

“The white inhabitants wished relief from the horrors of continual alarms...”<sup>1</sup>

The British Empire, Planter Politics, and the Agency of  
Jamaican Slaves and Maroons

Alex Adams

Castleton University

Phi Alpha Theta Conference, April 30, 2016

Although agency is generally depicted as local actions triggering local results, fears caused by the agency of slaves and Maroons in Jamaica influenced the policies of the British Empire by affecting the agendas of worried planter politicians who had one foot in Jamaica and the other in Britain.<sup>2</sup> Kathleen Wilson argues that “examining [Maroon’s] roles within the larger theaters of British colonial power ... can illuminate their contribution to the Jamaican colonial order.”<sup>3</sup> This paper suggests that Maroons’ influence extended to the heart of British imperial politics, the British Parliament. It joins a conversation among historians associated with the “New Imperial History” which has reversed the trend of exploring the British Empire in terms of how the metropole influenced the world, instead focusing on how the world impacted the British Empire. For example, Antoinette Burton, a leader in this field of British imperial history, explores the influence of distant British subjects on their metropolitan center in *The Trouble With*

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections of its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government II* (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1774), 344.

<sup>2</sup>The term “maroon” derives from *marronage* (flight); there is an extensive literature on *marronage* in the Atlantic world, and more recently in the Indian Ocean world, too. See, for example, Edward Alpers, “The Idea of Marronage: Reflections on Politics and Literature in Reunion,” *Slavery and Abolition* 25 (2), 2004, 18-29.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Wilson, “The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, No. 1 (Jan., 2009), 49.

*Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism*. According to Burton, “[i]f many ... acts were episodic and even unreported, others left indelible imprints on the metropolitan imagination and on politics at the highest level.”<sup>4</sup> This paper argues that Jamaica’s Maroon communities were among those who left such “indelible imprints” on imperial politics; it is important to highlight how the practice of planter absenteeism allowed concerns to travel overseas and manifest in political influence. Bryan Edwards, Edward Long, Stephen Fuller, and other influential figures in British politics also held fiscal interests in Jamaica. Correspondence and other documents written by these men demonstrate how their multifaceted positions provided a bridge for concerns provoked by the actions of slaves and maroons to cross the Atlantic and compel British Parliamentarians to regulate the slave trade - a remarkable example of how agency helped steer the British towards abolition. Laying the foundation for future research, this paper suggests that if slaves and Maroons fueled the political imaginations of Parliamentarians, their influence on imperial politics would not have been confined to abolition, but would have extended to broader imperial concerns.

The English invaded Jamaica in 1655 whilst fighting the mid-seventeenth century Anglo-Spanish War. During the English invasion, slaves who had been laboring on Spanish plantations fled to the mountains and formed semi-autonomous communities and came to be known as Maroons. Jamaica did not officially become an English possession until after the Spanish formally relinquished the island through the Treaty of Madrid in 1670, which was in part due to difficulties overcoming former Spanish slaves who formed Maroon colonies. The first Maroons epitomized slave agency, and have left a significant mark on Jamaican, as well as British history.<sup>5</sup> Maroons periodically launched attacks from these isolated locations, plaguing the colony for nearly two centuries. They continued to prove problematic to the new slaveholders by raiding plantations, providing refuge to escaped slaves, and encouraging slave revolts. The very knowledge of

---

<sup>4</sup> Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble With Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 127.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.), 52; Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 221.

their presence was enough to garner inspiration for rebellion among those still enslaved, and to incite anxiety among individuals with financial interests on the island.

Individuals in England were enticed by the prospect of financial prosperity through means of agricultural production, and travelled to Jamaica to establish sugar plantations fueled by slave labor. These planters and their heirs were able to amass exorbitant amounts of wealth, especially with the passing of Parliamentary acts that encouraged oceanic trade and provided protected markets for the sale of West Indian sugar, most notably the Revenue Act, also known as the Sugar Act, of 1764. Some planters chose to leave others in charge of their property while taking up residence in England, where they were able to influence British governance. John Brooke describes a growing presence of absentee West Indians in the House of Commons during this period. Between 1754 and 1761, according to Brooke, there were fifteen absentees serving in the House, and although this number was down to nine by 1790, their presence was still felt.<sup>6</sup>

According to David Watts, Jamaica's sugar exports increased by 1100% over the first thirty years following the Treaty of Madrid.<sup>7</sup> To increase supplies, more land in the British West Indies was cultivated for sugar production, which necessitated increased labor imports. Greater demand for labor in Jamaica, as well as elsewhere in the region, brought the trans-Atlantic slave trade to its peak in the eighteenth century. Andrew O'Shaughnessy argued failed attempts to control the ratio of slaves to whites through 'deficiency acts' allowed the black population to grow eighteen times faster than the white population in the hundred years leading up to 1774.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, slaves brought into Jamaica by planters to increase profits also had the potential to cause a great deal of damage. Formidable groups of Maroons in Jamaica coupled with growing slave populations in the eighteenth century increased the threat of rebellions, consequently influencing discussions and actions of absentee planters who engaged in both Jamaican and British politics. Upon the English invasion, Maroons carried out attacks on English forces, significantly hinder-

---

<sup>6</sup> John Brooke, *The House of Commons 1754-1790: Introductory Survey by John Brooke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 231.

<sup>7</sup> David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Changes Since 1492* (Cambridge University Press, 1990,) 285.

<sup>8</sup> O'Shaughnessy, 8-9.

ing efforts to gain complete control of the island.<sup>9</sup> This began a long bout of clashes beginning in 1660 that would last nearly 80 years and become known as the Anglo-Maroon wars. What would later be called the First Maroon War ended in 1739 when a treaty was struck between the British and Captain Cudjoe, who was assumed to be the leader of all Maroons. The British were acquiescent to land concessions in exchange for a promise from Maroons to stop raiding, and to turn away future runaway slaves.<sup>10</sup> Realistically, Captain Cudjoe did not have the authority to speak for all Maroons. Plantations continued to be raided, and Maroons continued providing refuge to escaped slaves. Steven Fuller, Jamaican planter and British ambassador, felt the Maroons were “supposed to be friends yet it was feared [t]hey would always side with the strongest.”<sup>11</sup> Even in times of their complete isolation, the knowledge of their existence was enough to strike planters with fear and paranoia. Affecting absentee planters’ parliamentary agendas through acts of rebellion demonstrates how slave agency in the periphery influenced the center of the British Empire.

Bryan Edwards presented his perspective in *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*.<sup>12</sup> Edwards was a Jamaican planter, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a Member of Parliament.<sup>13</sup> Edwards declared that as many as 1500 slaves became Maroons upon the arrival of the British in 1655, and described the difficulties they posed to the English.<sup>14</sup> His bias is evident in his defense of the West Indies in response to British complaints over being forced to pay more for sugar than if they were to allowed to purchase from foreign mar-

---

<sup>9</sup> Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1970,) 195.

<sup>10</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 221; Claudius K. Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013,) 5. Sheridan notes the start of the war was in 1730. Fergus argues it was an eighty-year conflict beginning in 1660, most likely because of the prevalence of violence in times of ‘peace’.

<sup>11</sup> Memorial of Stephen Fuller to Germain, Dec. 23/24, 1778, Fuller MSS 256, f. 113, BCL, quoted in O’Shaughnessy, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies: vol. I* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, Mundell & Son, and J. Mundell, 1819).

<sup>13</sup> Olwyn M. Blouet, “Bryan Edwards, F.R.S., 1743-1800,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 54, no. 2 (2000): 215.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 522-526.

kets; he argued West Indian sugar “comprehends the whole of [British] produce.”<sup>15</sup> Edwards’ arguments in favor of West Indian interests, coupled with his influence in British politics, illustrate the ability of planters to introduce their opinions into Parliament.

Numerous slave rebellions occurred sporadically throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, suggesting anxieties felt by planters were not unwarranted. The most violent of these insurrections took place in 1760 and 1831. The rebellion of 1760 is also known as ‘Tacky’s Rebellion’, due to the slave overseer who incited the uprising. Tacky was a “Coromantee”, as were the vast majority of the thousands who followed his lead. Richard B. Sheridan said the following of “Coromantee” aggression:

“it [is] remarkable that almost every one of the slave rebellions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were instigated and carried out mainly by Coromantee or Akan slaves who came from the Gold Coast where the Ashanti Federation had a highly developed military regime which was skilled in jungle warfare.”<sup>16</sup>

So-called Coromantees carried a reputation of aggression among whites in Jamaica, where working conditions were particularly grueling. An African perspective on this matter can be found in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa. The African*.<sup>17</sup> Equiano was Igbo, implying that he would have originally lived in modern day Nigeria. He describes Igbo war culture, stating “[e]ven our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men. Our whole district is a kind of militia.”<sup>18</sup> This is not meant to imply that Igbos and Coromantees did not have significant differences. However, close regional proximity inevitably led to some similarities in cultural development, and the beliefs of planters in

---

<sup>15</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies: vol. 5* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, Mundell & Son, and J. Mundell, 1819), 528-534.

<sup>16</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution,” *The Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 3 (1976): 293.

<sup>17</sup> Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa. The African* (London: 1794).

<sup>18</sup> Equiano, 16-17.

“Coromantee” aggression, whether or not it was accurate, holds importance for the ways in which it swayed their opinions.

Philippa Levine stated there was also a “substantial uprising” in 1776.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Andrew O’Shaughnessy described the event as a “rebellion.”<sup>20</sup> Although there was a significant conspiracy for rebellion 1776, Richard Sheridan and Michael Craton describe in detail how the Hanover Plot of 1776 was foiled after a slave was caught attempting to disable the gun of a slaveholder. The failed plot of 1776 was rooted in Hanover, Jamaica but rumors circulated within Jamaica and its assembly suggesting the conspiracy “allegedly extend[ed] to the Maroon Negroes at Trelawny Town.” Despite the prevention of this uprising, which was likely due to already high levels of anxiety, the intricacies of the plot greatly added to the consternation of planters.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most alarming components of this threat was the apparent involvement of Maroons, who were blatantly breaking the terms of the treaty ending the First Maroon War. Thomas Thistlewood, an especially brutal plantation manager residing in Jamaica at the time, noted in his journal on July 30<sup>th</sup> of 1776 that “It [was] strongly reported that the Maroon Negroes [were] at the bottom of the Negro conspiracy...” On September 11<sup>th</sup> of that year he noted reading in the “Montego Bay paper, the North American declaration of themselves an Independent people...” and six days later he received “A report of the Negroes at Montego Bay attempting to poison all the butcher’s meat...” suggesting a parallel between concerns over slavery and North American secession.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited), 21.

<sup>20</sup> O’Shaughnessy, 173.

<sup>21</sup> Sheridan, “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution,” 295; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982,) 175; Neither Levine nor O’Shaughnessy give any evidence to suggest that this plot materialized, and although the works of Sheridan and Craton were published earlier, their analysis is more thorough.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas Hall ed., *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750-86* (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 1999), 244. For more on Thistlewood see Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Jamaica's Second Maroon War lasted from 1795 to 1796, and occurred in part because of beliefs that conditions of the treaty ending the first Maroon War had been broken. The Longs were a prominent family of Jamaican planters, and Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* remains widely cited by historians despite his racist views. The 1774 work, as it related to Tacky's War, likely propagated the paranoia felt by planters leading up to the Hanover Plot.<sup>23</sup> Long, who did not mention how he acquired this information, notes, "In the year 1760, a conspiracy was projected, and conducted with such profound secrecy, that almost all the Coromantin (Coromantee) slaves throughout the inland were privy to it, without any suspicion from the Whites."<sup>24</sup> He was biased by his position as a planter, which is also evident by his description of Tacky upon his capture: "This old imposter was caught whilst he was tricked up with all his feathers, teeth, and other implements of magic."<sup>25</sup> Long's writing was so pugnaciously off point, that Suman Seth posits, "The polygenist portions of his *History* were overwhelmingly more likely to be cited by abolitionists than by the pro-slavery advocates among whom Long numbered himself."<sup>26</sup>

Despite the disgust of some contemporaries, Long reportedly convinced William Pitt (the younger) and others that creole populations were reproducing fast enough in the West Indies to sustain slave populations.<sup>27</sup> This was intended to suppress fears of uprising based on the idea that individuals born into slavery were more docile than 'saltwater slaves'. In *Saltwater Slavery*, Stephanie Smallwood argued this term was derogatory, as it implied "the ignorance and inexperience that African birth symbolized in a world increasingly dominated by American-born, or "creole," slaves."<sup>28</sup> Given his racist views, it is unlikely that Long's convictions were based on an altruistic view for a more humane future for the practice of slavery, and more likely that he

---

<sup>23</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica. or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections of its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*, (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1774).

<sup>24</sup> Long, 447.

<sup>25</sup> Long, 452.

<sup>26</sup> Suman Seth, "Materialism, Slavery, and *The History of Jamaica*," *Isis* 105, no. 4 (2014): 765

<sup>27</sup> Fergus, 89.

<sup>28</sup> Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007,) 202.

was attempting to mitigate the threat of uprisings - though in doing so he may have encouraged abolition.

Edwards held influence in Parliament, and was also fearful of slaves and Maroons. He wrote about literature distributed throughout Jamaica in 1795 stating, “In many of the pamphlets and tracts which the caused to be distributed throughout the Sugar Colonies, arguments are expressly adduced, in language which cannot be misunderstood, to urge the negroes to rife into rebellion, and murder their masters.”<sup>29</sup> By the end of the Second Maroon War, Edwards recognized the formidability of Maroons:

Thus terminated this disastrous and bloody conflict; in which it was never known with certainty, that a single Maroon lost his life. Their triumph therefore was great, and many of the best informed among the planters, in consequence of it, again anticipated the most dreadful impending calamities.<sup>30</sup>

Stephen Fuller, the agent for Jamaica from 1764 to 1795, expressly opposed abolition in representing Jamaican plantation owners to the British government. Stephen is not generally mentioned with the same frequency as his brother Rose Fuller or William Beckford, who Richard Sheridan argued were “the two most important West India absentees in British politics,” but his position caused his words to be more representative of Jamaican planters than those of his brother or Beckford.<sup>31</sup> Stephen Fuller’s opinion on slavery and abolition, as it reflects those of all Jamaican planters, is present in a memorial he wrote to Henry Dundas in 1791:

Your Memorialist therefore prays for an additional quantity of small arms to be sent out immediately to Jamaica, and that you will be pleased to devise some method of taking the sense of Parliament upon the abolition of the African Trade; as early as possible, in order that this horrid scene may be speedily & effectually closed, and that our Colonies in general; as well as Jamaica, may be relieved from

---

<sup>29</sup> Bryan Edwards, Introduction to *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica, in Regard to the Maroon Negroes: With an Introduction by Bryan Edwards* (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1796), li.

<sup>30</sup> Bryan Edwards, Introduction to *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica*, lviii.

<sup>31</sup> Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 453; Andrew O’Shaughnessy attributed this quote to Richard Pares in “The West Indian Interest and the Crisis of American Independence,” in

a state of suspense so inviting to the Negroes, and so dangerous to the White inhabitants.<sup>32</sup>

His plea is demonstrative of the sentimentality of Jamaican planters at the time, including his air of desperation. They were afraid of their slaves, their fears were compounded by the threat of Maroons, and they had lost a great deal of political leverage since the American Revolution.

Despite prior events, the conflict of 1831 was most fruitful in the promulgation of abolitionist ideas. This agitation is appropriately known as the Baptist War due to the involvement of missionaries, though it is also known as the Christmas Rebellion and the Great Jamaica Slave Revolt. According to Burton, the impact of this action led “Historians [to suggest] that the spectacle of slave rebellion in December 1831 impacted the tenor of reform in 1832 and immediately after.<sup>33</sup> The most renowned leader of the Baptist War was Samuel Sharpe. Sharpe was a literate slave whose involvement in the Baptist Church enabled him to articulate biblical objections to the practice of slavery. Violence ensued from a protest organized by Sharpe, which some believe was intended to be peaceful while others argue violent intentions. Fighting lasted less than a month, and Sharpe was sentenced to death. It is widely accepted that before his execution he announced, “I would rather die upon yonder gallows than live in slavery.” The Baptist War had great influence on passing the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, despite vehement objections from Jamaican planters and many in the southern states of North America.

However, the goals of West Indian planters were often far removed from those of their North American counterparts, and the two groups were therefore divided on issues in British politics. North Americans established schools and invested in other infrastructure whilst British West Indians, whose primary endeavor was to maximize profits, sent their children to schools in Britain. Furthermore, plantation owners in the West Indies strove to return to England themselves, whereas North Americans were generally intent on more permanent settlement. Many West Indian planters succeeded in amassing enough wealth to return to England, where they

---

<sup>32</sup> M.W. McCahill ed., *The Correspondence of Stephen Fuller, 1788-1795: Jamaica, the West India Interest at Westminster and the Campaign to Preserve the Slave Trade* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2014), 175.

<sup>33</sup> Burton, 128.

gained a reputation for their lavish tendencies and extravagant parties.<sup>34</sup> Their wealth and reputations afforded them opportunities to attain political involvement, which they used to protect and enhance their financial interests. West Indians customarily shared interests with one another, and collaborated to increase their effectiveness in Parliament.

Men in this ‘fraternity’ of West Indian planters typically could not claim distinguished heritage, and therefore did not fit the traditional mold of nobility. Aristocrats who inherited their privileges observed the burgeoning statures of these individuals, who they viewed social inferiors, with dismay; they disdained their profligate spending, and resented their presence in Parliament. Horace Walpole’s dignity was derived from his father Robert, the first Prime Minister of Great Britain. In a letter to the Lord of Hertford in 1765, Horace Walpole described a “boisterous Indian style.”<sup>35</sup>

The British government was somewhat reliant upon assets in the Caribbean, but Jamaican planters were extremely dependent on the British government. This was because Jamaican planters could not have profited without parliamentary support by way of protectionist policies through the Navigation Acts. Of course, the British were also interested in profiting from the Navigation Acts. They were often ignored and hardly enforced but acts passed in the 1760s were intended to reverse this tendency because plugging these leaks would have allocated more funds through taxation to compensate for debts accrued during the Seven Years War. The Revenue Act applied high tariffs to foreign sugar imports, and was therefore exceptionally vexing for mainland merchants who saw it as a threat to their fish and lumber sales: “...the [F]rench, [D]utch, and other foreigners, whom we supply with those articles, will not permit us to bring away their money; so that unless we can take their ordinary sugars and molasses in return, this trade will be lost.”<sup>36</sup> Of course, compelling a decline in foreign trade was the intention of applying high tariffs. For North Americans, however, this meant a hike in sugar prices. The fecundity of the soil in

---

<sup>34</sup> O’Shaughnessy, 4.; Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro*, 132-133.

<sup>35</sup> Horace Walpole, “To Hertford”: January 27, 1765,” W.S. Lewis, ed., *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence: Volume Twenty Two* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960,) 499.

<sup>36</sup> “Reasons Against the Renewal Of The Sugar Act; As it will be prejudicial to the Trade, Not Only Of the North Colonies, But To That of Great-Britain Also,” Province of the Massachusetts-Bay (Boston: N.E.: Printed for Thomas Leverett, in Cornhill. MDCCLXIV [1764],) 4.

the French West Indies coupled with quotas on imports into France, intended to protect their longstanding brandy and wine industries from the sale of rum, caused the price of French sugar to drop below a rate the British could compete with. Richard Sheridan noted one pamphleteer observed “North American vessels return[ing] empty handed from Jamaica because of the ‘high prices of Rum and Molasses there’ ...”<sup>37</sup>

As unrest bloomed into the American Revolution, the power of absentees in British governance gradually declined. Without a secure market on sugar consumers in North America, Jamaican exports became less of an asset to the British government. In *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams argued, “The superiority of the French sugar colonies was for the British planters the chief among the many ills which flew out of the Pandora’s box that was the American Revolution.” Williams went on to note a decline from pre to post revolution sugar profits from the Long family’s plantations in Jamaica, accrediting the decrease in profits to the decline of absentee power in parliament and allowing the abolitionist movement to gain momentum.<sup>38</sup> By providing statistics that actually indicate an increase in profits, O’Shaughnessy disputes this conclusion arguing, “The American Revolution did indeed weaken the foundations of slavery in the British West Indies but the causes were political, not economic.”<sup>39</sup> Neither Williams nor O’Shaughnessy recognizes the role of slaves and Maroons in the destabilization of Jamaican planters.

The rebellions of slaves and Maroons provoked a great deal of anxiety from Jamaican planters. Some of these planters had amassed enough wealth to take up residence in England, and had found ways to influence British governance in the interest of their personal economic well-being. Slaves and Maroons further complicated shaky relations between the colonies in North America and the West Indies, and the center of the British Empire. Attempts by planters like Long and Edwards to argue the importance of West Indian sugar to the British Empire, and racially motivated arguments to avoid abolition, would not have been possible without the oppor-

---

<sup>37</sup> “The Importance of the British Plantations in America” (London, 1731), 95; cited by Richard B. Sheridan in *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1653-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 353; Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 352-357.

<sup>38</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2014), 122-123.

<sup>39</sup> O’Shaughnessy, 238.

tunities to influence British politics afforded by their wealth. Links in the chain connecting slaves and Maroons to absentees included the Jamaica Assembly and Stephen Fuller, the agent of Jamaica.<sup>40</sup> Although the West Indians and North Americans were often divided on issues, the loss of the North American market after the American Revolution further weakened the leverage of West Indians holding seats in Parliament. The expense of suppressing slave rebellions without the income from sugar sales in North America heavily weakened the arguments against abolition from West Indian planters. Studies of slave agency often explore the influence slaves have had on the observable world around them. ‘New imperial history,’ according to Dane Kennedy, explores the ways in which the Empire influenced Britain through “the infiltration of colonial peoples, products, and customs into British society and popular culture.”<sup>41</sup> Absentee West Indian planters who found ways to influence British policy certainly fall within this trend, but the ways in which slaves and Maroons impacted how these individuals acted displays an impressive result of agency in the eighteenth century. Slave and Maroon agency in Jamaica influenced policies of the British Empire by affecting the motives of absentee West Indian planters holding positions in Parliament, who were already in struggling to retain prominence under the threat of the North American crisis. This study is a rudimentary exploration of the truly remarkable influence of slaves and Maroons on British politics, and should serve as a challenge to others to acknowledge their impressive, previously overlooked expression of agency during this period.

### Bibliography

Blouet, Olwyn M. “Bryan Edwards, F.R.S., 1743-1800.” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 54, no. 2 (2000): 215-222.

---

<sup>40</sup> For more on the involvement of the Jamaican Assembly see Bryan Edwards, *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica, in Regard to the Maroon Negroes: With an Introduction by Bryan Edwards* (Cambridge: University Printing House, 1796).

<sup>41</sup> Dane Kennedy, “The Imperial History Wars,” *Journal of British Studies* 54, No 1 (2015): 10

- Brooke, John. *The House of Commons 1754-1790: Introductory Survey by John Brooke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- Burnard, Trevor. *Mastery, Tyranny, & Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Burton, Antoinette. *The Trouble With Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Craton, Michael. *Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation: Black Slaves and the British Empire*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1976.
- Craton, Michael. *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Edwards, Bryan. *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica, in Regard to the Maroon Negroes: With an Introduction by Bryan Edwards*. Cambridge: University Printing House, 1796.
- Edwards, Bryan. *The History Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*. London: Printed for B. Crosby, Stationer's Court: For Mundell & Son, Edinburgh; and J. Mundell, College, Glasgow, 1798.
- Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa. The African*. London: 1794.
- Fergus, Claudius K. *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. 89.
- Hall, Douglass ed., *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica 1750-86*. Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 1999.
- Kennedy, Dane. "The Imperial History Wars." *Journal of British Studies* 54, no. 1 (2015): 5-22.
- Levine, Philippa. *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*. Harlow, Essex, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2007.
- Long, Edward. *The History of Jamaica. or General Survey of the Antient and Modern-State of that Island: with Reflections of its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government*. London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1774.

McCahill, M.W. ed.. *The Correspondence of Stephen Fuller, 1788-1795: Jamaica, the West India Interest at Westminster and the Campaign to Preserve the Slave Trade*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell for The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust, 2014.

Memorial of Stephen Fuller to Germain, Dec. 23/24, 1778, Fuller MSS 256, f. 113, BCL.  
O'Shaughnessy, Andrew Jackson. *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

“Reasons Against the Renewal Of The Sugar Act; As it will be prejudicial to the Trade, Not Only Of the North Colonies, But To That of Great-Britain Also.” Boston: N.E.: Printed for Thomas Leverett, in Cornhill, MDCCLXIV [1764].

Seth, Suman. “Materialism, Slavery, and The History of Jamaica,” *Isis* 105, no. 4 (2014): 764-772.

Sheridan, Richard B. *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies 1623-1775*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Sheridan, Richard B. “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution.” *The Journal of Negro History* 61, no. 3 (1976): 290-308.

Smallwood, Stephanie E. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

“The Importance of the British Plantations in America.” London, 1731.

*The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl Of Orford: Including Numerous Letters Now First-Published From the Original Manuscripts in Six Volumes, VOL. II: 1749-1759*. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1842.

Walpole, Horace. “To Hertford”: Letter, January 27, 1765. Horace Walpole’s Correspondence: Yale Edition. New Haven: Yale University Library, 2011.

Watts, David. *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Changes Since 1492*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Williams, Eric. *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean 1492-1969*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1970.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.