanoff,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 3, 2012, 506–9; Jack Rakove, “Hail, Britannia,” *Claremont Review of Books* 2, 2012, 17–18. The only exception to the general rule is Albert H. Tillson, Jr., “Review of *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* by Maya Jasanoff,” *Journal of American History* 3, 2011, 820–1. Though the most critical review, it does not mention the refugee estimate.

The earliest chroniclers of the American Revolution were those who lived through it. Writing in 1789, Dr. David Ramsay of South Carolina noted that “many indecent outrages” had been inflicted upon the king’s supporters among whom, he admitted, “were doubtles . . . friends to peace, and lovers of justice,” but, alas, “the innocent, from the impossibility of discrimination, are often involved in the same distress with the guilty.”¹⁰ A considerable distress upon many of them involved having to flee and “take up their abodes in the inhospitable wilds of Nova Scotia, or on the barren shores of the Bahama Islands.”¹¹

Though Ramsay had been a prisoner of the British, his treatment of the loyalists was mild compared to that of Mercy Otis Warren. She complained of the “[e]pithets of the most indecent and vindictive nature” spewed by loyalists which “increased the general disgust planted in the bosoms of their countrymen from their first defection from the American cause.”¹² She acknowledged that not all of the king’s allies were evil, but she insisted that “[t]his class had hazarded their own fortune and liberty, which were staked against the independence of America, and the freedom of future generations.”¹³ Tories had “set their faces against the liberties of mankind.”¹⁴

Such feelings stayed strong. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Washington Irving showed how many Americans still felt about loyalists. After Rip Van Winkle slept twenty years—right through the American Revolution—he journeyed back to his village but made the mistake of blessing the king: As the villagers were now all hearty republicans, they yelled, “A tory! A tory! A spy! A Refugee! Hustle him! Away with him!”¹⁵

American attitudes towards the loyalists changed little until the Civil War, a conflict so deadly it made the death and destruction caused by the Revolution seem small by comparison. In the midst of the war, Lorenzo Sabine, a journalist in Maine (who also served briefly in Congress), produced a huge two-volume

10. David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, ed. Lester H. Cohen, 1789, Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1989, vol. 2, 623–4.

11. *Ibid.*, 624.

12. Mercy Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, New York: AMS Press, 1970 [original: 1805], vol. 3, 259.

13. *Ibid.*, 266–7.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*, Haskell Springer, ed., 1820 Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1978, 38.

compilation of short biographies of thousands of loyalists.¹⁶ Years later, a local historian of New York, Henry Onderdonk Jr., accused Sabine of blatant plagiarism. According to Onderdonk, "Some account of most of the Tories mentioned in this book may be found in Sabine's *Lives of the Loyalists*, wherein are about 1,000 names (filling 32 pages), copied, without crediting, from my *Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County*."¹⁷ Presumably, Sabine did the same with the work of other local historians. Nobody cared, however, as Sabine was a prominent man and local historians were not.¹⁸ But Sabine did do original oral research. He lived near the Canadian border and had much interaction with descendants of Tories who shared their family lore with him. Overall, Sabine stood out for his very sympathetic accounts of loyalists (though he made sure to point out that he himself was of good patriot stock). However, Sabine had little effect on historians, at least those of his own time.¹⁹

Curiously, during the early years of American scholarship on the loyalists, no one made an attempt to come up with a number for loyalists who left America. Instead, speculation centered on Tory strength in a particular state or region. Ramsay, for example, insisted that the loyalists formed about half of New York's population and maintained that in the South loyalists were very strong on the Appalachian frontier.²⁰ This reluctance to guess at the total strength of Toryism ended with the nineteenth century.

As the years passed by, and as the loyalists themselves and their immediate descendants passed away too, the British government saw no need to keep the

16. Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution*, 2 vols, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1864; Robert M. Calhoon, "Afterward: Loyalist Cosmopolitanism," in Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 2012, 277–87: 277–8; George Athan Billias, "The First Un-Americans: The Loyalists in American Historiography," in Alden T. Vaughan and George Athan Billias, eds, *Perspectives on Early American History: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Morris*, New York: Harper and Row, 1973, 282–324: 291–2; Elizabeth Donnan, "Sabine, Lorenzo," in Allen Johnson et al., eds, *Dictionary of American Biography*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928–1958, vol. 16, 276–7.

17. Henry Onderdonk, Jr., *Documents and Letters Intended to Illustrate the Revolutionary Incidents of Queens County, N.Y., with Connecting Narratives, Explanatory Notes, and Additions*, Second Series, Hempstead, NY: Lott Van De Water, 1884, 59n.

18. Donnan, "Sabine, Lorenzo," 276–7.

19. Billias, "Un-Americans," 291–2; A. G. Bradley, *The United Empire Loyalists: Founders of British Canada*, London: T. Butterworth Limited, 1932, 12, 279 (an American version of Bradley's book was published as *Colonial Americans in Exile*, New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1932).

20. Ramsay, *History*, vol. 1, 106; idem, vol. 2, 627.

documents assembled for compensation claims confidential anymore. This led to the institution that became the New York Public Library producing, at its own expense, a written transcript of every single document submitted by every claimant, of whom there were many. These transcripts enabled two historians to make the first stab at estimating the numbers of the loyalists.²¹

The first scholar to use the transcripts (at least the first known), Alexander C. Flick, a doctoral candidate at Columbia University, employed these documents to study the Tories of New York. Anyone who has examined the loyalist claims can understand how Flick reacted to them. He perused untold thousands of documents that came from the famous and unknown alike. The transcripts, he insisted, formed "the most valuable and most complete collection of material concerning the loyalists now open to students."²² The hordes of documents made him believe that there were hordes of Tories throughout New York, a loyalist bastion if ever there was one, far more so than any other rebellious colony. Some fifty percent, at least, supported King George II—as Ramsay had suggested over a century before—and even New York City was swarming with Tories. Over the course of the war, Flick believed, 60,000 Americans (of whom 35,000 were New Yorkers) fled what became the American republic for friendlier British territory.²³

Claude H. Van Tyne made no secret of his admiration for Flick's research.²⁴ As one scholar has pointed out, "The heavy dependence of Van Tyne's general history upon Flick's work on one province is clear."²⁵ However, Van Tyne utilized the transcripts to demonstrate how laws passed by the rebels affected the loyalists. Though Van Tyne agreed with just about everything Flick had postulated, including the number of loyalist exiles.²⁶ When the Revolution ended, Van Tyne declared, "The numbers were increased in Canada to some 25,000 during the next few years and those in Nova Scotia and other British territory swelled the number

21. Alexander C. Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, New York: Columbia UP, 1901, 277; Claude Halstead Van Tyne, *The Loyalists in the American Revolution*, Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1959 [original: 1902], ix.

22. Flick, *Loyalism*, 277.

23. *Ibid.*, 179–82.

24. Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, ix, 183n1, 299n1.

25. Eugene R. Fingerhut, "Uses and Abuses of the American Loyalists' Claims: A Critique of Quantitative Analyses," *William and Mary Quarterly* 2, 1968, 245–58: 245n2.

26. Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, ix, 103, 182–183, 293.

to 60,000.”²⁷ The reference to other British territory suggests that he believed 60,000 loyalists spread through all the lands of the British Empire.

After the appearance of the Flick and Van Tyne books, other scholars followed in the paths they had blazed and, inevitably, made extensive use of the transcripts of the loyalist claims.²⁸ Yet even as Flick’s and Van Tyne’s work arrived in 1901 and 1902, American attitudes were evolving. More and more prominent Americans came to accept Anglo-Saxonism, a belief that Americans and Britons all belonged to an Anglo-Saxon race (using race in a sense that has fallen out of favor). In this spirit, an admirer of the British, Woodrow Wilson, would write in 1902 a popular textbook sympathetic to the loyalists.²⁹ The future president explained how many American conservatives—the loyalists—had fled the rebels in “incredible numbers” once the war seemed lost.³⁰ They escaped to Florida or to the British Caribbean and trekked through the wilderness to Canada: “Thousands upon thousands crowded to New York to seek the shelter of the British arms.”³¹ He added that “More than 29,000 refugees [a number he got from Van Tyne] including 3000 negroes left the State of New York alone, for Canada, during that confused and anxious year 1783.”³²

A reviewer praised Wilson’s epic despite noting how he tried to defend the Ku Klux Klan. The author’s “judicial temper” was demonstrated by his “discussion of Tory sentiment and conduct.”³³ At last there was

adequate consideration [of the loyalists, while t]he facts about them are for once frankly set forth. . . . One of the pleasantest elements of Dr. Wilson’s history is his profound spirit of race. Most Americans of the better sort were glad to call themselves English [until independence became unavoidable]. . . . the qualities of blood that brought on the struggle were the strong

27. Ibid., 299.

28. Fingerhut, “Uses,” 245n2.

29. John Morton Blum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1956, 10, 85; Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, 5 vols, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1902.

30. Wilson, *History*, vol. 3, 24–6.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid. Also see Van Tyne, *Loyalists*, 293.

33. George McLean Harper, January 1903 review of *A History of the American People*, in Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1972, vol. 14, 312–13.

English traits to which we owe much of what is best in our national life still.³⁴

The shedding of much American and English blood in the First World War only emphasized the ties between the two Powers. The author of a famed western novel, *The Virginian* (1902), Owen Wister, a friend of Theodore Roosevelt, was moved to criticize school textbooks for their inaccuracies in their narratives of the role of Great Britain in the American Revolution. Fearing that these erring books would not be corrected because of “every influence visible and invisible that pro-German and pro-Irish propaganda can exert,” he decided to take a stab at revising “[o]ur anti-English complex.”³⁵ He explained away such comments as “Don’t you know George III was a German?” and everything else he could think of.³⁶ Although Wister never mentioned the loyalists, they also glowed in the splendid light generated by the glories of Britain. Not surprisingly, Wister’s pro-British efforts won plaudits from loyalist descendents in Canada.³⁷

Meanwhile, the English had been writing about the American Revolution, too. George O. Trevelyan, writing just before Flick and Van Tyne, seemed rather antagonistic to the loyalists, who displayed a feeling of “superiority, whether real or fancied.”³⁸ He blasted their “ebullitions of Loyalist sentiment” that had misled Generals William Howe and John Burgoyne, who discovered that the king’s friends were both “scanty and unreliable” in New York and “altogether non-existent” in New England.³⁹ “The country, indeed, had risen,” he declared, “but not for the King.”⁴⁰ The loyalists willing to fight in America for George III constituted a “handful.”⁴¹

Nonetheless, Trevelyan could not forget the sacrifices the loyalists made for the Empire. He related the funeral, in Britain, of a refugee from New York, Oliver

34. Ibid.

35. Owen Wister, *A Straight Deal or The Ancient Grudge*, New York: Macmillan, 1920, 17, 91–2, 99.

36. Ibid., 35.

37. Janet Carnochan, *United Empire Loyalists*, Niagara Historical Society, no. 37, Niagara, Canada: Advance Print, 1925, 3.

38. Sir George Otto Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, New Edition, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922–6 [original: 1899–1914], vol. 1, 377.

39. Ibid., vol. 4, 50, 156.

40. Ibid., 156.

41. Ibid., 52–53.

DeLancey. As the coffin was lowered into the grave, “a fellow-refugee said, truly enough, that there would be scarcely a village in England without some American dust in it by the time they were all at rest and not in England only.”⁴² Arthur G. Bradley presented a much more sympathetic account of the loyalists than Trevelyan. Having lived in the United States and traveled extensively in Canada, Bradley was an unusually impartial commentator.⁴³ He especially appreciated the same quality in Van Tyne, who did “not spare his countrymen,” and often depended on his book.⁴⁴ However, most British historians had little interest in the loyalists, preferring to write about the king, his ministers, and their opponents.

Canadians only slowly began to voice their changing perspectives toward the loyalists. It seems as if the most literary-minded refugees tended to go to Great Britain. Furthermore, the first Canadian pioneers left behind little written evidence except for complaints about the problems of settling anew. A Canadian scholar of early America, L.F.S. Upton, remarked that “since the first generation of Loyalists failed to provide a body of literature expressive of their hopes and ambitions, they have been an easy prey for those who would mould them to their own ends.”⁴⁵

From 1815 to 1840, immigration from Britain swamped the loyalist population in the future Canadian provinces, making them much less American.⁴⁶ Gradually, what became known as the “loyalist myth” grew and at times it became cult-like. The myth emphasized the Tories’ “elitist origins,” often laced with hatred of the United States, “and steadfast adherence” to “the unity of the British Empire.”⁴⁷ Essential parts of the loyalist myth would be “their sufferings and

42. Ibid., vol. 3, 226. Those who knew DeLancey in New York were not awash in sentiment at his death. When the future chief justice of Quebec, William Smith, heard about DeLancey’s demise he wrote: “Poor Man, Lamented by No Body. He always was a Tyrant and for fifteen Years past has been a miser, wretched by a timid Avarice” (William Smith, *The Diary and Selected Papers of Chief Justice William Smith, 1784–1793*, ed. L.F.S. Upton, Toronto: Champlain Society, 1963, vol. 2, 13).

43. L.F.S. Upton, ed., *The United Empire Loyalists: Men and Myths*, Toronto: Copp Clark, 1967, 153.

44. Bradley, *United Empire Loyalists*, 279.

45. L.F.S. Upton, “Introduction,” in Upton, ed., *United Empire Loyalists*, 1–7: 2–3.

46. Bradley, *United Empire Loyalists*, 169–70.

47. Murray Barkley, “The Loyalist Tradition in New Brunswick: The Growth and Evolution of an Historical Myth, 1825–1914,” *Acadiensis* 2, 1975, 3–45: 6, 12.

self-sacrifice” along with “their divinely-inspired sense of mission.”⁴⁸ Over time, “different elements of the total myth were emphasized in response to prevailing ideological and psychological needs”; the 1840s, for example, constituted a period of “rabid anti-Americanism.”⁴⁹

This hatred of Americans evaporated during the next decade and, with it, the fascination with the loyalists themselves. But the loyalist myth resurrected itself.⁵⁰ In 1880 a Protestant minister, Egerton Ryerson, published a two-volume work that he had been working on since the 1850s.⁵¹ He was straightforward as to the reason for his labors:

The history of the Loyalists of America has never been written except by their enemies and spoilers, and those English historians who have not troubled themselves with examining original authorities, but have adopted the authorities, and in some instances imbibed the spirit of American historians, who have never tired in eulogizing Americans and everything American, and deprecating everything English, and all who have loyally adhered to the unity of the British Empire.⁵²

His account of the loyalists, Ryerson wrote, had been written “in obedience to the requests of public men and the newspaper press of all parties.”⁵³ Explaining that Queen Victoria graciously allowed the book to be dedicated to her, he added “that I write, not as an Englishman, but as a Canadian colonist by birth and life-long residence.”⁵⁴

Ryerson even suggested that when the Revolution began “a majority of the population of the colonies” supported the king but that “[t]heir numbers had been greatly reduced from various causes during the war.”⁵⁵ He saw the “United Empire Loyalists” as “conservators” trying to stop “the dismemberment of the empire,” much like how the American North had stopped “the dismemberment of

48. Ibid., 6.

49. Ibid., 6, 15–17.

50. Ibid., 18–19, 21.

51. Upton, “Introduction,” 3.

52. Egerton Ryerson, *The Loyalists of America and Their Times: From 1620 to 1816*, New York: Haskell House, 1970 [reprint of 1880 second ed.], vol. 1, iii.

53. Ibid., vol. 1, i.

54. Ibid., vol. 1, i, 1.

55. Ryerson, *Loyalists*, vol. 2, 57.

the Republic" during the American Civil War.⁵⁶ Eventually, Barkley was to call Ryerson's account pure "hagiography."⁵⁷

Actually, Ryerson does not even get to the American Revolution for many hundreds of pages, beginning not in, say, 1763, but in 1620 when the Pilgrims of the Plymouth colony in New England composed the *Mayflower* Compact, which he saw as "a declaration of unswerving loyalty to the British Crown."⁵⁸ The loyalists could trace their roots all the way back to them and were "the rightful successors to the Pilgrims."⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, Ryerson listed as one of the rebels' great sins their alliance with the Catholic powers, France and Spain, to uproot Great Britain from North America.⁶⁰ Ryerson's book became popular in Canada and restored the appeal of the loyalists to his readers. It quickly became a major cog in the loyalist myth. As it appeared just before the centennial of their arrival in Canada, the book helped color at least the festivities in Ontario; Ryerson helped organize the celebration there, which produced "extravagant and fantastic denunciations" of the United States.⁶¹

By the 1890s anti-American feelings in Canada had become "vitriolic," and numerous new writings on the exodus of royalist supporters in the course of the American Revolution and its aftermath appeared.⁶² At this time, Ryerson finally got his wish granted, for "the descendants of the loyalists throughout Canada began to commemorate their ancestors with unbroken, persistent enthusiasm," strengthening the loyalist myth.⁶³ An organization dedicated to their memory, the United Empire Loyalist Association, was established. Stories about the mistreatment of the American loyalists mushroomed, as Canada became ever more

56. Ibid., vol. 1, 504. The phrase United Empire Loyalists and the abbreviation U.E. arise from 1789, when the governor of Upper Canada decreed it as an hereditary title to follow the name of loyalists and their progeny forever (Wallace Brown and Hereward Senior, *Victorious in Defeat: The American Loyalists in Exile*, New York: Facts on File, 1984, x).

57. Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 24.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ryerson, *Loyalists*, vol. 1, 516–517.

61. Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867–1914*, Toronto: U. of Toronto P., 1970, 81, 154–5; Upton, "Introduction," 3; Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 21.

62. Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 6, 34.

63. Ibid., 38.

devoted to the glories of imperial Britain.⁶⁴ As Upton remarked, "The Loyalists were thus identified with an imperial enthusiasm smacking of social Darwinism and Anglo-Saxon racial superiority."⁶⁵

Two Canadian scholars, James Hannay and W.O. Raymond, led the way.⁶⁶ The most intense hostility toward the United States was exhibited by Hannay, who emphasized bad treatment of the loyalists by the demonic rebels. Curiously, he may have been greatly motivated by the 1879 publication in New York of a history by the arch-Tory Thomas Jones.⁶⁷ As for Raymond, he again saw a link between the Pilgrims and the loyalists, "the chosen of the chosen."⁶⁸

Of course, not all Canadians accepted the loyalist myth and its anti-American stance. For that matter, not all United Empire Loyalists did either, especially in New Brunswick.⁶⁹ There a non-loyalist academic, John Davidson, lamented how,

Regarding the Loyalists no questions are asked and to ask them seems to savour almost of sacrilege and impiety. [He added:] To be descended from a Loyalist is like having a patent of nobility, like coming over in the *Mayflower*, or coming over with the Normans. [While he did not mean] to exaggerate, but the cult of the Loyalists is sometimes carried so far that it is impossible to treat it with patience.⁷⁰

Davidson did more than complain. A few years before, Raymond had compiled the letters of Edward Winslow, a prominent loyalist of New Brunswick (and an actual Pilgrim descendant). Carefully reading the hefty volume, Davidson found a Winslow letter of 1800 that ripped apart the foundation of the loyalist myth:

64. Berger, *Sense*, 86; Upton, ed., "Introduction," 3; Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 34.

65. Upton, ed., "Introduction," 3.

66. Hannay's "History of the Loyalists" was published in a series in the *Daily Telegraph* (a newspaper published in Saint John, New Brunswick) in 1893, but he also published an article called "The Loyalists" in Boston (see Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 31-4ns97-105; James Hannay, "The Loyalists," *New England Magazine*, 1891, 297-315). Raymond's most comprehensive work was W.O. Raymond, *The United Empire Loyalists*, St. Stephen: Saint Croix Publishing Co., 1893.

67. Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 31, 35; Thomas Jones, *History of New York during the Revolutionary War*, ed. E.F. de Lancey, 2 vols, New York: New York Historical Society, 1879.

68. Barkley, "Loyalist Tradition," 41.

69. *Ibid.*, 30-31, 39, 42n130.

70. John Davidson, "The Loyalist Tradition in Canada," *Macmillan's Magazine*, September 1904, 390-400: 393.

[T]his arrangement of property was of short duration—a great proportion of the original patentees were idle, dissipated, and capricious, and as soon as they were fairly in possession of their lands and had expended the bounty of Government, they sold it for a trifle to Land jobbers and speculators. Some of these purchasers now hold an extent of five or six miles on the river.⁷¹

Davidson did not know it, but in 1787 the British expected that very result. As a loyalist wrote from England, “The report is here that all you that are refugees in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are only wanting to get your dividends and then away back to the Rebel States again, and that many have already gone back into Egypt.”⁵¹⁷²

Despite Davidson’s determination, he did not kill off the loyalist myth. It lasted until the First World War. The myth died, seemingly forever, along with the 100,000s of allied Canadian and American soldiers, in the bloody no man’s land of the Western Front.⁷³

Nonetheless, Canadian scholars continued to write about the Revolution and the loyalists. By 1935 the estimate of Tory refugees had risen to 100,000, of whom 60,000 journeying to Canada, even if George M. Wrong remained puzzled that only 6,000 Tory family names could be discovered in Canada.⁷⁴ For the most part, the field was dominated by “transient enthusiasts,” Upton insisted a generation later, “who had used the Loyalists for their own ends [and] made serious historical scholarship impossible.”⁷⁵ In the 1980s, another Canadian historian stated that “[t]he Loyalists are unfashionable” and a prominent Canadian journalist branded them as “Canada’s first welfare recipients.”⁷⁶

While interest in the loyalists declined in Canada after the Second World War, the opposite happened in the United States. “It was not really until the 1960s, and

71. Edward Winslow to Col. Edward G. Lutwyche, 4 March 1800, in W.O. Raymond, ed., *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776–1826*, St. John: The Sun Printing Co., 1901, 443; see Davidson, “Loyalist,” 393–4.

72. William Jarvis to Munson Jarvis, 9 July 1787, Jarvis Papers, box 19, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, N.B.

73. Upton, “Introduction,” 3; Barkley, “Loyalist Tradition,” 22.

74. George M. Wrong, *Canada and the American Revolution: The Disruption of the First British Empire*, New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1968 [original: 1935], 376, 468–9.

75. Upton, “Introduction,” 4.

76. D. G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783–1786*, Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1983, vii; Brown and Senior, *Victorious*, 207.

even more the seventies and eighties, that loyalist studies came into their own,” declared one American scholar of the field.⁷⁷ In 1968, Paul H. Smith, complaining about “Inadequate knowledge of the American loyalists,” asserted that they were pivotal to an understanding of the period.⁷⁸ He sought to create “a more precise approximation” of their strength by studying how many loyalists joined the various Tory military units and came up with “about 19,000” loyalist soldiers.⁷⁹ However, Smith tried to extend his data further. “For those who wish to go beyond statistics on the loyalist corps to the more interesting and significant, if more speculative and perhaps foolhardy, projection of the total numerical strength of the loyalists,” he estimated a total number of loyalists at about 500,000.⁸⁰

As innovative and path-breaking as Smith’s observations were, his numbers are not realistic. Though he did his best to eliminate soldiers who were clearly not loyalists, not much was known about that subject in the 1960s.⁸¹ Future research demonstrated that loyalist recruiters signed up rebels held in horrific prison ships. They were given the choice to join the loyalist forces or face death on the prison ships. Two groups, the British Legion and the Volunteers of Ireland, were composed entirely of former rebels who had been prisoners of war. In the South, the Georgia Volunteers took men off prison ships too. So did the loyalist Thomas Brown, eager to fill his own Tory unit. Ill prisoners of war were even recruited out of a hospital. Frankly, one has to wonder how many actual loyalists were in the loyalist regiments. Smith’s jump to the number 500,000 from such recruits seems dubious at best. The process of getting there depended on Sabine’s two volumes—which contained 6,025 Tories according to Smith—being a reliable cross section needed to create a proportion between soldiers and the population at large. That is just too much of an assumption to make. Smith’s estimates did not seem to hold up.

77. Sheila L. Skemp, *William Franklin: Son of a Patriot, Servant of a King*, New York: Oxford UP, 1990, 281.

78. Paul H. Smith, “The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 2, 1968, 259–77: 259.

79. *Ibid.*, 261, 267.

80. *Ibid.*, 262, 269.

81. *Ibid.*, 267–268, 268n20–22; Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, second ed., Lanham, MD: UP of America, 2002, 101; Philip Ranlet, “In the Hands of the British: The Treatment of American POWs during the War of Independence,” *The Historian* 4, 2000, 731–57: 737, 739–40, 745.

The 1980s saw a flurry of new work on the loyalists. In 1986, I published a book on New York which debunked Flick's belief that that province was chockfull of Tories.⁸² A Canadian scholar writing on Nova Scotia questioned the sincerity and substance of the loyalist mood there.⁸³ And the next year two other monographs, on Pennsylvania and South Carolina, put paid to the notion that those states were swarming with loyalists.⁸⁴ Then the subject of loyalism seemed to peter out and scholars looked for other subjects to investigate.

There the matter rested until Jasanoff published her article in 2008 and subsequent book in 2011.⁸⁵ Given all the mythmaking about the loyalists, it is instructive to see how Jasanoff treats a prominent figure, Thomas Brown (1750–1825), a well-known Tory of the American South. Setting the stage for her book, she starts her first chapter with the gory details of the tarring and feathering Brown suffered at the hands of patriots, along with a brutal beating as well. As if to make sure that a reader will not forget the incident of Brown as victim, she refers to it six more times in the book.⁸⁶ What of Brown's other side, though, which was that of a violent Tory? There is but one mention in the text of a victorious Brown hanging and scalping rebels who had become prisoners of war. And this mention refers to the charges as patriot accusations and "appalling reports," not facts.⁸⁷ Buried in an endnote is brief mention of "[t]he black legend of Brown."⁸⁸ That is all, which serves to downplay the "legend."⁸⁹ But Edward Cashin's biography of Brown (which Jasanoff cited) states how Brown

82. P. Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, Knoxville, TN: U. of Tennessee P., 1986.

83. Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783–1791*, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1986.

84. Anne Ousterhout, *A State Divided: Opposition in Pennsylvania to the American Revolution*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987; Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, Columbia, SC: U. of South Carolina P., 1987.

85. See Jasanoff, "Other Side," and Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*. It should be noted that Simon Schama's *Rough Crossings* has some bearing on the issue of loyalism, but Schama does not focus on the scope of loyalism as such (see Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution*, London: BBC Books, 2005).

86. The initial description is in Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 21–24. For the repetitions see *ibid.*, 34, 37, 45, 71, 131, 227.

87. *Ibid.*, 45.

88. *Ibid.*, 367n6.

89. *Ibid.*

sought revenge for what had been done to him: "The facts make the theory plausible."⁹⁰ And a leading authority on Southern prisoners of war commented on the killing of a dozen patriots by Brown: "In the brutal civil war in the South Carolina backcountry, execution of each other's prisoners had become commonplace for patriot and loyalist militia alike."⁹¹ Jasanoff's one-sided account of Brown's "torture" gives the American Revolution an unflattering appearance.⁹² In her book only rebels seem to commit violence. When Linda Colley (who greatly aided her before her book's publication) wrote a British review of it, her first paragraph described what had happened to Brown and a separate case involving a free black.⁹³

The emphasis given to bad treatment of loyalists and the stories of loyalists building up the British Empire suggests that Jasanoff constructs a new loyalist myth for the Atlantic world. Even the *Mayflower* is mentioned. It is not the same version as that generated in Canada during the 1890s, however.

First of all, this rendition has been acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic. And the old all-white narrative has changed too as Jasanoff gives much attention to both African Americans and American Indians, befitting the attention given to "subalterns" or "people without history" to which historians today are much more attuned.⁹⁴ But there is another change. Downplayed is the elitism in the old myth. Instead, she wrote, the loyalists "provided a model of liberal constitutional empire that stood out as a vital alternative to the democratic republics taking shape in the United States, France, and Latin America."⁹⁵

Nothing could be further from the truth, however, in my view. In fact, there was nothing liberal in the governments of the Canadian colonies. Perhaps Davidson said it best in 1904 about the reality of the founders of the loyalist governments:

90. Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier*, Athens, GA: U. of Georgia P., 1989, 219. For Jasanoff's citation of Cashin, see n92.

91. Carl P. Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen: American Prisoners of War in the Revolutionary South, 1780–1782*, Columbia, SC: U. of South Carolina P., 2012, 95–96.

92. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 131.

93. Colley, "Review of *Liberty's Exiles*." Some of the readers' commentaries on Colley's piece display furious anti-Americanism.

94. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 8.

95. *Ibid.*, 12.

Influence and not fitness or possible efficiency came to be the decisive test. These practices, combined with their loyalty, made them the apologists and supporters of privilege; and they carried into public life the military spirit of command. Any attempt to encroach on their privileges or to criticize their conduct in office was an act of insubordination; and the fact that they were not only leaders by birth and circumstances, but were also in virtue of official salaries better off than the rest of the population, tended to make them a class apart.⁹⁶

Murray Barkley commented that the loyalist settlement of New Brunswick was meant to create “an exclusive Elysium in the north.”⁹⁷ The loyalist leaders in New Brunswick created what became known as the “Family Compact” and these men engaged in a “race for privilege.”⁹⁸ By the 1830s one Canadian blamed the colony’s problems upon its being “too much in the power of the favoured few.”⁹⁹ Members of the Compact—the “ruling elite”—tried to “appropriate the Loyalist image to legitimize its exclusive access to positions of power and influence,” helping to explain why future immigrants had no interest in the loyalist past and actually displayed “widespread . . . sympathy for the American Revolution.”¹⁰⁰ The other Canadian colonies were no different and there were “other aristocratic traditions” aside from the Family Compact.¹⁰¹

Nor were the loyalist governments in Canada liberal in their treatment of the black refugee loyalists, as Simon Schama has demonstrated.¹⁰² Orders to allow them to leave for Sierra Leone came from London, but the colonial leaders did everything they could to frustrate their emigration. If the governor of Nova Scotia had not suddenly died, far fewer African Americans would have left. And many of the white loyalists had done everything they could to force the blacks into a status close to servitude.

The long-lasting Family Compact has to be a mystery to readers who know this era of Canadian history only from Jasanoff’s book. She never mentions it. One of

96. Davidson, “Loyalist,” 395.

97. Barkley, “Loyalist Tradition,” 3–4.

98. Ibid., 3–4, 7.

99. Ibid., 9.

100. Ibid., 11; Brown and Senior, *Victorious*, vii.

101. Ibid., vii, 165, 208. See also Watson Kirkconnell, “The Loyalists of Nova Scotia,” *The Loyalist Gazette* 2, 1969, 1, 5–6.

102. Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings*, 221, 225–6, 253–5, 270, 281, 283, 286, 291–4, 300–3.

the members of the Robinson clan that features so prominently in her book, John Beverley Robinson, was not just a member of the Compact but was one of its founders. She does not mention this.¹⁰³ Jasanoff's estimate of 60,000 refugees, as suggested first by Flick in 1901 and Van Tyne in 1902, can now be put in perspective. All guesses mainly rely on two returns of loyalists going to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where the bulk of loyalists journeyed from New York. The first, dated 12 October 1783, listed 29,278 individuals who had signed up (or been signed up) for Nova Scotia, which then included New Brunswick. A second return, that of 24 November 1783, which has long been in print, mentions 32,224.¹⁰⁴ The increase on the later return reflects additional people who drifted in, as well as 600 men of the army's civil departments who had always intended to leave but did not formally sign up until later.¹⁰⁵ Words such as "suppose" and "about" appear in the November return.¹⁰⁶ Obviously, 32,224 remained a rough estimate. The eighteenth century was just not as fixated on exact numbers as future times.

It does seem surprising that no one composed a return listing how many individuals actually left, not those who merely signed up. The lack of such a return is explained by more than a lack of interest in arithmetic. The loyalists in Canada themselves believed that those who supplied them with food and supplies saw their distress only as something that could be exploited.¹⁰⁷ The exploitation may have been more extensive than the loyalists could have imagined. Fortunes are known to have been made by various quartermasters and commissaries who served the British Army and faked their accounts. These falsified records constituted what James Thomas Flexner dubbed "Hidden Fountains of Gold."¹⁰⁸

103. Brown and Senior, *Victorious*, 165, 208; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 332.

104. "Returns of Loyalists etc. gone from New York to Nova Scotia . . .," 12 October 1783, CO5/111/p. 235–6, Library of Congress transcript; "Return of Loyalists etc. gone from New York to Nova Scotia . . .," 24 November 1783, in K.G. Davies, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783 (Colonial Office Series)*, Shannon: Irish UP, 1981, vol. 21, 225–6.

105. November return, John Sayre to Amos Botsford and others, 25 May 1783, *Amos Botsford and family fonds*, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

106. November return.

107. Neil MacKinnon, "Nova Scotia Loyalists, 1783–1785," *Histoire Sociale-Social History* 4, 1969, 17–48: 24.

108. James Thomas Flexner, *States Dyckman, American Loyalist*, Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1980, 25.

Auditors looked the other way as “audits were not set up to embarrass high officials whose use of the perquisites of office contributed to the solidity of the British ruling class.”¹⁰⁹

Quartermasters in the British army, for example, could make as profit “at least three quarters of what the Crown was paying for the entire transport of the army.”¹¹⁰ Calling such profits “lucrative” is an understatement (although some money had to be diverted to bribe superiors).¹¹¹ Such raids upon “the public purse” were greeted with “tolerance and discretion.”¹¹²

The loyalist States Dyckman, who made a fortune this way, built a mansion in New York called Boscobel.¹¹³ It remains today as a monument to the fleecing of the British taxpayer during the War of Independence. Dyckman is unusual only in that he did not destroy the documentary evidence of the rampant fraud. Exactly how such men gained such wealth demonstrates why the returns of loyalist refugees have to be used with caution. Dyckman, for example, simply “upped the total” of, say, drivers of wagons, thus justifying the excessively high demands for payment.¹¹⁴ This sort of thing happened in the military too. Commanding officers reported more men in garrisons than there actually were; the commander could then pocket the extra sums given for the upkeep of the non-existent soldiers. That kind of wealth-making was tolerated by military superiors only during peacetime.¹¹⁵ When peace came with the end of the American Revolution, the bureaucrats knew that profits could be made. That is why no one produced a list of the actual number of loyalists who left the United States. More loyalists signed up for transportation than actually set sail, thereby enriching those charged with buying provisions for loyalists, including those not actually in Canada.

As suspect as the returns of refugees are, because they are really all that exists one cannot but use them. Both returns tend to exaggerate loyalism as they give the number of children who were going with their parents. Including

109. *Ibid.*, 52.

110. *Ibid.*, 29.

111. *Ibid.*, 29, 184.

112. *Ibid.*, 184.

113. *Ibid.*, 199–200, 210–13.

114. Flexner, *States Dyckman*, 185.

115. Philip Ranlet, “Loyalty in the Revolutionary War: General Robert Howe of North Carolina,” *The Historian* 4, 1991, 721–42: 725.

children can give a misleading impression about Tory strength. Deleting the 9,140 children presents a more realistic picture of Tory strength, and brings the number down to 23,084. Jasanoff does not make clear that children were listed until her appendix, thus seemingly inflating the estimate of Tories as most people will not read the appendix. Those who do not know the details can be easily confused. Take, for example, Joseph Ellis's comment about Jasanoff detailing "the experience of 60,000 men and women."¹¹⁶ These children did not likely make a conscious decision to depart the new republic. Some readers, like Ellis, will assume the estimate refers to adults as a group. Others may even infer that the estimate is of adult males, the source of military strength at that time. Anyone giving a total number for loyalists must be clear as to who is included in it. Canadian scholars, aware of the possible confusion, tend to use words like dependents, families, women, or children when they give a number for loyalists.¹¹⁷

A related problem bedeviling this estimate is the lack of a definition of a loyalist. Who, exactly, was a loyalist? The situation of Brooks Watson provides a good illustration. David Brion Davis and Steven Mintz refer to him as a loyalist.¹¹⁸ Watson did stay in Boston for a while before the Revolution, but he moved to Nova Scotia and then to London in 1759. He did not return until he became Sir Guy Carleton's commissary-general. Watson could not have been a loyalist by any reasonable definition.

The failure to clearly define a Tory affects Jasanoff's view of the attitude exhibited by African Americans in the conflict. While she correctly writes that escaped slaves were loyalists, any pro-British sentiment of the so-called servants, a euphemism for slaves, on the returns is at least moot.¹¹⁹ Not being runaways the latter cannot be considered loyalists, according to Jasanoff's apparent definition. The November return lists 3,602 servants. If they are deleted from the returns,

116. See Joseph Ellis, comments on Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, back cover. Ranlet, *Loyalists*, second ed., 179–80, did not delete children in its estimate, because I did not realize how keeping them in could be easily misconstrued.

117. MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 20, 30, 32, 174. See n134 for Esther Clark Wright, another Canadian historian aware of the problem.

118. Davis and Mintz, eds, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 214; Lloyd and Shields, "Watson," 603–4. For the problem of definition, see Ranlet, *Loyalists*, second ed., 6–7. There I usually refer to adult males, as it requires some actual activity to call individuals (conscious) loyalists.

119. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 8–9.

Tory numbers are down to 19,482.¹²⁰ Jasanoff gives the puzzling number of slaves as 1200, a third of the actual total on the return.¹²¹

Another major problem exists with the estimate. The returns refer to “Loyalists etc.” for a reason.¹²² Discharged British soldiers were transported to Canada, too. At Shelburne, Nova Scotia, soldiers from 23 different regular army units were present.¹²³ And they were not loyalists. A sailor helping to bring the travelers to Canada wrote, “During our passage the soldiers and emigrants did not agree, the former stealing the goods of the latter.”¹²⁴ The November return lists “Discharged Men” separately from loyalists.¹²⁵ Deleting 3093 from the total, the number shrinks to 15,880.

There were discharged regular army veterans elsewhere as well. Present day Quebec and Ontario had immigrants who were “[l]oyal subjects and disbanded Troops.”¹²⁶ Former regulars also settled with Sir John Johnson’s loyalists; some Germans (probably Hessians) also lived with them, while children are listed on this return, too.¹²⁷

120. November return. A white servant would have been eligible for a land grant in his or her name—suddenly they would no longer be servants; meanwhile, one return ignores the servant euphemism and calls the servants “Negroes” (see “Embarkation Return of Loyalists going to Nova Scotia,” 5 August 1783, CO5/110/p.487, Library of Congress transcript).

121. Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 151.

122. Both the October and November returns use these words.

123. William Porter, “List of Those Mustered at Shelburne, Nova Scotia in 1784,” Shelburne Records, vol. 141, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax; “Embarkation Return of Troops etc. going from New York to Nova Scotia,” CO5/109/pp. 402–3; MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 54, 175; W.O. Raymond, ed., “Founding of Shelburne and Early Miramichi, Marston’s Diary,” New Brunswick Historical Society, *Collections* 3, 1907, 204–93: 255.

124. Crosbie Garstin, ed., *Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century Seaman*, New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925, 90.

125. November return. In Ranlet, *Loyalists*, second ed., I was extremely cautious in not deleting the total number of discharged soldiers, allowing thereby for possible loyalists in the ranks of the regular army; it makes just as much sense, however to delete all the men and leave the women in the total to make up for possible Tories, as is done in this essay (see Ranlet, *Loyalists*, second ed., 179–80).

126. General Haldimand to General St. Leger, 14 November 1784, in E.A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Settlement of the United Empire Loyalists on the Upper St. Lawrence and Bay of Quinte in 1784: A Documentary Record*, Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1934, 174.

127. “General Abstract of Men, Women and Children Settled on the New Townships on the River St. Lawrence,” July 1784, in Cruikshank, ed., *The Settlement*, 134; Sir John Johnson to Haldimand, 27 May 1784, in Cruikshank, ed., *The Settlement*, 115; Johnson to Major Holland and John Collins, 5 July 1784, Mss. Misc. Collection 1784 no. 2, Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

Despite Jasanoff's interest in quantifying the loyalist refugees, little use is made of the work of a pioneering scholar of the subject, Esther Clark Wright. The author of *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, which went through several editions, Wright compiled a stupendous appendix of the adult males who settled in New Brunswick.¹²⁸ The total that Wright arrived at was about 6000, a number that does not appear in *Liberty's Exiles*, and which makes loyalism seem much less substantial than Jasanoff suggests.

Different from Jasanoff, Wright excluded "[d]isbanded soldiers" from her appendix "unless there is some trace of their having actually been present in the province."¹²⁹ Clearly, she uses loyalist in the sense of a Canadian pioneer instead of an American who opposed the rebels. This approach excludes those who were speculating in land, a common practice in unsettled areas. The sailors of the transports going to Canada, who were most likely neither Americans nor loyalists, could also get land grants. Such sailors probably only wanted grants in order to sell them. These men, who lived elsewhere, seem to be counted by Jasanoff as loyalists in New Brunswick, or wherever else they landed.¹³⁰

The breakdown to the number of loyalist refugees cannot proceed any further because of an insurmountable problem. Many people who signed up for transportation did not actually go on those transports. In June 1783, 2,472 expressed a wish to go to Nova Scotia from New York. In July it was recorded that 1,335 had actually gone, amounting to 54 percent of the original total.¹³¹ This closely agrees with the findings of Carl P. Borick who discovered that, of those Tories in Jamaica who picked Nova Scotia as their destination, "less than half" of them went there.¹³² Such facts help explain why the October 1783 return cautions that "it is probable the Numbers Actually gone will fall far short," a rare admission

128. Esther Clark Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, 1955, rev.ed., Windsor: Lancelot Press, 1977, 166–7, 253–345. When family groups were considered, she put the number "at least 13,500" (*Ibid.*, 67). See also the list in Bell, *Early Saint John*, 172–255. Jasanoff does not mention Wright's appendix.

129. Wright, *Loyalists*, 166.

130. Garstin, ed., *Samuel Kelly*, 91–2.

131. "Return of Refugees embarked for Nova Scotia," 17 June 1783, CO5/110/p.67, Library of Congress transcript; "General Return of Loyalists Actually Embarked for Nova Scotia and Canada," 8 July 1783, CO5/110/p. 221, Library of Congress transcript. Another list, dated 17 June 1783, at New York is more inclusive and gives higher numbers, showing how puzzling British record keeping was: See "Return of Persons who have applied at the Adjutant General's Office since May 26th to be removed from New York," 17 June 1783, British Headquarters Papers, no. 8066, New York Public Library, New York.

132. Borick, *Relieve Us of This Burthen*, 123.

that the official returns were not really reliable.¹³³ Perhaps this explains Jasanoff's findings (see above) that only about one-third of the slaves listed on the final return could be found in Nova Scotia-New Brunswick.¹³⁴

One group of the Nova Scotia refugees at first glance might have been an exception. Some 184 men from Westchester County, New York, signed up to go to Nova Scotia. Returns taken at the sites of the settlements have 179 taking possession of their land grants, some 97.3 percent of the original total.¹³⁵ But it should be remembered that Westchester in New York was the scene of intense violence by both sides and was therefore probably rather untypical. These men of Westchester had, sometimes, literally burned their bridges. There are many stories of the so-called Neutral Ground in Westchester. Instead of being "noncommittal," it was an active "war zone."¹³⁶ And in war zones, horrible things happen.

Nonetheless, even their numbers are probably overstated. Agents for loyalists could pick the lots for their grants. In fact, the returns for the Cobequid Road and Ramsheq were signed by "G. Totten Agt for W.C. Loyalists."¹³⁷ Throughout Nova Scotia, there was much fraud with these land grants, and agents sought land for people who had left Nova Scotia far behind and had gone elsewhere, thereby increasing the number of supposed refugees. Nothing the authorities did could stop the fraud. Canadian historians are well aware that most loyalists, after getting their land grants and selling them, left Nova Scotia for the United States. Some, of course, stayed in British territory and could be counted at their real homestead again.¹³⁸ According to Neil MacKinnon, "To observers at the time, the

133. For the October 1783 return, see n104 above.

134. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 151.

135. November 1783 return, Davies, ed., *Colonial Office Documents*, vol. 21, 225–6; Guy Carleton to John Parr, 14 June 1783, British Headquarters Papers, New York Public Library; "Return of West Chester Loyalists who have Drawn Lands at Ramsheq," 15 October 1784, RG1, vol. 359, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; "Return of West Chester Loyalists who have Drawn Land on North [and South] Side of Cobequid Road," 15 October 1784, *ibid.* Four men whose names were crossed out on the Westchester returns were deleted from the calculation. Their inclusion would raise the percentage even higher.

136. On the Neutral Ground, see Harry M. Ward, *Between the Lines: Banditti of the American Revolution*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002, 17–32.

137. For the Westchester loyalist returns, see n135 above.

138. The rampant fraud demonstrates Jasanoff's error in trying to support the accuracy of the New York returns by comparing them to returns of provisions given to supposed loyalists in Canada, many of whom never left from New York; the enumerators in Canada would have been as corrupt as those in New York (see Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 352–3; MacKinnon, "Nova Scotia Loyalists," 25–26; *idem*, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 30, 174–6, 180; Garstin, ed., *Samuel Kelly*, 91–2).

most remarkable thing about the loyalists was not so much their abrupt arrival as it was the extent of their exodus" away from Nova Scotia.¹³⁹ "They had achieved their goal in Nova Scotia," he pointed out.¹⁴⁰ So even the apparent loyalist strongholds of Ramsheq and both the sides of the Cobequid Road probably had fewer Tories than the returns suggest.

Perhaps these wandering refugees were counted a second, a third, or even a fourth time on some other lists. Take Joseph Taylor of Massachusetts, for example.¹⁴¹ Taylor can be counted as a Massachusetts loyalist. Then he went to England, where he might have been counted as a Tory refugee. Then he settled in New York, where he may have been counted as a New York loyalist. Then he went to Canada and might have been counted there as well. He received a land grant in Nova Scotia long before he left New York and set foot again in British territory. As can be seen, the number of loyalists can mushroom very easily given such wanderings.

Indeed, Jasanoff's argument that "[u]ltimately the total recorded exodus of New York loyalists to Nova Scotia alone amounted to nearly thirty thousand," is wrong.¹⁴² During the long years of the American Revolution, refugees fled to southern New York, which the British held. The exodus in 1783 was not just composed of New Yorkers. Already in 1926, Alexander C. Flick corrected the similar error that he made in this regard.¹⁴³

Jasanoff also exaggerates the number of loyalists elsewhere in Canada. She minimizes the impact of the so-called late loyalists, a group of economic, not political, émigrés from the United States. They departed when they were confronted with the inept governments of the independent thirteen states, who did not seem able to improve the American economy shattered by the Revolution. The loyalist William Smith of New York understood this situation. Writing from Great Britain, he commented: "The Outgoings of this Country would be much

139. MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 174.

140. *Ibid.*, 180.

141. AO13/24/448, Loyalist Claims, reel 25, New York Public Library; "A Return of Persons who are at present resident in the American States . . .," 11 December 1784, Old Township and Loyalist Settlements, vol. 359, no. 60, Public Archives of Nova Scotia; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 161, 163.

142. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 94.

143. Alexander C. Flick, *The American Revolution in New York: Its Political, Social and Economic Significance*, Albany, NY: UP of the State of New York, 1926, 222; Ranlet, *Loyalists*, second ed., 179–80.

greater if the Poor could find Means to get away to America. . . . Had America an inviting Government how rapidly would [one] see [an] increase."¹⁴⁴

The subject of the late loyalists is a significant one. Jasanoff appears to follow Alan Taylor, who believed these economic refugees only began to arrive in Canada by 1791, and gives her loyalist estimate for the year 1785.¹⁴⁵ Late loyalists started swarming to Canada shortly after peace was restored, however. "It's very hard," grumbled one true Tory in 1785, "that they should meet with the same encouragement as people who have fought in the later war and lost all they have in the world."¹⁴⁶ One of these late loyalists, the man who executed John Andre, made the mistake of settling among New Yorkers who knew who he was. In other words, late loyalists may inflate Jasanoff's estimate, too.¹⁴⁷

As Joseph J. Talman observed, "The Loyalists in the western parts of British North America were not identifiable for long as a separate group."¹⁴⁸ The early arrival of the late loyalists calls into question Jasanoff's estimate for Ontario (then part of Quebec) as well as her assertion that the loyalist total may "have been up to 10 percent higher."¹⁴⁹ In addition, there were late loyalists in Nova Scotia, although some of them were not very late. Apparently, there late loyalists arrived starting in 1783. Governor Parr encouraged Americans who had not rebelled against George III to come to Nova Scotia, where they settled among true loyalists. London reprimanded the governor for his actions. MacKinnon has called the motive of these late loyalists for emigrating "naked opportunism," which it was.¹⁵⁰ Their presence imperils any attempt to determine the number of loyalists there.

Other parts of the world received loyalist refugees, too. Basing loyalist estimates on returns and land grants makes these numbers most likely as misleading

144. Upton, ed., *Smith Diary*, vol. 1, 176.

145. Alan Taylor, "The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 1, 2007, 1–34: 19–20; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 203–6, 351, 398 notes 92 and 93.

146. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds, *Quebec to Carolina in 1785–1786, Being the Travel Diary and Observations of Robert Hunter, Jr., a Young Merchant of London*, San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1943, 75.

147. *Ibid.*, 75. See also Douglas S. Robertson, ed., *An Englishman in America, 1785, Being the Diary of Joseph Hadfield*, Toronto: The Hunter-Rose Co, 1933, 58–9.

148. James J. Talman, "Ontario: A Product of the American Revolution," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 37, 1968, 129–34: 130.

149. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 354.

150. MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 56–7.

as those examined for Canada. Fraud and land speculation could not be limited only to the colder domains inhabited by Tories. Nor should it be forgotten that Britain lost two other colonies in North America because of the American Revolution—East and West Florida—to Spain. Those British settlers who inhabited those colonies before 1775 and did not wish to become Spanish citizens had to go somewhere else. East Florida, according to official statements, had between 3,000–4,000 pre-war inhabitants, probably including some slaves.¹⁵¹ The governor of the colony, Patrick Tonyn, praised these inhabitants, “happy in the full enjoyment of their native rights and privileges, under His Majesty’s auspices, and mild Government.”¹⁵² Despite the “general revolt,” they “stood firm and distinguished for their allegiance.”¹⁵³

In 1785, Governor Tonyn continued to praise these once happy people: “His Majesty’s faithful and loyal Subjects, groaning under the unhappy predicament of the Cession of the Country to a foreign Prince, in which they had lived and enjoyed every earthly Blessing.”¹⁵⁴ Whatever their merit, were the loyalists of East Florida actually loyalists? Certainly, the post-1775 refugees from the rebellious colonies were probably loyalists. But the pre-war inhabitants could not be counted as such under any sensible definition, as the colony of East Florida did not rebel.

These pre-war inhabitants of East Florida (and West Florida, which also became part of the Spanish empire) present another problem for the Jasanoff estimate. A “Return of Persons” who left East Florida does not distinguish between the pre-war inhabitants and later refugees, who fled from the thirteen colonies.¹⁵⁵ These “not-loyalist” pre-war inhabitants probably help to explain at least a part of the population increase in Jamaica by 1788, for example, an

151. Patrick Tonyn to Admiral Digby, 10 September 1783, CO5/560/ f. 698–699, Library of Congress transcript; “Observations on East Florida by a person recently arrived who has lived in that region several years,” c. 1783, Joseph Byrne Lockey, *East Florida, 1783–1785: A File of Documents Assembled, and Many of Them Translated*, ed. John Walton Caughey, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: U. of California P., 1949, 120.

152. Tonyn to Thomas Townsend, 15 May 1783, CO5/560/f. 584–585, Library of Congress transcript.

153. Ibid.

154. Tonyn to Lord Sydney, 10 August 1785, in Lockey, *East Florida*, 574.

155. “Return of Persons who Emigrated from East Florida to different parts of the British Dominions etc.,” 2 May 1786, CO5/561/p. 817, Library of Congress photostat. The etc. refers to those “Persons” who went to the United States and to the mysterious “Other foreign parts.” See Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles*, 421n21, 422n23, 422n28.

increase which Jasanoff solely attributes to loyalist émigrés.¹⁵⁶ In addition, some of the arrivals in Jamaica were loyalists who abandoned Shelburne, Nova Scotia, a settlement that collapsed; they therefore may have been counted more than once by Jasanoff. A date as late as 1788 inevitably leads to such problems.

Pre-war settlers of East Florida certainly help to explain in part the population increase of the Bahamas. East Florida had a population of Minorcans in it. Some 1,100 Minorcans, from the British colony of Minorca in the Mediterranean, together with a smattering of Greeks and Italians, settled in East Florida in 1768.¹⁵⁷ Most of these 1,400 to 1,500 new immigrants survived and stayed in East Florida; some 1,200 were still there in 1769. These people were not American loyalists. Governor Tonym stated that “a considerable number” of them had left East Florida for the Bahamas when the Floridas reverted to the Spanish crown.¹⁵⁸ As for the Bahamas in general, Gilbert Din has pointed out that “[m]any loyalists found life on the Bahamas’ tiny barren spits unproductive and monotonous and quickly departed.”¹⁵⁹ They would be counted again as loyalists in whatever British colony they settled afterwards.

Then there is the conundrum of what was probably the most obscure British colony in North America, West Florida, which came to Britain from France at the end of the French and Indian War (or Seven Years War) at the Treaty of Paris in 1763. British settlers soon arrived but little is known about their numbers. In fact, the few statistics that exist for it are inconclusive.¹⁶⁰ No one can tell how many

156. MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, 176; Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 261, 357. The East Florida return, cited in the previous note, has 196 whites going to “Jamaica and Spanish Main,” along with 714 blacks.

157. Tonym to Sydney, 4 April 1785, Lockey, *East Florida*, 498; Robert L. Gold, *Borderland Empires in Transition: The Triple Nation Transfer of Florida*, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1969, 48–49, 148, 152; Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida*, Coral Gables, FL: U. of Miami P., 1971, 82. The East Florida return has 1,033 whites and 2,214 slaves going to the Bahamas; the Minorcans are not listed separately. “Return of Persons who Emigrated from East Florida to different parts of the British Dominions etc.,” 2 May 1786, CO5/561/561/p. 817, Library of Congress photostat. Jasanoff makes no mention of these Minorcans transplanting themselves to the Bahamas. Minorca itself was regained by Spain because of the American Revolution.

158. Tonym to Sydney, 4 April 1785, Lockey, *East Florida*, 498.

159. Gilbert C. Din, *War on the Gulf Coast: The Spanish Fight against William Augustus Bowles*, Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2012, 24.

160. J. Barton Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida*, Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 1976, 228–31, 234; Andrew McMichael, *Atlantic Loyalties: Americans in Spanish West Florida, 1785–1810*, Athens, GA: U. of Georgia P., 2008, 15.

came to West Florida before or after the start of the American Revolution. The best estimate is that, before Spain conquered the colony during the war, there were at most some 8,000 people.

How many West Floridians were loyalists? Certainly, the pioneering British inhabitants could not be. Many had only weak links to the future thirteen rebel colonies. Many had been in them only briefly; meanwhile, Great Britain was easier to reach by letter for them than the eventual rebel states on the east coast.¹⁶¹ These early residents cannot be considered loyalist Americans; West Florida did not rebel. No one from West Florida was allowed to apply for compensation as a loyalist after the war.

In terms of those who arrived here closer to the Revolution or during it, one estimate, which is really just a guess, gives these individuals a number as high as 2,500.¹⁶² But the only somewhat reliable evidence behind it gives a lower sum, 1,643. However, some of these people came from the Caribbean colonies of Dominica, Grenada, and St. Vincent, as well as from East Florida, none of which territories rebelled. Deleting them gives a total of about 1,380. It should be noted that the more generous estimate includes the soldiers of two loyalist regiments sent to West Florida, the Pennsylvania Loyalists and the Maryland Loyalists, none of whom went as refugees; they were stationed there (and should be counted as loyalists belonging to their home colonies). Another factor arguing against the existence of many loyalists in West Florida is its sheer distance from the conflict. It took an overland trip of over a thousand miles lasting 149 days for some refugees from that colony to trek to Savannah, Georgia, on the east coast.¹⁶³ Surely, loyalists would have found it easier to travel to some British stronghold seized by the king's forces nearer to their homestead.

Certainly, "inveterate tories" did go to West Florida, as Robin A. Fabel states, adding how "[t]he breed undoubtedly existed."¹⁶⁴ However, they "[p]robably" were "only a small minority of the immigrants" as, Fabel continued, "Most of

161. Starr, *Tories*, 228–9, 239; McMichael, *Atlantic*, 15.

162. Starr, *Tories*, 230–1; Albert W. Haarmann, "The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1779–1781," in Gilbert Din, ed., *The Spanish Presence in Louisiana, 1763–1803*, Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1996, 203–218: 208. Perhaps as many as 1,665 of the people in West Florida are thought to have been slaves (see Starr, *Tories*, 230–1).

163. Robin F. A. Fabel, *The Economy of British West Florida*, Tuscaloosa, AL: U. of Alabama P., 1988, 192.

164. *Ibid.*, 209–10.

them came for economic reasons.”¹⁶⁵ The governor of the colony offered a land grant to each loyalist who came to West Florida. In order to obtain the land, a new arrival in the colony had to say he was a loyalist. So it should not surprise that new arrivals said they were loyalists, especially given that reports had circulated in the 1770s that West Florida had rich land. It is clear that most of the Connecticut immigrants, when their hopeful prospects in West Florida failed, went back to New England and willingly joined the rebel armed forces. West Florida does not seem to have contained all that many loyalists.¹⁶⁶

What happened to the British residents of West Florida after the Revolution was lost and Spain received West Florida? While “there was no general exodus,” it is thought that “about a third” abandoned West Florida.¹⁶⁷ That could be well over 2000 refugees. Yet, were these refugees loyalists or were they earlier arrivals and later economic migrants? This is impossible to assess. The loyalists may have been motivated to stay behind in the now Spanish colony of West Florida. Loyalists had wanted to live under a king; Spain had a king. Loyalists wanted their land titles secure: Spain would accept them and would willingly grant more land. Though Spain was Catholic and banned Protestantism, the Spanish were desperate to have settlers. Therefore, to keep as many people as possible, the Spanish leaned to leniency. Even some Protestant proselytizing went on. While West Florida was hardly a paradise for Protestants, most of the now new Spanish subjects met little trouble over their religious beliefs and practices.¹⁶⁸

The situation may have been different for the earlier British settlers of the colony. They had not been refugees like the loyalists. They had not been driven to West Florida. Many had not done well there. Farmers had worked hard for very little gain. Why would they stay and be Spanish when the best off of them had provided supplies to the now departed British authorities?¹⁶⁹ Fabel believed that “but few planters stayed after the British surrender.”¹⁷⁰

165. Ibid.

166. Ibid., 6, 193–5, 209–10; Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775–1782*, Columbia, SC: U. of South Carolina P., 25. It should be noted that land grants were also granted to arriving loyalists in East Florida. Perhaps some of these supposed loyalists there were not loyalists after all. See Piecuch, *Three Peoples*, 24.

167. Gilbert C. Din, “The Irish Mission to West Florida,” *Louisiana History* 12, 1971, 315–34: 315; McMichael, *Atlantic*, 15.

168. McMichael, *Atlantic*, 11, 16–17; Din, “Irish Mission,” 316, 326, 329–30.

169. Fabel, *Economy of British West Florida*, 207–9.

170. Ibid., 207.

Thus there is a good chance that many of these non-loyalists have been counted as loyalist refugees in various still-British destinations. The non-loyalist West Floridians, therefore, taint the estimates of the loyalist diaspora. West Floridians went just about everywhere in the British Empire. At least some new settlers of the Bahamas, for example, were from West Florida. How many of the estimated 2,000 refugees from West Florida were loyalists is anybody's guess. There is a good chance that very few of them were.¹⁷¹

In sum, for all of the reasons that I have proposed, Jasanoff's estimate of 60,000 loyalist refugees appears inflated and unreliable. This high number makes the loyalists appear to be more numerous and impressive than they actually were. The question of how many American loyalists exactly left the United States will have to remain unanswered, but it is evident that the number was much lower than 60,000. Ultimately, any effort to quantify almost anything in this period (and most other periods of history) runs against a basic problem: The statistics are untrustworthy, contradictory and incomplete. As a historian commented on the creation of a different number, "All of this is wildly speculative, of course—conjectures wobbling atop assumptions."¹⁷²

It is indeed illuminating to look at another example of notoriously unreliable numbers, that of army sizes in the seventeenth-century British civil wars. For one thing, the winning side of a battle might exaggerate the size of an opponent's army to make a victory even more impressive.¹⁷³ Conversely, losing commanders minimized their forces' casualties to make a defeat seem less significant. The eighteenth century was not different. In Britain, foes of the government manufactured an overly high number for British casualties in the American Revolution that was blatantly wrong.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, in 1778 Thomas Jefferson cooked up some British casualty figures that were just as absurd. For some years, it was believed that 8,500 captive Americans died on British prison ships. Now a number of 11,000 is thought to be more accurate. Overall, the number of Americans who died in military service during the Revolution has jumped to over 35,000, a gain of some

171. Starr, *Tories*, 234; Thelma Peters, "The Loyalist Migration from East Florida to the Bahama Islands," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 2, 1961–2, 123–41: 137.

172. Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots*, 204.

173. Memegalos, *George Goring*, 176–7, 177n62, 289.

174. Howard H. Peckham, ed., *The Toll of Independence: Engagements and Battle Casualties of the American Revolution*, Chicago, IL: U. of Chicago P., 1974, xi, 130; Philip Ranlet, "Tory David Sproat of Pennsylvania and the Death of American Prisoners of War," *Pennsylvania History* 61, 1994, 185–205: 199; Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots*, 201.

10,000. But perhaps these numbers will change once more when other evidence comes to light or different (and better) calculations are made.

Given the uncertainty of the statistics, it may prove impossible for one individual to produce an accurate number for Tories who left the United States. The task may require an international effort; it might be inspired by the project that detailed the number of African slaves shipped across the Atlantic with greater precision.¹⁷⁵ Only such a project could finally give the loyalist refugees their due.

175. See David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," *William and Mary Quarterly* 1, 2001, 17–46.

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