

**Joseph Howe and Edward Jordon: Loyalty, Press Freedom, and Reform in 1830s**

**Nova Scotia and Jamaica**

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**Joseph Howe and Edward Jordon: Loyalty, Press Freedom, and Reform in 1830s****Nova Scotia and Jamaica****Christian Cowper****Abstract**

This is a comparative study of two journalists in Nova Scotia and Jamaica respectively in the 1830s. As editors of colonial newspapers, Joseph Howe (1804-73) and Edward Jordon (1800-69) were tried for publishing seditious writings. Both were acquitted, however, in part due to their rhetoric of loyalty to Britain. Such rhetoric undermined the charges of sedition made against them and allowed them to contrast their loyalty with the apparent disloyalty of colonial elites. It also shows their place within a transatlantic network of reform. These journalists expertly manoeuvred through the complex divisions of power in Britain's Atlantic Empire, yet their success was also contingent on their powerful position within their respective societies. In the twentieth century, Howe and Jordon were remembered for their combination of loyalty and advocacy for reform. However, this remembrance changed and faded as the British Empire receded.

8 August 2022

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R.G. Miller, “Erected by Public Subscription in Memory of The Honorable Edward Jordon C.B...,” Sculpture, 1875, St. William Grant Park, Kingston, Jamaica. Photography by Jonathan Greenland, 2018. Printed in Petrina Dacres, “Keeping Alive Before the People’s Eyes This Great Event: Kingston’s Queen Victoria Monument,” *Victorian Jamaica* eds. Tim Barringer and Wayne Modest (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 493-523, at 497.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Despite best efforts, it was unfortunately not possible to receive written permission for use from the photographer.



Louis-Phillipe Hébert, "Joseph Howe," Sculpture, 1904, Province House, Nova Scotia. Author's Photograph, 2022.





Relief from Statue of Joseph Howe showing his trial. Author's Photograph, 2022.

*To Nicole Laguit, for her kindness and patience.*



## *Introduction*

In 1932, the American historian Herbert Bolton called for a history of the Americas premised on the fundamental belief that they share a common past. If the conditions of the ‘frontier’ were faced wherever the Americas were settled, Bolton argued, surely their great history must be written across colonies, continents, and oceans. According to J.H. Elliott, however, for most of the twentieth century Bolton’s call went unheeded. Even as the study of the Americas grew in ambition, its scope grew smaller, with few historians venturing beyond national or regional contexts. As Elliott writes, “professionalization and atomization grew in tandem.” Historical comparisons between colonies were rare. Transnational work was even rarer.<sup>2</sup>

As Atlantic history has grown since the 1990s, this trend has reversed. Researchers have increasingly tackled the history of the Americas from transnational perspectives.<sup>3</sup> In doing so, they have shed new light on common themes such as enslavement, empire, activism, and rebellion. As Yarimar Bonilla writes, recent scholars have sought to cut across linguistic and imperial boundaries especially in studies of the Caribbean.<sup>4</sup> Yet there has also been suspicion that transnational works erode understanding of individual colonies with specific characters and nuances. Tina Loo’s claim that Canadian history has become “a species at risk” is just one example.<sup>5</sup> Merging transnational perspectives with the peculiarities of local polities can prove a difficult balancing act.

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<sup>2</sup> John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). See also, David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Yarimar Bonilla, “Freedom, Sovereignty, and Other Entanglements,” *Small Axe* vol. 21, 2 (July 2017): 201-8.

<sup>5</sup> Tina Loo, “Species at Risk,” *Canada’s History*, published October–November 2013, accessed 20 June, 2022, <http://www.canadashistory.ca/Magazine/Tina-Loo/October-2013/Species-at-risk>.

One solution to this problem is comparative history, which enables the study of historical themes across lands and oceans whilst respecting the characters of individual colonies. This thesis is a comparative study of two journalists, one Nova Scotian and one Jamaican, who came to prominence during the 1830s. While they may at first appear strange bedfellows, there are striking similarities. Both gained notoriety in the 1830s for similar reasons: the exposure of corruption amongst colonial elites. Both were brought to trial by these elites and exonerated in part due to the pressure of public opinion. Afterwards, both launched successful political careers and rose to high office. As we shall see, loyalty to Britain was an important feature of their rhetoric. This is a study of how that loyalty, which was adapted to local conditions, enabled them to embolden themselves against the persecution of colonial elites and expand press freedom. Loyalty is defined here as support for the continued presence of Britain in its Atlantic colonies, as opposed to the independence of those colonies or their annexation by the United States. Howe and Jordon also associated freedom of the press with Britain, which allowed them to connect their advocacy with British loyalty.

The thesis is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter studies the societies in which Jordon and Howe operated and provides the context for their activities once they became public figures at the end of the 1820s. The second chapter analyses the events that brought them to trial, the trials themselves, and their successful defences. Finally, the third chapter considers how their trials were remembered in Jamaica and Nova Scotia after their deaths. It argues that Howe and Jordon became imperial heroes because of their loyalty to Britain as well as their actions during their trials. After the decline of the British Empire, however, their loyalty was downplayed as it became irrelevant and awkward for the evolving societies in which they had lived. This is a study of what loyalty to Britain meant for

Jordon and Howe, but also how that loyalty was understood by the people who remembered them.

After a short period publishing *The Acadian*, Joseph Howe (1804-73) took over *The Novascotian* newspaper in 1828. He was initially supportive of the colonial government but became increasingly critical after uncovering corruption in the Nova Scotian assembly and magistracy. He was brought to trial in 1835 for criminal libel but was acquitted after he delivered a six-hour speech in his own defence.<sup>6</sup> He used this triumph as a springboard to office and quickly became one of the province's most influential politicians. By 1840, he was in government and, in 1848, led the successful campaign for responsible government. During this decade, he was also a conciliatory 'Commissioner of Indian Affairs' who advocated better treatment of the Mi'kmaq people in Nova Scotia.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards, he devoted his energy to the construction of a railway from Halifax to Quebec and served as premier of Nova Scotia from 1860-3. He resisted the British North America Act, which would incorporate Nova Scotia into the new nation of Canada but failed as Confederation became a reality in 1867. After a short spell as Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, he died in 1873.<sup>8</sup>

Edward Jordon (1800-69) was born in Jamaica, a free person of colour in a society where the majority of people were enslaved. Little is known of his parents, but he was of European and African descent and, in Jamaica's racial hierarchy, part of an intermediary class between enslavers and enslaved people.<sup>9</sup> In 1829, he and Robert Osborn founded *The*

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<sup>6</sup> The exact charge made against Howe is a matter of debate in scholarship. J. Murray Beck argues that it was criminal defamatory libel, while Barry Cahill describes it as a charge of sedition. The former term refers to a civil action taken by one individual against another, while the latter refers to a criminal matter prosecuted by the state. For an overview of the debate, see Lyndsay M. Campbell, "License to Publish: Joseph Howe's Contribution to Libel Law in Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Law Journal* 79, no.1 (2006): 79-116. Following Campbell, the term 'criminal libel' has been used as an umbrella term here.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savages* (Halifax, NS: Nimbus, 1993), 190.

<sup>8</sup> For a critical overview of writing on Howe prior to 1984, see P.A. Buckner, "Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe," *Acadiensis* 14, no.1 (Autumn 1984): 105-116.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'people of colour' is used to mean people of mixed African and European descent. It does not include people of pure African descent and does not correspond with the contemporary North American term.

*Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*. Subsequently, the newspaper advocated for the removal of restrictions placed on free men of colour, who were barred from serving on juries and voting in elections. It was fervently loyalist in outlook, writing that the people of colour whom it represented “will be found rallying under the British banner, wherever that banner is unfurled...”<sup>10</sup> During the spring of 1832, *The Watchman* threatened to “knock off the fetters” of the slaveholding system and “let the oppressed go free.”<sup>11</sup> Jordon was then arrested for constructive treason, a type of sedition outlined in Jamaica’s 1823 Island Act. The penalty was death. Fortunately, the Attorney-General refused to prosecute him; however, the case was turned over to an assistant who brought Jordon to trial in April 1832. While Jordon was acquitted of constructive treason, he was tried in August of that year for a civil charge of libel brought by a Scottish clergyman. He was found guilty and sentenced to six months in prison. However, the Colonial Office reversed the conviction before he could complete his sentence.<sup>12</sup> By this time, he had been elected an alderman for Kingston. After his release, he advocated for the end of slavery in *The Watchman* and, with this achieved, entered the Jamaican House of Assembly in 1835. He went on to hold several high offices, even leading a government, before the Jamaican assembly was dissolved following the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. He died in 1869.<sup>13</sup>

The aim of this thesis is to use the period around the trials of Jordon and Howe to illuminate features of Jamaican and Nova Scotian society respectively. The comparison between Jamaica and Nova Scotia allows for discussions of these societies individually, but also as components of a larger British polity. The question of whether the sea can be found in

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<sup>10</sup> Alpen Razi, “Narratives of Amelioration: Mental Slavery and the New World Slave Society in the Eighteenth-Century Didactic Imagination,” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2013), 186.

<sup>11</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, “Edward Jordon,” *Six Great Jamaicans: Biographical Sketches* (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1960), 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 3-24.

a drop of water, to paraphrase Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, is relevant here.<sup>14</sup> With this in mind, the question of whether Jordon and Howe's loyalty was shared by other sections in their societies (enslavers in Jamaica and the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia, to name two examples) is also discussed in the thesis. It is essential to ask how Jordon and Howe interacted with their societies at large, which groups they represented, and which groups they failed to represent. With this in mind, the crucial question of whether Howe and Jordon represented anything more than their own beliefs can be posed from a sound foundation.

There is a lively field of scholarship to draw from on the 'Loyal Atlantic' during the period of Atlantic Revolutions (c.1770-1840). This term describes that part of Britain's Atlantic Empire which remained loyal to Great Britain during this period. Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan locate it in an "intellectual rainbow" of movements within the Atlantic including "black, brown, red, white, and green Atlantics."<sup>15</sup> The study of these movements, which came into scholarship on the heels of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, has changed it in a number of ways.<sup>16</sup> Bannister and Riordan argue that they have encouraged scholars to transcend national boundaries, to avoid the teleological mistake of writing colonies' histories as an inevitable journey towards independence, to understand diasporas outside of national confines, and to challenge Eurocentric master narratives.<sup>17</sup> Recent work by S. Karly Kehoe questions the assertion that Britain, its empire, and the idea of loyalty were "Anglo-Saxon and Protestant spaces," and argues that the empire provided opportunities for groups who were persecuted in the British Isles to demonstrate loyalty.<sup>18</sup> Jordon's work shows how free

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<sup>14</sup> Richard D. Brown, "Reviewed Work. What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice," by Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó. *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 3 (2014): 840-41.

<sup>15</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, eds., *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic*, 3-28.

<sup>18</sup> S. Karly Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation: Scottish and Irish Catholics at the Atlantic Fringe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 4.



people of colour, a group which suffered civil disabilities in the British West Indies, used loyalty to support their case for full citizenship.

It is in this complex Atlantic world of loyalty to crown and empire that this study locates Jordon and Howe. Loyalty to Britain was central to the rhetoric of both figures during the 1830s. Both raised political capital by emphasizing their loyalty when they were brought to trial by British colonial authorities, for instance. Yet there were also contradictions, such as the men's use of their British loyalty *against* colonial assemblies which represented British power. Study of these is essential to understand loyalty in Britain's Atlantic Empire as a force for reform: in Jamaica, for the removal of civil disabilities and the abolition of slavery; in Nova Scotia, for the removal of corrupt government practices; in both, for press freedom. As Bannister and Riordan argue, loyalty has too often been understood as inherently conservative. In fact, British loyalty did not signify clinging to "the losing side of history" as republican citizenship superseded it. Rather, those in the Atlantic who remained loyal to Britain contributed to the development of "the world's largest empire in the nineteenth century," an empire which was in part defined by "commitment to lawfulness and legality."<sup>19</sup> Howe and Jordon defined their politics by loyalty yet were also part of what Paul Keen calls a "radical Atlantic."<sup>20</sup> They advocated for reform of their societies while emphasizing that they must remain British in character. By stressing their British loyalty, they suggested that their political goals (namely, press freedom) were not radical, but rooted in British tradition and culture. This rhetoric was extremely successful, as the second chapter will show.

The study of Howe and Jordon illustrates several tensions in British loyalty more broadly. For instance, to what extent were the ideas of British rights articulated by Jordon and

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<sup>19</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic: Joseph Howe and the Culture of Reform," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no.3 (2014): 30-48.

Howe confined to educated elites, and what role did race play in their loyalty? Jordon lived in a society where social class was inherently tied to skin pigment. As a man of colour who had been born free, he was part of a social class below the white elite but above the enslaved majority. He had much to gain by proving his loyalty to the imperial government at a time when revolts of the enslaved, as well as successionist rhetoric from enslavers, threatened the stability of British colonies in the Caribbean.<sup>21</sup> British North America was a focus of African American Anglophilia from the 1830s, but also a land from which slavery was eradicated at a slow pace, and where black people continued to suffer discrimination long after 1834.<sup>22</sup> Did Howe believe that the British rights which he celebrated in his trial speech also belonged to African Nova Scotians and the Mi'kmaq? As Maya Jasanoff explains, “the line of inclusion and exclusion” in loyalist societies reveal how race and class functioned in the Empire and are essential to its study.<sup>23</sup>

Another important tension in the British Empire of the 1830s was between liberty and control. Edmund Burke may have preferred the rights of Englishmen to the Rights of Man, but the British government, at home and in the colonies, was repeatedly threatened by revolutionary ideas during this period.<sup>24</sup> As Bannister and Riordan write, colonial systems of government in the early nineteenth century were deliberately designed to “keep popular impulses in check,” and the Colonial Office was founded in 1801 with this in mind. However,

the system never worked according to design: colonial assemblies repeatedly contested the authority of the appointed councils; persistent public criticism of the governors’

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<sup>21</sup> For more information on the rhetoric of Jamaican enslavers during the era of Emancipation, see Alpen Razi, “Coloured Citizens of the World Unite: The Networks of Empire Loyalism in Emancipation-Era Jamaica and the Rise of the Transnational Black Press,” *American Periodicals* 23, no. 2 (2013): 105-124.

<sup>22</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, “Ending Slavery,” *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016). See also, Elisa Tamarkin, “Black Anglophilia; or, The Sociability of Antislavery,” *American Literary History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 444–78.

<sup>23</sup> Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (London: HarperPress, 2012), 358.

<sup>24</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Frank M. Turner (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 28.

regimes created a divisive political climate; and efforts to curb political opposition damaged the legitimacy of local government.<sup>25</sup>

The trials of Howe and Jordon show how agitators for press freedom could come up against the sharp end of this control, but also how they outmanoeuvred it.

The nature of loyalty to Britain was influenced by the societies in which Howe and Jordon operated. Howe was raised in a Nova Scotia where, as John G. Reid shows, British power had only recently been established.<sup>26</sup> And though this power solidified throughout his life, loyal subjects in Nova Scotia did not take for granted that it would remain in the British Empire even during the 1830s. As chapter two shows, Howe felt it necessary to disavow the United States at great length during his trial speech. Jordon, on the other hand, wrote from a Jamaica in which enslavers advocated joining the United States, and where the threat of a second Haiti (a republic of “Black Jacobins,” as C.L.R. James called them) formed a parallel threat for British governors.<sup>27</sup> Economically, Jamaica was at the beginning of the transition from a society built around enslavement to one occupied by free people (though drastically unequal). Nova Scotia’s fledgling economy, on the other hand, was based on its military base, status as a British port, and agrarian settlement outside of Halifax. Both men’s careers coincided with a period in which a number of groups pushed against civil restrictions in Great Britain and its empire. Amongst these were Chartists, parliamentary reformers, Catholics, abolitionists, and enslaved people, all of whom agitated for an expansion in the boundaries of citizenship.<sup>28</sup> How did membership of these societies affect Howe and Jordon? This question allows one to glean the differences between Nova Scotia and Jamaica in this period. It also

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<sup>25</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> John G. Reid, “Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760-1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (2004): 669-692.

<sup>27</sup> C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Random House, 1967).

<sup>28</sup> Paul Keen, “Radical Atlantic: Joseph Howe and the Culture of Reform.” See also, S. Karly Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation*; Melanie J. Newton, *The Children of Africa in the Colonies: Free People of Color in Barbados in the Age of Emancipation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana St Press, 2008).

allows one to understand reform as a phenomenon that extended throughout Britain's Atlantic Empire in the 1830s.

No comparative history of the West Indies (either the region or of individual islands) and Nova Scotia in the 1830s exists. Indeed, there are only a few studies which examine their links in this period, and these tend to be economic histories or studies of merchant networks. Works by Selwyn Carrington and Peter K. Newman, for instance, show how the fledgling merchants of Nova Scotia failed to supplant American trade in the British West Indies despite the perceived benefits of trading under the British flag.<sup>29</sup> More recent work includes a biographical article of William Roche, a Halifax merchant who worked in the West Indies carrying trade from 1820-40, which places him within a "highly visible elite group of merchants" who dominated Nova Scotia's economy during the period.<sup>30</sup> A similar work is the edited diary of Joseph Salter, another Halifax merchant working in the trade contemporaneously. This work is particularly valuable as Salter traded in Jamaica shortly after emancipation, mixing with a white Jamaican elite whose wealth he described with great enthusiasm. His interactions with these Jamaicans show the links between British colonies across the Atlantic, but also white Jamaicans' attitudes towards Salter as a "British American."<sup>31</sup> David Sutherland's article on Halifax merchants from 1783-1850 highlights the importance of the West Indies carrying trade to Halifax's economic development, while economic histories of both regions describe their importance to one another.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Selwyn H.H. Carrington, "The United States and Canada: The Struggle for the British West Indian Trade," *Social and Economic Studies* 37, no.1/2 (March 1988): 69-105. See also, Peter K. Newman, "Canada's Role in West Indian Trade Before 1912," *Inter-American Economic Affairs* 14, no.1 (1960): 25-49.

<sup>30</sup> Julian Gwynn, "Shipping to the Caribbean in the 1820s-1840s: William Roche, Halifax Merchant," *The Northern Mariner* 23, no.2 (2013): 99-122, at 99.

<sup>31</sup> Nancy Redmayne Ross, ed., *The Diary of a Maritimer, 1816-1902: The Life and Times of Joseph Salter* (St John's, NL: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1996), 27.

<sup>32</sup> David A. Sutherland, "The Merchants of Halifax: A Commercial Class in Pursuit of Metropolitan Status" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1975). See also, Julian Gwynn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998). Charles Victor Callender, "The Development of the Capital Market Institutions of Jamaica," *Social and Economic Studies* 14, no.3 (September 1965): 1-174.

These are not comparative histories. Gwynn's article on Roche, for instance, shows how the livelihoods of Halifax merchants largely depended on trade with the West Indies, a greater player in the Atlantic economy than Nova Scotia in the 1830s. However, it does not stop to examine West Indian society, nor its cultural and political links with Nova Scotia. Likewise, Salter's diary does not discuss Caribbean societies in detail. Rather, he confines his discussion of the West Indies to details such as sending home "curiosities" (trinkets) like any other bewildered tourist.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, these small descriptions are useful in themselves for the snapshots they give of West Indian society and of Nova Scotian attitudes towards it.

While their societies have not been compared in great detail, Howe and Jordon have been well studied within their national contexts. This is particularly true of Howe. As P.A. Buckner noted some time ago, "Joseph Howe has always held a special fascination for Nova Scotia historians."<sup>34</sup> At his death in 1873, the *Evening Herald* proclaimed him "our greatest man," and – though he was criticized for failing to keep Nova Scotia out of Canadian Confederation – other newspapers generally echoed the view.<sup>35</sup> A statue of him was erected at Province House in 1904 after a lengthy public campaign.<sup>36</sup> In 1909, a mammoth collection of his speeches and writings was published by Joseph A. Chisholm, and Howe was the subject of three biographies before 1936.<sup>37</sup> A collection of Howe's letters followed in 1939 which was similarly laudatory, and this interpretation of Howe was dominant through to the 1980s.<sup>38</sup> During the 1990s and 2000s, two studies of Howe's trial by the legal scholars Barry Cahill and Lyndsay M. Campbell respectively analysed the case as a milestone in the history

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<sup>33</sup> Nancy Redmayne Ross, *The Diary of a Maritimer*, 70.

<sup>34</sup> P.A. Buckner, "Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe," 106.

<sup>35</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: The Briton Becomes Canadian* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 302.

<sup>36</sup> David A. Sutherland, "Celebrating the Joseph Howe Centennial in 1904: An Exercise in Selective Recall," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotian Historical Society* 8 (2005): 76-91.

<sup>37</sup> P.A. Buckner, "Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe," 105-116.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

of Canadian press freedom.<sup>39</sup> However, by 2000 work on Howe had declined to such an extent that Gerald Friesen titled an article “Atlantic Canada’s History Writing Today: No Howe?”<sup>40</sup> In 2014, Howe was the subject of an article by Paul Keen which stressed his ability to absorb the ideas of British political reformers such as William Cobbett and adapt them to the campaign for responsible government in Nova Scotia.<sup>41</sup>

The first of Howe’s biographies was originally written as a series of articles in 1875 and was published as a book in 1904. The author, George Monro Grant, was then commissioned to write a new biography of him but died before he could finish it.<sup>42</sup> J.W. Longley worked on the new manuscript, which was published under his name in 1905.<sup>43</sup> William Lawson Grant, the son of Howe’s first biographer, also published a biography of Howe in 1920 which drew heavily on the work of his father.<sup>44</sup> These works were written from a Whig perspective which viewed Nova Scotian history as an extension of the British journey to parliamentary democracy, constitutional monarchy, and individual rights. Howe, who frequently stressed his passionate attachment to Britain, was a great hero in that journey. Indeed, it is significant that the second biography was issued as part of a series on the ‘Makers of Canada,’ while the third was part of a ‘Chronicles of Canada’ series. These positioned him as a founding father of sorts within an enlightened British Empire. In the words of Longley, when “the British Empire has attained the dominance [of the world] due to union and enlightened virtue, Joseph Howe will occupy a conspicuous niche among the authors and heroes of its glory.”<sup>45</sup> While this thesis does not share this lofty assessment, these

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<sup>39</sup> Barry Cahill, “R. v. Howe (1835) for Seditious Libel: A Tale of Twelve Magistrates,” *Canadian State Trials Volume I*, ed. Barry Wright (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996), 547-576. See also, Lyndsay M. Campbell, “License to Publish: Joseph Howe’s Contribution to Libel Law in Nova Scotia,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 79, no.1 (2006): 79-116.

<sup>40</sup> Gerald Friesen, “Atlantic Canada’s History Writing Today: No Howe?” *Acadiensis* 30, no. 1 (2000): 64-72.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Keen, “Radical Atlantic: Joseph Howe and the Culture of Reform.”

<sup>42</sup> George Monro Grant, *Joseph Howe* (Halifax: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1904)

<sup>43</sup> J.W. Longley, *Joseph Howe* (Toronto: Morang & Co. Limited, 1905).

<sup>44</sup> W. L. Grant, *The Tribune of Nova Scotia: A Chronicle of Joseph Howe* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1920).

<sup>45</sup> J.W. Longley, *Joseph Howe*, 290.



works are useful because they reveal the afterlife of Howe as a hero of early twentieth century Canada. That they are so closely related, however, raises the question of the extent to which the views held by Grant, Grant Jnr., and Longley reflected Nova Scotian opinion more broadly.

Published in 1935, James Roy's *Joseph Howe: A Study in Achievement and Frustration* gave a slightly more critical account of Howe's career.<sup>46</sup> A professor of English Literature, Roy's work concentrated on Howe "the man," with emphasis on his unpublished diaries and some of his poetry. Roy found Howe's poetry abysmal, and his diaries indicative of a man with a provincial, small-minded attitude. The problem with this approach, according to a contemporary reviewer, was that Howe's political life (both as a journalist and as a Member of the Assembly) was the vessel into which he poured most of his energy. His poetry and diaries are "trivial intimacies" which reveal nothing about the substance of his life, and so the study was not well-constructed. Indeed, most of the material was not considered worthy of publication by its author. It was rather as if a biography of Winston Churchill had taken his watercolours as its principal primary source.<sup>47</sup>

J. Murray Beck also found Roy's study overliterary. He wrote that Howe's life was written like a "Shakespearean tragedy," with early triumphs such as his journalism and trial undone by failures "at some point in the third act."<sup>48</sup> However, Roy's work is notable because it did not concur with Howe's reputation for what the 1936 reviewer called his "statesmanship and courage."<sup>49</sup>

In 1939, another collection of Howe's letters was published with the support of Nova Scotia's premier, Angus L. MacDonald. D.C. Harvey, who edited the work, wrote in the

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<sup>46</sup> James A. Roy, *Joseph Howe; a Study in Achievement and Frustration* (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1935).

<sup>47</sup> Chester Martin, "Reviewed Work: *Joseph Howe: A Study in Achievement and Frustration*," *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 17, no.1, 78-80 (1936), at 78.

<sup>48</sup> J. Murray Beck, "Preface," *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, vii.

<sup>49</sup> Chester Martin, "Reviewed Work: *Joseph Howe: A Study in Achievement and Frustration*," 79.

foreword that Howe was “Nova Scotia’s most eloquent son.”<sup>50</sup> He also stated that the aim of the work was to give “inspiration” to “the youth of this province.” That this work received political support from the Premier himself hints at the construction of Howe as a hero whose life was a moral example to the youth of Nova Scotia.<sup>51</sup>

Subsequently, Howe was subject to reassessment. Yet, this “revisionist interpretation,” as P.A. Buckner called it, only raised Howe’s star higher.<sup>52</sup> Whereas Roy regarded him as an eloquent pragmatist, Howe’s next biographer, J. Murray Beck, argued that he was a man of principle devoted almost religiously to Nova Scotia’s connection with Britain. Beck wrote prolifically on Howe from 1960 onwards, but his work culminated in a two-volume biography published in the early 1980s which labelled Howe “the greatest Nova Scotian.”<sup>53</sup> He remains Howe’s most recent biographer.

Beck was, at times, a controversial writer. He cited almost no secondary sources and regarded the biographies of Howe written before his as pitifully inadequate. Indeed, the only previous biography he cited was Roy’s 1935 work and, even then, he wrote that he did so only “for purposes of evaluation.”<sup>54</sup> Yet Beck was praised by P.A. Buckner for his encyclopaedic knowledge of Howe’s writing, which – even by the standards of a nineteenth-century journalist – was prolific. The second volume of his biography was published in 1983; and, in 1986, an entire academic symposium was devoted to Howe.<sup>55</sup> The symposium reflected Beck’s views; indeed, he was the keynote speaker at the conference. Tellingly, a review of the symposium remarks on the “booming Howe industry,” which indicates his

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<sup>50</sup> Joseph Howe, *The Heart of Howe: Selections from the Letters and Speeches of Joseph Howe*, ed. D. C. Harvey (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939). Quoted in Buckner, “Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe,” 106.

<sup>51</sup> P.A. Buckner, “Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe,” 106.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>53</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 377.

<sup>55</sup> Wayne A. Hunt, ed., *The Proceedings of the Joseph Howe Symposium* (Sackville, N.B.: Centre for Canadian Studies, 1984).

importance to Nova Scotian history-writing during the 1980s.<sup>56</sup> It also writes that very little challenge was issued to Beck. Other contributions to the symposium studied Howe's support for free education in the 1860s, his relationship to sectarian politics in the 1850s, and his publishing ventures. These are not immediately relevant to this work.

Although Beck dominated writing on Howe at this time, other work was published which at times questioned his views. An article by Kenneth McNaught in 1974, for instance, argued that Howe's case was one of the "two most significant cases involving political freedom of the press" in Canada's history.<sup>57</sup> Beck, on the other hand, argued that the trial was of little importance in itself, but rather was part of a long process which eventually led to the achievement of press freedom much later.<sup>58</sup> A biography of Howe by Charles Bruce Fergusson published in 1973, meanwhile, did not reassess the laudatory view of Howe which had previously dominated.<sup>59</sup>

This period of scholarly interest was mirrored outside the academy. In 1961, a film on Joseph Howe was released by the National Film Board of Canada which took his trial as its centrepiece. Howe is the hero and protagonist of the film: the "Tribune of Nova Scotia."<sup>60</sup> The film was presented in history classes at junior and senior high schools, which suggests that Howe maintained his status as a government-sanctioned hero during this period. A Joseph Howe Festival was also held in Halifax from 1973-1985 during which, amongst other celebrations, contests in oratory were held at local high schools to find a "Young Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Howe." In 1979, the opening ceremony was watched by the Governor-General

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<sup>56</sup> D.A. Muise, "Reviewed Work: *The Proceedings of the Joseph Howe Symposium*," *The Canadian Historical Review* vol.67, no.1 (March 1986): 113-4.

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth McNaught, "Political Trials and the Canadian Political Tradition," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 24, no. 2 (1974): 149-164, at 164.

<sup>58</sup> Beck, "A Fool for a Client: *The King v. Joseph Howe*," *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 129-47.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Bruce Fergusson, *Joseph Howe of Nova Scotia* (Windsor, N.S: Lancelot Press, 1973).

<sup>60</sup> Julian Biggs, *Joseph Howe: The Tribune of Nova Scotia* (National Film Board of Canada, 1961), film.

of Canada, Edward Schreyer; and, at its peak in 1983, 20,000 people attended.<sup>61</sup> The significance of this interest is discussed in the third chapter.

During the 1990s, interest in Howe declined both within and without the academy. The Joseph Howe Festival was last held in 1985, while no new biography of Howe emerged to challenge Beck's work. Nonetheless, there was a steady stream of work which has lasted to the present. Barry Cahill argued that Howe's trial stopped libel prosecutions by the state in Nova Scotia for the rest of the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> In contrast to Beck's assessment, then, the trial had a significant impact on press freedom in Nova Scotia in the 1830s. This debate was taken up by Lyndsay M. Campbell in 2006, who concurred with Cahill's argument, writing that the trial "signalled that criminal libel would be ineffective in controlling political criticism in the Nova Scotia press."<sup>63</sup> This debate is crucial to understanding the significance of Howe's trial, and is therefore extremely useful to this thesis.

Howe was also praised in Daniel Paul's seminal work on indigenous history in Canada, *We Were Not the Savages*, as a rare example of a settler politician who defended the interests of indigenous people. Paul argued that, without him, "the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia would probably have passed into extinction."<sup>64</sup> Howe has not otherwise been examined in a postcolonial context.

In 2014, Paul Keen located Joseph Howe within a "radical Atlantic." Keen argues that Howe was part of a cultural awakening in Nova Scotia in the 1830s, but also that he used his loyalty cleverly to accomplish his political goals.<sup>65</sup> This political goal was reform of the Nova

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<sup>61</sup> "Joseph Howe Festival Society," Memory NS, accessed 26 August 2022, <https://memoryns.ca/joseph-howe-festival-society>.

<sup>62</sup> Barry Cahill, "R. v. Howe (1835) for Seditious Libel: A Tale of Twelve Magistrates," 565. Cahill uses the term "public libel."

<sup>63</sup> Lyndsay M. Campbell, "License to Publish: Joseph Howe's Contribution to Libel Law in Nova Scotia."

<sup>64</sup> Paul, *We Were Not the Savages*, 190.

<sup>65</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic: Joseph Howe and the Culture of Reform," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no.3 (2014): 30-48. See also, Paul Keen, "Transatlantic Rambles: Joseph Howe, Popular Radicalism, and Local Culture," Raddall Symposium: "Atlantic Canada in a Shifting World, Wolfville, NS (July 2013).

Scotian political system: firstly, to confront corruption amongst Nova Scotian elites; and secondly, to achieve responsible government. These works are significant for this thesis, as they examine the movement for reform in Nova Scotia which Howe led in the 1830s, as well as its long-term significance.

The literature on Edward Jordon is patchier, though Jordon was once nearly as exalted a figure in Jamaica as Howe is in Nova Scotia. Like Howe, he was one of the most senior political figures in his colony upon his death in 1869. This prompted notices in Jamaican newspapers, as well as a flattering obituary in London's *Anti-Slavery Reporter*.<sup>66</sup> It was only six years before his statue was unveiled in central Kingston in 1875.<sup>67</sup> Jordon was praised by nineteenth century African American journalists, who held him up as an example of Black excellence.<sup>68</sup> This played into contemporary African American Anglophilia, which contrasted the brutality of American slavery with the supposed benevolence of British rule.<sup>69</sup> Such comparisons inevitably downplayed the fact that Jordon, a mixed-race man in Jamaica, was part of a class which was distinct from black Jamaicans.

From the end of the nineteenth century, Jordon and his co-editor Robert Osborn were frequently labelled Jamaica's greatest sons by its press. Much of their appeal lay in the fact that, though they agitated for emancipation and civil rights, "they did not resort to violence."<sup>70</sup> This made them attractive to the mixed-race and white communities who contrasted them with 'rebels,' such as George William Gordon, and who owned a disproportionate number of the island's newspapers and presses. Jordon and Osborn were

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<sup>66</sup> James M. Phillipo, "The Late Hon. E. Jordon," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* 16, no.10 (July 1869): 246-7.

<sup>67</sup> "Champions of Emancipation," Jamaican Information Service, accessed April 1, 2022, <https://jis.gov.jm/information/stalwarts/>.

<sup>68</sup> William Wells Brown, *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (Boston: James Redpath, 1863).

<sup>69</sup> Elisa Tamarkin, "Black Anglophilia; or, the Sociability of Antislavery."

<sup>70</sup> "Jamaica's Greatest Men," *Daily Gleaner*, December 23, 1899. "A Famous Jamaican," *Jamaica Times*, June 22, 1901. "Westwood High School," *Jamaica Times*, 22 July 1905.

also loyal to Britain at a time of crisis, which made them attractive in a West Indies where, as C.L.R. James notes, loyalty was taught almost as a creed.<sup>71</sup>

As nationalism in Jamaica grew between the world wars, the cult of Jordon and Osborn gave way to reverence for two ‘rebels’: George William Gordon and Paul Bogle. These two criticised the policies of Governor Edward Eyre in the 1860s, which led to the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. They were both hanged by the British under martial law on extremely thin evidence. In the 1930s, Gordon was taken up by the Jamaican nationalist Alexander Bustamante, who portrayed him as a self-sacrificing hero who anticipated independence. Gordon and Bogle were declared National Heroes of Jamaica in 1969 by Bustamante’s successor as Prime Minister, Hugh Shearer. Jordon and Osborn missed the cut, though they had been subject to a positive study nine years earlier in W. Adolphe Roberts’ *Six Great Jamaicans*.<sup>72</sup>

In the following years, Jordon was an important figure in two studies of free people of colour in Jamaica after Emancipation. He was also the subject of some controversy between their authors. Mavis Campbell, a black Jamaican scholar writing from the United States, departed significantly from previous assessments of Jordon. She claimed that he was “almost wholly interested in offices for himself,” determined to become “respectable” in the eyes of white colonial elites and fought against slavery only because he was “envious of the privileged.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> C.L.R. James, “Old School Tie,” *Beyond a Boundary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013) 39-46. James’ description of loyalty in its “specifically British” form is an illuminating discussion of Victorian values in the West Indies and beyond.

<sup>72</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans* (Kingston: The Pioneer Press, 1951). Howard Johnson, “From Pariah to Patriot: The Posthumous Career of George William Gordon,” *New West Indian Guide* 81, no.3-4 (2007): 197-218.

<sup>73</sup> Mavis Campbell, “Edward Jordon, *The Watchman* (1830-7), and the Electoral Franchise,” *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1976), 154-197.



Writing in 1981, Gad Heuman not only disagreed with this assessment, but suggested that Campbell allowed her views on contemporary Jamaica to cloud her judgement of its past. He attached an entire appendix devoted to challenging her, in which he wrote that her work “suffers from a singular bias against the coloreds.”<sup>74</sup> His charge was not without foundation. For most of Jordon’s political career, he was the most senior mixed-race politician in Jamaica. In her work, Campbell not only portrayed this class negatively, but also used pejorative language such as “half-breeds” to describe them. This language was by no means acceptable in 1970s scholarship.<sup>75</sup>

Following independence, political power in Jamaica passed from the Colonial Office to a mixed-race and white elite which produced almost all of Jamaica’s Prime Ministers until 1992. Violence grew in the 1960s under the rule of this elite, which continued to hold onto power.<sup>76</sup> Her strong words, then, may be a classic case of the present dictating how the past is written. This was a point she made herself when she wrote that her study was vital “for an understanding of the origin of the present color syndrome in Jamaica.”<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, Campbell’s accusations were wholly based on documentary evidence. For instance, her statement that Jordon’s newspapers advertised the sale of enslaved people is correct.<sup>78</sup> It is also true that a colonial governor wrote a memorandum which suggested that Jordon had “gone over to the planter’s interest” in the years following Emancipation.<sup>79</sup> These are facts which apologists for Jordon must address.

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<sup>74</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981), 197-8.

<sup>75</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 49.

<sup>76</sup> Kareen Williams, “The Evolution of Political Violence in Jamaica 1940-1980,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>78</sup> “For Sale: A Young Negro Woman,” *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 1 October 1831, National Archives, Kew, CO 142/2.

<sup>79</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 188. See also, Smith to Glenelg, 13 October 1838, National Archives, Kew, C.O. 137/230.

Heuman's accusation was not that Campbell fabricated her thesis, but rather that she failed to give a balanced view of Jordon. In Heuman's work, Jordon is portrayed as a canny political operator. Although he nurtured alliances with black people, he was also accused at times of harbouring prejudices against them.<sup>80</sup> Unlike Campbell, Heuman does not delve into psychological speculation about whether Jordon was motivated by self-interest, nor does he trace colourism in the Jamaican 1970s to the actions of the free politicians of colour whom Jordon led after Emancipation.

What is most striking about recent monographs on Jordon is that they do not engage with Campbell's argument, or even cite her at all. This is despite the fact that she eventually became Emerita Professor of History at Amherst College in the US, and only she and Heuman have written book-length studies of Jamaican free people of colour after emancipation.<sup>81</sup> Both recent works cite Heuman, so this oversight is difficult to explain. Candace Ward's 2018 monograph on *The Watchman*, the newspaper which Jordon edited alongside Robert Osborn, is one example of this gap.<sup>82</sup> She commends Osborn and Jordon for seeking to "dismantle the racial boundaries in Jamaican society" but does not address Campbell's contradictory assessment of Jordon. Similarly, Alpen Razi's 2013 work locates Jordon at the centre of a "transnational Anglophone black print culture" which worked for Emancipation, and which also included papers edited by African Americans.<sup>83</sup> Razi cautions against conflating mixed-race people in Jamaica with black people, but nonetheless fails to address the evidence given by both Campbell and Heuman that Jordon may have been

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<sup>80</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 78.

<sup>81</sup> "Mavis C. Campbell (d. 2019)," Amherst College, accessed 2 April 2022, <https://www.amherst.edu/news/memoriam/node/755634>.

<sup>82</sup> Candace Ward, "'An Engine of Immense Power': The Jamaica Watchman and Crossings in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Print Culture," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 51, no.3 (Fall 2018): 483-503.

<sup>83</sup> Alpen Razi, "Coloured Citizens of the World Unite."

prejudiced against the latter. It is unfortunate that the authors did not engage with Campbell's argument, because her accusations against Jordon flatly contradict their positive assessments.

One can only speculate on the reasons for omission. Campbell's views cast doubt on these authors' arguments, who may have been tempted to ignore them instead of cluttering up their pages with a messy rebuttal. Both are literary scholars and may have been attracted to the idea of Jordon as a man of letters rather than a power-hungry politician. They may have accepted Heuman's criticism of Campbell and simply decided to ignore her. Nonetheless, their articles suffer from the omission because they do not address Jordon's failings, which tease out the contradictions of race in Jamaica regardless of whether one agrees with Campbell's argument.

The Jordon who emerges in recent scholarship seems strangely incomplete, as if he has been airbrushed for a photo shoot. This thesis aims to address this problem by engaging with Campbell and Heuman's work critically, which will enable the full discussion of Jordon which recent scholarship has lacked. Although Campbell's incendiary portrait of Jordon is unjustified, the recent articles by Razi and Ward have overstated Jordon's contribution to emancipation and omitted sources which contradict their positive assessment. Ward in particular overstates Jordon's interest in dismantling racial boundaries in Jamaican society. She also lacks a sophisticated understanding of conflict between mixed-race and black groups in Jamaican society during the 1830s.

This discussion is essential for the thesis. If one is to assess the boundaries of press freedom in the 1830s British Empire, one must first understand whether Jordon was a tireless campaigner against the colonial plantocracy or, as Campbell suggests, their stooge. In order to understand how politics in Jamaica and Nova Scotia functioned in the 1830s, one must understand how Jordon and Howe used their trials as a springboard to political office –

including the political tricks they may have used to make the jump. If the thesis is to reveal some unifying themes of loyalty in the British Atlantic, it must not shy away from analysing the extent to which it was bound by racial, class, or other forms of privilege.

Any study of Howe and Jordon must begin with a discussion of the societies in which they were raised. Consequently, the first chapter considers the colonies in which these two young journalists lived and asks what connections existed between the societies. Although trade with Nova Scotia was relatively unimportant for the Jamaican economy, the reverse was not true. The colonies shared a print culture in the British tradition. They also shared a British system of imperial government in which the Colonial Office in London and the local assemblies existed uneasily. British ideas of liberty and property could be used against colonial power, as they had been during the American Revolution, as well as to support it.

In the second chapter, the backgrounds, trials, and careers of Howe and Jordon are discussed. Both loudly proclaimed their loyalty to Britain from the beginning of their careers but combined this rhetoric with criticism of their respective colonial governments. Next, the trials themselves are analysed: the different methods Howe and Jordon used to secure acquittal are discussed, as well as the role that their rhetoric of loyalty to Britain played in those acquittals. The extent to which the 'British' freedoms advocated by Howe and Jordon were shared by marginalized groups in their societies is questioned, as well as whether the social class of the journalists was important in their respective triumphs.

The final chapter discusses the afterlives of Howe and Jordon. It details how, after their deaths, they became heroes in their respective colonies and eventually rose to the status of 'greatest son.' It asks what social needs propelled these men to their exalted status at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, it makes the case that both men experienced a decline

in interest as the press freedom and loyalty to Britain with which they were associated became either irrelevant or awkward for mythmakers in Jamaica and Nova Scotia.

The research for this thesis centred on the 1830s newspapers published by Joseph Howe and Edward Jordon respectively: *The Novascotian; or Colonial Herald* and *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*. The former is available on microfilm at the Nova Scotia Archives, while I travelled to Kew to access the latter at the National Archives. Other primary sources were also relevant, such as contemporary accounts of Howe's trial in local newspapers and, for Jordon, descriptions of his trials by British missionaries. The research was aided by this similarity in primary sources, which extends to the media through which Howe and Jordon were remembered after their deaths. Both men were immortalized in public statues around the end of the nineteenth century, and both were subject of educational films in the twentieth. On the other hand, the research was underpinned by an extensive acquaintance with the secondary sources, which to some extent directed primary source research. For example, *The Watchman's* ambivalent assessment of slavery which appears in the conclusion has not previously appeared outside the newspaper. However, the author only knew to look for it due to Mavis Campbell's argument that Jordon was not an abolitionist. The large volume of material left by Howe, meanwhile, benefitted from the clarification provided by secondary sources. Consequently, the primary source research undertaken on *The Novascotian* was guided by secondary work on Howe, in particular J. Murray Beck's two-volume biography and Paul Keen's 2014 article.

This is an exciting opportunity to raise questions about British imperial identity, freedoms associated – at least by Howe and Jordon – with nineteenth century British culture, and the production of national heroes within the British Empire and after independence. These are important questions for societies with British heritage, particularly those in the midst of decolonization of one kind or another. It is also an opportunity to illuminate aspects

of the British Empire which could be better understood; for example, the triumph of loyalism in the Atlantic British Empire in the decades following the American Revolution. Finally, it aims to provide an insight into the function of the Atlantic British Empire in the 1830s in terms of law, politics, and culture.



## *Chapter One*

### *Setting the Stage: Jamaica and Nova Scotia in the 1830s*

The Halifax merchant Joseph Salter received generous hospitality when he visited the Grange Estate, a sugar plantation in the hills of Jamaica's Trelawny parish, in 1837. He remarked on the "splendid views from the estate of the town [Falmouth] and the harbour," as well as his "very gentlemanly" Scottish host, Mr. Tait. However, he was disappointed when, after several drinks and a few "old songs," a Scottish doctor at the estate committed a *faux pas* which will be instantly recognized by any Nova Scotian who has travelled abroad. The doctor mistook him for a "Yankee." "Altho' I told him I was a British American," wrote Salter, the doctor did not seem to understand that this signified loyalty to crown and empire. "Ah! Damn it mon," said the doctor, "ye were in the righth of it, yere forefathers did well, an had I ha been there I'd a done the same. We have been trampled underfoot in Jamaica de ye see, but are not strong enough ye see." Salter tried to explain himself but found he could "scarce get a word in," and eventually gave up his effort to "fight all the battles of the last war [of 1812]... for the sake of peace."<sup>84</sup>

There was good reason for the misunderstanding. As P.A. Buckner writes, many Nova Scotians at this time spoke with American accents and were possessed of American habits.<sup>85</sup> They identified as American, as Salter did in this case, albeit with a "British" prefix. That Salter recorded this entry in March 1837, the same year that pro-American rebellions were launched in Lower and Upper Canada, adds another layer of irony to the scene. Some British North Americans saw less need than Salter to distinguish themselves from the "Yankees." Yet the Scotsman's speech is also remarkable for what it says about Jamaica in 1837. His claim that "we have been trampled underfoot in Jamaica" is undermined by the fact that, as

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<sup>84</sup> Nancy Redmayne Ross, ed. *Diary of a Maritimer 1816-1901: The Life and Times of Joseph Salter* (St. John's, NL: International Maritime Economic History Association, 1996), 27.

<sup>85</sup> P.A. Buckner, "Making British North America British, 1815-1860," in *Kith and Kin: Canada, Britain and the United States from the Revolution to the Cold War*, ed. C.C. Eldridge (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 11-45.

he spoke, he was drunk on porter in a “beautiful residence” where, according to the UCL slavery database, 139 people had been enslaved five years earlier.<sup>86</sup> Many of these people may have still been apprenticed on the estate, working in grim conditions without the freedom they had been promised.<sup>87</sup> The scene shows how the American Revolution inspired British colonists throughout the Atlantic. The Scotsman implied that, had enslavers in Jamaica been “strong enough,” they would have raised arms as the Americans did before them. It also suggests that British loyalty was flexible and identity negotiable. The Nova Scotian protested that he was “British American,” not American, but gave up the point when he could not be understood. The Scot voiced his support for the American Revolution and claimed to be part of a Jamaican group that had been “trampled underfoot.” Amidst the drunken misunderstanding, here is a vivid snapshot of the different attitudes to Britain in different parts of its Atlantic empire.

The goal of this chapter is to understand those attitudes in greater detail. In order to study the rhetoric of Edward Jordon and Joseph Howe, one must first study the societies in which they operated. This necessitates a description of the geography, economies, journalism, legal systems, and government of the two colonies at this time – as well any similarities or differences between them. Setting the stage in this way is the purpose of this first chapter.

As John Reid argues, British settlers in Nova Scotia found themselves in a precarious position up to the Loyalist influx in 1782. Yet, even if this influx secured British dominance over the Mi’kmaq, it produced a new threat from the United States.<sup>88</sup> The borders of the United States and British North America were contested throughout the nineteenth century,

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<sup>86</sup> “Grange Estate,” UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, accessed 2 August 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/1936>.

<sup>87</sup> Keith McClelland, “Apprenticeship: Redefining the West India Interest: politics and the legacies of slave ownership,” *Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 125-63.

<sup>88</sup> Reid, John G. “Pax Britannica or Pax Indigena? Planter Nova Scotia (1760-1782) and Competing Strategies of Pacification.” *The Canadian Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (2004): 669–692.

and Americans spilt blood in 1812 in an effort to force “the final expulsion of England from the American continent,” which Thomas Jefferson envisioned would follow an “attack on Halifax.”<sup>89</sup> Jefferson’s prophecy was not realised, yet it should not be forgotten that British expulsion was the Americans’ ultimate goal. Nova Scotia did not fall to the Americans in 1812, however, and its position as a British colony was more secure after the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. The 1820s, therefore, were a decade of consolidation for the British in Nova Scotia.

This is reflected in contemporary cartography. Until the 1820s, maps of Nova Scotia were drawn primarily to aid British armed forces. They tend to show military fortifications and other information useful for soldiery. After 1820, however, maps went from “a tool of colonization to a form of popular communication,” as Joan Dawson writes.<sup>90</sup> In 1829, the ‘Great Map’ of Nova Scotia was drawn by William McKay and published by Joseph Howe. The map contained much greater detail on settled communities as well as the interior of Nova Scotia, a sign that British settlers were putting down roots. According to Dawson, contemporary maps also showed settlers by their ethnic background (Acadian or black, for example), which speaks to its geographical segregation at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, British Nova Scotia had changed from military outpost to settled community, a change in which Howe, as the publisher of the 1829 map, was already playing a part.<sup>92</sup> As William Scarfe Moorsom wrote in 1830, Nova Scotia was a “young country” in the midst of transformation.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to James Madison, 29 June 1812,” Founders Online, accessed 20 June 2022, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-05-02-0155>.

<sup>90</sup> Joan Dawson, *The Mapmakers’ Legacy: Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia Through Maps* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2007), 5.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>92</sup> William McKay, *A New Map of Nova Scotia compiled from the latest surveys expressly for the Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia*, (Halifax: Joseph Howe, 1829).

<sup>93</sup> William Scarfe Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia: Comprising Sketches of a Young Country* (London, 1830), 58.

Jamaica in the 1820s was dominated by a small group of enslavers, known euphemistically as ‘planters,’ who (when not absentees) were concentrated in the island’s rural parishes. Not all enslavers were white, but free people of colour who owned slaves still suffered civil disabilities. They could not vote, sit on juries, or give evidence against white people in trials. There were some exceptions to this rule, such as the “mulatto Nabob” J. Swaby, who was granted equality by the assembly because of his immense wealth.<sup>94</sup> However, rich people of colour were only granted such equality on the basis of individual petitions presented to the assembly, and those who were successful were few. All petitions presented there by free people of colour *as a group* were rejected from 1792 to 1830. It is also important to note that the majority of mixed-race people were enslaved up to 1834.<sup>95</sup>

White people therefore dominated Jamaican society. They were the only group represented in the House of Assembly; they owned most of the island’s press; and they enslaved most of its labour force. By the end of the 1820s, however, slavery in Jamaica was in crisis. Throughout the decade, the population of enslaved people declined while the number of plantations, which peaked at 860 in 1806, fell to 650 by 1834. The Abolitionist movement, the creation of Haiti, and the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 were signals of a long, terminal decline in the slave system. In the short-term, sugar prices fell dramatically in 1822. Both the enslaved and the enslavers seem to have been conscious of this decline. Fear that Jamaica might become another ‘Black Republic’ was a constant theme of the Jamaican press in the 1820s.<sup>96</sup> In Samuel Sharpe’s Rebellion of 1831-2, it seemed briefly that this fear might be realised. As long as they were protected by the British government, however, the

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<sup>94</sup> Mavis Campbell, “Between Black and White,” *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 39-118, at 59.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 39-118.

<sup>96</sup> Alpen Razi, “Coloured Citizens of the World Unite,” 111.

enslavers could count on the loyalty of colonial militias (made up of free men of all races) as well as the Maroons, who helped to suppress rebellions throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup>

A new class emerged in 1820s Jamaica which would challenge the planters in the decades to come. After the removal of civil disabilities in the 1830s, they became known as the ‘Town Party’ in the assembly. Often free people of colour, they tended to share interests with free black and Jewish people, who were also concentrated in towns and barred from civil society.<sup>98</sup> They possessed an increasing share of economic power on the island due to the gradual decline of slavery and, during the 1820s, petitioned both in Jamaica and Great Britain for the removal of civil disabilities. Although Jamaica’s divisions were primarily racial in this period, the geographical rivalry between town-dwellers and rural enslavers did exist and became more powerful as slavery declined. Like Nova Scotia, Jamaica’s geography spoke to its social divisions in this period.

Although the two colonies were distant geographically, the beginning of the nineteenth century saw their economies draw closer together. According to Julian Gwyn, in the eighteenth century Nova Scotia was not economically important to Jamaica, which relied on the Thirteen Colonies for most of its lumber and food. In 1772, for instance, Halifax only contributed seven ships out of the 1,205 which sailed for the British West Indies from North American ports.<sup>99</sup> After American independence, Halifax’s share of West India trade grew slowly and sporadically but received a boost when the United States placed an embargo on overseas trade in 1807. From 1812-19, Nova Scotia received 90% of its sugar direct from the

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<sup>97</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 23-33. The Maroons were free communities of black people who lived in isolated pockets of Jamaica, especially Cockpit Country. Their role in Jamaica’s racial hierarchy was complex: during the 1700s, they fought against the British, who did not defeat them decisively. In the 1800s, they were crucial in nullifying rebellions on behalf of the British, and also acted as ‘slavecatchers’ in rural parishes. See, Helen McKee, “From Violence to Alliance: Maroons and White Settlers, 1739-1795,” *Slavery and Abolition* 39, no. 1 (2018): 27-52; Rifke Jaafe, “From Maroons to Dons: Sovereignty, Violence and Law in Jamaica,” *Critique of Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (March 2015): 47–63.

<sup>98</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 73.

<sup>99</sup> Julian Gwyn, “Shipping to the Caribbean in the 1820s–1840s: William Roche, Halifax Merchant,” *The Northern Mariner* 23, no.2 (2013), 99-122, at 103.

British West Indies. It also received much of its rum which, according to the merchant William Forsyth, was the staple drink of the poor.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, Nova Scotia became the principal supplier of naval stores to Jamaica, as well as an important supplier of fish and lumber.<sup>101</sup>

The relationship was not to prove enduring. Following the abolition of slavery and during the period of ‘apprenticeship,’ which took place from 1834-8, the production of sugar in Jamaica declined dramatically. Recently freed people had little enthusiasm for continued work on the plantation. Generally, they took up subsistence farming or opened small businesses after they gained their freedom. In 1846, the collapse was hastened by the adoption of a Sugar Duties Act which removed British preference for sugar from British West Indian islands.<sup>102</sup> Sugar production in Jamaica would not reach pre-emancipation levels until 1934.<sup>103</sup> This proved challenging for Nova Scotian merchants. Until the 1830s, the British West Indies supplied Nova Scotia with 90% of its sugar; after 1837, it fell to 3.5%.<sup>104</sup> Fear of this decline was reflected in the pages of Howe’s *The Novascotian*, which greeted the passage of the Emancipation Act not with a celebration of the cause of humanity, but with a terse article on its cost to Nova Scotia’s trade.<sup>105</sup>

While the Jamaican economy was transformed in the 1830s, for Nova Scotia the decade was one of stagnation. According to Julian Gwyn, the economy suffered from inequality, high unemployment, and low wages.<sup>106</sup> This is reflected in the comment of George R. Young, who wrote resignedly in 1838 that Nova Scotians “must be content with

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<sup>100</sup> William Scarfe Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia*, 58.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

<sup>102</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 30.

<sup>103</sup> Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 55.

<sup>104</sup> Julian Gwyn, “Shipping to the Caribbean in the 1820s-1840s: William Roche, Halifax Merchant,” 105.

<sup>105</sup> Joseph Howe, “Editorial,” *The Novascotian*, 2 August 1834.

<sup>106</sup> Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, 45.

the humbler and subservient sphere of operation their position gives.”<sup>107</sup> Life for the poorest Nova Scotians at this time could be exceedingly grim. In 1833 and 1834, for instance, the *Halifax Journal* recorded starvation in Arichat, Baddeck, and Middle River.<sup>108</sup> The economy did not enjoy intensive growth until well after the 1840s. As the son of a fairly successful printer-journalist in the economic centre of Halifax, Joseph Howe was insulated from this suffering. But he belonged to a family that was devoted to Nova Scotia’s prosperity and conscious of the position of the poor. *The Halifax Journal*, which reported the starvation, was founded by his father, John Howe Sr.<sup>109</sup>

On the other hand, the population of Nova Scotia grew in the 1820s and 30s. This brought about some economic growth and contributed to the sense of a society which was finding its feet. The merchants of Halifax, wrote a British colonel stationed in the city until 1832, “began the world with small means, and by industry and enterprise accumulated considerable wealth.”<sup>110</sup> A visiting British naval officer likewise commented on the “very respectable society” which he found there in 1826.<sup>111</sup> On the one hand, then, there existed a remote colony in the midst of economic stagnation; on the other, a “respectable” society centred around the British base at Halifax.

Greg Marquis, who considers Canadian legal history, argues that law was intimately connected to British North Americans’ sense of identity: “part of their orientation towards local affairs, government, and the Empire.”<sup>112</sup> The great legal scholar William Blackstone

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<sup>107</sup> George R. Young, *Upon the History, Principles and Prospects of the Bank of British North America* (London, 1838), 44. Joseph Howe acquired *The Novascotian* from Young in 1828.

<sup>108</sup> “Editorial,” *Halifax Journal*, 5 August 1833. Ibid, 17 March 1834.

<sup>109</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 9-10.

<sup>110</sup> Jeffrey McNairn, “Everything Was New, Yet Familiar”: British Travellers, Halifax, and the Ambiguities of Empire,” *Acadiensis* 36, no.2 (2007): 38.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>112</sup> Greg Marquis, “Doing Justice to ‘British’ Justice: Law, Ideology and Canadian Historiography,” in *Canadian Perspectives on Law and Society: Issues in Legal History*, eds. W. Wesley Pue and Barry Wright (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1988), 44.



described trial by jury as the guarantor of English liberty in 1769: ‘the liberties of England cannot but subsist,’ he wrote, “so long as this palladium remains sacred and inviolate.”<sup>113</sup>

According to R. Blake Brown, this culture of reverence was shared by Nova Scotian elites.

For instance, the Speaker of the Nova Scotian House of Assembly, Samuel George William Archibald, said in 1825 that trial by jury had “come down to us, immemorial from usage, and has stood the test of ages.”<sup>114</sup> Although the jury could be a “bothersome duty” for the poorer classes, in politicized trials rhetoric which stressed the importance of the jury re-surfaced.<sup>115</sup>

As will be discussed in chapter two, Howe’s rhetoric in his trial speech was part of this pattern.

For Jamaicans of colour prior to 1830, British law provided opportunities for improvement. Since the *Somerset vs Stewart* case of 1772, the legal position of enslaved people had improved in England, which set a troubling precedent from the point of view of enslavers. Rex Nettleford argued that English common law provided a “higher (external) force which could be appealed to” for those barred from civil life in Jamaica. Even an enslaved person, he wrote, “suffered under the control of his owner on the basis of a deep respect for the rights of ‘persons’.”<sup>116</sup>

Free people of colour were all too aware of this potential. Many of their leaders were schooled in England, where no legislation barred them from civil life and there was little racial segregation. Some had practiced law there. Price Watkis, who defended Edward Jordon in his trial, was raised in Shropshire, attended Shrewsbury School, and qualified as a barrister

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<sup>113</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Clarendon 1769). Quoted in R. Blake Brown, *A Trying Question: The Jury in Nineteenth Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 22.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>116</sup> Rex Nettleford, “Freedom of Thought and Expression: Nineteenth Century West Indian Creole Experience,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 36, no.1/2 (1990): 16-45.

in England before ‘returning’ to Jamaica at the end of the 1820s.<sup>117</sup> Watkis was not alone. The men of colour who gained seats in the Jamaican House of Assembly in the 1830s had almost all been barristers, solicitors, or attorneys.<sup>118</sup> During the 1820s, therefore, free people of colour possessed both a potential ally in English common law and the expertise to exploit it.

The difference in rights for free people of colour in Jamaica and England produced some striking facts. For instance, John Stewart Jnr., a mixed-race man, was elected to the House of Commons in 1832, only a year after Price Watkis became the first free man of colour to take a seat in the Jamaican assembly.<sup>119</sup> Both men indicate the ambiguous position of free men of colour in British West Indian society. Watkis and Stewart were both enslavers, and Stewart defended slavery in the House of Commons. Free men of colour did not necessarily support emancipation. Indeed, free people of colour who owned slaves had an obvious incentive to oppose it.

The most important tool used by free people of colour in their work for equality was the petition. Petitions were a legal means by which groups could express their grievances to legislatures in Britain and its colonies. They had a long pedigree in English history and had been especially potent since English Civil War, after which Parliament described them as “the inherent right of every commoner in England.”<sup>120</sup> As Nettleford argues, common law extended that right across the Empire. Consequently, petitions are recorded in colonial Jamaica throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>121</sup> In 1813, free people of colour issued two

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<sup>117</sup> “Price Watkis,” UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, accessed 2 August 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/14205/#:-:text=Biography,Park%2C%20St%20Ann%2C%20Jamaica>.

<sup>118</sup> Gad Heuman, “Coloreds and Blacks in the Assembly: A Biographical and Ideological Profile,” *Between Black and White*, 57-72, at 61.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 58. See also, “John Stewart,” UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, accessed 2 August 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/8816>.

<sup>120</sup> “Petitioning Parliament,” Erskine May, UK Parliament, accessed 20 June, 2022, <https://erskinemay.parliament.uk/section/5072/a-brief-history-of-petitioning-parliament/#footnote-item-1>.

<sup>121</sup> Gad Heuman, “The Free Coloreds as Loyal Petitioners, 1792-1823,” *Between Black and White*, 23-33.

petitions to the House of Assembly calling for expanded rights; in 1816 and 1823, petitions were issued again; and in 1827, they sent a deputation to Westminster led by Richard Hill (another lawyer), who presented their case at the bar of the Commons.<sup>122</sup> Although Hill was given a warm reception in Westminster, Parliament refused to supersede the Jamaican assembly, which had earlier refused the petition.<sup>123</sup> As chapter two will discuss, Jordon served as secretary for the group which sent the 1823 petition.

Jamaicans sometimes expressed pride in such rights provided by English law and, as in Nova Scotia, this pride was arguably concentrated in those whom British colonization had placed at the top of society. According to Edward Long, the white Jamaican historian of the eighteenth century, “the native spirit of freedom, which distinguishes British subjects beyond most others, is not confined to the mother country: but discovers itself in the remotest corners of the Empire.”<sup>124</sup> The petition of 1823 proves his point. Free people of colour took pride in the fact that they were “free denizens of England” in the Mother Country, which made it insufferable that they were deprived of their status “in the colonies.”<sup>125</sup> Jamaican enslaved people also called for freedom. The Samuel Sharpe Rebellion, for instance, was prompted in part by the false belief that the British King had manumitted all enslaved people.<sup>126</sup>

In Nova Scotia, there were also contradictions between the rights of British law and the racial hierarchy which British colonization had created. A Black Loyalist refugee listed his name as “British Freedom” in 1783’s *Book of Negroes*, yet in 1815 the Nova Scotian House of Assembly attempted to block black immigration in law.<sup>127</sup> People of African

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>123</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 118-9.

<sup>124</sup> Rex Nettleford, “Freedom of Thought and Expression,” 23.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 23. See also, Sheila Duncker, “The Free Coloureds and Their Fight for Civil Rights in Jamaica 1800-1830,” (MA diss., University of London, 1960), 22.

<sup>126</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society 1787-1834* (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, IL, 1982), 38-65.

<sup>127</sup> Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: The British, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins, 2010), 7.

descent, it stated, were “unfitted by nature to this climate, or an association with the rest of His Majesty’s colonists.”<sup>128</sup> Similarly, Daniel N. Paul provides a modern Mi’kmaq perspective on the limits of British law in the nineteenth century. “It’s amazing,” he writes, “how a people who claimed to be from a society governed by the rule of law could so religiously have ignored the property rights of an entire race of people.”<sup>129</sup> British law, then, could entail different things for different groups under British rule.

John Wilkes wrote in 1762 that “the liberty of the press is the birthright of a Briton,” and this liberty expanded at the end of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom.<sup>130</sup> The year 1792 saw the passage of Fox’s Libel Act, which bolstered journalists against the threat of libel prosecution. Prior to the Act, all that was required to convict a defendant of libel (of any kind) was proof of publication. Whether the text was true or not was quite irrelevant in determining the defendant's guilt. Fox’s Act changed this. It allowed the jury to consider the entire issue – not simply the matter of publication. Because of this, the jury was no longer forced to convict journalists on the basis of publication in all cases.<sup>131</sup> If the journalist had told the truth, they could be acquitted.<sup>132</sup> The extension of this practice to British colonies was slow and inconsistent, but the defences of Howe and Jordon would both rely upon the innovation.

As stated, the question of how quickly North Americans adopted Fox’s Act is an open one. As J.M. Bumsted writes, in British North America the law regarding libel was “most unclear”: it varied from province to province, and indeed from court to court. Bumsted states

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<sup>128</sup> Harvey Amani Whitfield, “The African Diaspora in Atlantic Canada: History, Historians, and Historiography,” *Acadiensis* 46, no.1 (September 2017): 213-32, at 215.

<sup>129</sup> Daniel N. Paul, *We Were Not the Savages*, 99.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Rea, “The Liberty of the Press as an Issue in English Politics, 1792-1793,” *The Historian* 24, no.1 (November 1961): 26-43.

<sup>131</sup> Wendell Bird, *The Revolution in Freedoms of Press and Speech: From Blackstone to the First Amendment and Fox’s Libel Act* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 198. Bird notes that Fox’s Act “left in place the criminality of seditious libel and the potential criminality of true statements and opinions.”

<sup>132</sup> “Libel Act 1792,” Legislation, UK Government, accessed 19 June 2022, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apgb/Geo3/32/60/content>.

that “colonial judges who applied Fox’s principles did so largely at their own discretion.”<sup>133</sup> In 1820, William Wilkie was charged with seditious libel for a letter to the *Acadian Recorder* in which he attacked every aspect of Nova Scotia’s government, including the legislative council, assembly, and supreme court. Having admitted that he was the author of the letter, he was found guilty by the jury in five minutes. Despite Fox’s Act, it appears that libel law remained unreformed in Nova Scotia up to 1820 and beyond. As Barry Cahill writes, sedition law remained “simply a matter of elite conspiratorial manipulation” – in other words, a method by which those in power could quiet freedom of speech.<sup>134</sup>

The situation in Jamaica was markedly different, but for economic reasons as well as legal ones. Prior to Edward Jordon’s *Watchman*, founded in 1829, all the newspapers published in Jamaica favoured the continuation of slavery. This reflected the domination of the island by the planter class, which produced newspapers to such an extent that Phillip D. Curtin called Jamaica an “over-papered society.”<sup>135</sup>

As Andrew Lewis argues, British West Indian newspapers generally operated in an atmosphere of press freedom until the last years of the slave system.<sup>136</sup> But after 1823, West Indian assemblies in general regulated the press more stringently. In Antigua, for example, the journalist Henry Loving, a free man of colour, was put on trial for seditious libel in October 1829. The grounds for the trial were extremely flimsy and the charge was strangely vague. Loving was accused of libelling not a single person, nor the government, but “the whole community.”<sup>137</sup> Like Jordon, Loving used a rhetoric of loyalty to what he called “the

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<sup>133</sup> J.M. Bumsted, “Liberty of the Press in Early Prince Edward Island 1823-9,” *Canadian State Trials Volume 1*, eds. Frank Murray Greenwood and Barry Wright (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 523.

<sup>134</sup> Barry Cahill, “Sedition in Nova Scotia: R. v. Wilkie (1820) and the Incontestable Illegality of Seditious Libel before R. v. Howe (1835),” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 17, no.2 (1994): 458-97.

<sup>135</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1955), 1

<sup>136</sup> Andrew Lewis, “The British West Indian Press in the Age of Abolition,” (PhD diss., University of London, 1993), 230-95.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 213-4.

parent state” in his defence. He was acquitted. Yet it is impossible to find instances of the Jamaican colonial government suppressing the press in the 1820s. On the other hand, it is likely that there was little need to censor the press. It was in the hands of the planters; and until Jordon’s *The Watchman* appeared in 1829, no Jamaican newspaper opposed slavery. In fact, Jamaica’s ‘free press’ counted for little. It was free only to the white planters who owned it. As will be shown in the next chapter, even privileged people of colour (a category into which Edward Jordon fell) saw their voices muffled when they began to criticize the Jamaican planter regime. This is to say nothing of the great, oppressed mass of enslaved people to whom attributing ‘press freedom’ would be absurd. To the extent that Jamaica had press freedom, it did not indicate a free society.

Nova Scotia’s press freedom too was constrained. The Wilkie case of 1820 shows that there was no license for Haligonians to attack their governing institutions. As Barry Cahill shows, Wilkie’s dissent ended with his legal rights “trampled upon.”<sup>138</sup> According to Cahill, the case also shows how class privilege operated in the administration of the law. Wilkie was a comparatively impotent member of the Haligonian community: he was not from a wealthy family, but rather wrote proudly on behalf of poor “tradesman.”<sup>139</sup> Howe did argue for reform in far more diplomatic language than Wilkie. However, as the offspring of a respected Loyalist family he was better placed to critique Nova Scotia’s government.

The Nova Scotian Loyalists fled to Nova Scotia during the American Revolutionary War; ever since, they and their descendants had dominated its institutions. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, Loyalists arrived in great numbers. 60,000 Loyalists fled to Nova Scotia after 1783, doubling its population.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, they were predominantly Protestant,

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<sup>138</sup> Barry Cahill, “Sedition in Nova Scotia,” 482.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 463.

<sup>140</sup> P.A. Buckner, “Making British North America British, 1815-1860,” in *Kith and Kin: Canada, Britain and the United States from the Revolution to the Cold War*, ed. C.C. Eldridge (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 12.

Anglophone, and descended from settlers from the British Isles. Because of this, they provided the British population which the authorities had long sought to counterweight Acadian and indigenous peoples in Nova Scotia. Within this group, a small collection of Loyalist families dominated what J. Murray Beck calls “a substantial part of ‘government’” in the province.<sup>141</sup> Beck’s use of inverted commas here hints at the corruption and nepotism of the group. For instance, Brenton Halliburton served in a legislative council on which his father, two uncles, two brothers-in-law, father-in-law, and son-in-law would all serve at one time.<sup>142</sup> The same Halliburton was the judge at the trial of Joseph Howe in 1835.<sup>143</sup>

Howe sprung from this soil. His father, John Howe Snr., was a senior magistrate, as well as the King’s printer and Deputy Postmaster General in Nova Scotia.<sup>144</sup> Although these posts did not elevate him above the middle class in money terms, they meant that he was a well-connected individual. For instance, the Halifax magistrates who were in charge of Halifax’s local government, and whom Joseph Howe attacked in print, counted John Howe Snr. amongst their number. Moreover, Howe’s chief prosecutor was the Attorney-General, William Archibald, who was his personal friend. Joseph Howe’s connections to the governing elite in Halifax, then, afforded him a certain insulation from the abuse of the law – as is suggested by the ordeal of the worse-connected Wilkie.<sup>145</sup>

Symbolically, power in Nova Scotia lay with the British Crown. In reality, it was divided between a number of bodies. The province was headed by a governor who possessed tremendous powers of patronage. According to J. Murray Beck, many Nova Scotian governors gripped this power with great enthusiasm, especially Sir John Wentworth (in office

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<sup>141</sup> J. Murray Beck, *The Government of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 21.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>143</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 156.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

from 1792-1808), who was corrupt even by the standards of his contemporaries.<sup>146</sup> There was also a legislative council. As S. Karly Kehoe writes, this council was the colonial equivalent of the House of Lords, with the additional power to advise the governor.<sup>147</sup> Helen Taft Manning, however, wrote that the councilmen were invariably much more concerned with “the lining of their pocket-books.”<sup>148</sup> Standards of public life in the legislative assembly were likewise low. The assembly was empowered to make laws for “the public peace, welfare, and Good Government.” However, it was limited by the governor’s ability to veto whatever he deemed “repugnant” to the laws of Great Britain.<sup>149</sup> There is some evidence of the assembly’s unpopularity within the province in the 1820s. In 1829, a group of assemblymen was pelted with “snow, mud, and stones” as they walked through Halifax. Hoping to restore their dignity, they voted £500 to investigate the crime.<sup>150</sup> As Howe became critical of the provincial civil service in the 1830s, he was frequently incensed by its corrupt use of patronage. As he wrote in 1836, “from end to end of Nova Scotia, there is not one office in the gift of the people but that of Member of the Assembly. They cannot choose a Health Warden, or a Firewarden -- or even a Scavenger.”<sup>151</sup>

Unlike Jamaica, there was no legal colour bar to membership of the Nova Scotian assembly, or to the right to vote. Catholics were effectively barred from serving in the assembly, on the other hand, by an oath against transubstantiation. This discrimination was tested, and then partly eliminated, when Laurence Kavanagh’s election in 1820 after Cape Breton’s reannexation to Nova Scotia prompted an election. He was permitted to take his seat

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<sup>146</sup> J. Murray Beck, *The Government of Nova Scotia*, 37.

<sup>147</sup> S. Karly Kehoe, “Catholic Relief and the Political Awakening of Irish Catholics in Nova Scotia, 1780–1830,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, no.1 (2018): 1-20, at 9.

<sup>148</sup> Helen Taft Manning, *British Colonial Government After the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT: 1933), 115.

<sup>149</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Government in Nova Scotia*, 44.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>151</sup> Joseph Howe, “Editorial,” *The Novascotian*, 27 October 1836.



in the assembly in 1823. This sowed the seeds for the increase of Catholic power in the assembly in the 1830s, a decade in which discrimination against Catholics in the law would also be challenged.<sup>152</sup>

As in Nova Scotia, study of Jamaican government prior to 1830 does not produce a picture of enlightened British liberty. Power was split between the legislative assembly and the governor, who represented the Crown and answered to the Colonial Office in Whitehall. According to Christer Petley, the Jamaican House of Assembly was more successful in defending its rights than other British colonial assemblies, especially those on the American mainland.<sup>153</sup> In 1766, the British recalled Jamaica's governor, William Lyttelton, after sustained opposition to the Stamp Act in the assembly. His successors acceded to all of their demands. In the following decades, the Jamaicans were emboldened by the enormous wealth of their enslaving class, which gave them influence in the British business community and at Westminster (where absentee enslavers continually found seats). Yet this influence was threatened by the moral imperative to abolish slavery, which embedded itself in the British conscience after the turn of the century. The British government locked itself in to ending slavery in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, especially after 1823.<sup>154</sup> For an assembly which essentially existed to represent the enslaver's interest, this produced an obvious problem.

During the Stamp Act crisis, Jamaican assemblymen used language which paralleled the nascent American rhetoric of liberty. As the assembly refused to vote funds to support the government, Nicholas Bourke wrote that the assemblymen were simply "men zealous for the

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<sup>152</sup> S. Karly Kehoe, *Empire and Emancipation: Scottish and Irish Catholics at the Atlantic Fringe, 1780-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 86-93.

<sup>153</sup> Christer Petley, *White Fury: A Jamaican Slaveholder and the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 41-2.

<sup>154</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 91.

constitution and liberties of their country.”<sup>155</sup> By 1771, the British government had given in to all of the Jamaican Assembly’s demands, which dampened any enthusiasm Jamaicans might have held for joining the American Revolution. However, at the beginning of the 1830s white Jamaicans adopted such rhetoric again. They also began to flirt with American annexation. “We have well and accurately viewed our situation,” wrote Augustus Hardin Beaumont in 1831, “it is similar to that of the Colonies of North America in 1775... the same, precisely the same, as was that of the Southern part of those colonies...”<sup>156</sup> Alpen Razi notes that Beaumont often dropped language from the preamble to the American constitution into the editorials of his newspaper, the *Jamaica Courant*.<sup>157</sup> This hinted at disloyalty with which Edward Jordon would contrast with the loyalty of his class.

By 1831, the relationship between the British government and Jamaican enslavers had become strained nearly to the point of breakage. While relations with white Jamaicans had never been worse, the British government benefitted from greater support from the free people of colour throughout the West Indies. On the other hand, the 1820s were a decade of consolidation for the British in Nova Scotia. While the corruption of its institutions began to attract Howe, this did not produce any impetus for separation – as will be discussed in the next chapter. Rather, Howe – like Jordon – moved for change in his region not by pushing for separation, but for reform. The loyal rhetoric which underpinned that reform is the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>156</sup> Alpen Razi, “Coloured Citizens of the World Unite,” 112.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 112.

## *Chapter Two*

### *Loyalty on Trial*

Representing himself in a trial for criminal libel, Joseph Howe's defence invoked King William IV.<sup>158</sup> He wished, he said, that "His Majesty really sat beside their Lordships" so that he could "do me the justice to wish he had many more such preachers of sedition in his dominions."<sup>159</sup> Howe was sure that, if King William were present at that moment, he would recognize his loyalty and exonerate him. Indeed, Howe mocked the magistrates for presuming to bring to trial a true Loyalist through whose veins "the blood of Britons flows."<sup>160</sup> That William could neither be at the trial, nor voice an opinion on it, conveniently prevented Howe's claim from coming to test.

Five years prior in Jamaica, Edward Jordon proclaimed *his* loyalty to King William. "A Sovereign whose tolerant principles are such as to render him an object of regard to every good man," proclaimed an editorial in his newspaper, *The Watchman*, in 1830.<sup>161</sup> "Good King William," declared another editorial following his 1832 trial.<sup>162</sup> Yet Howe and Jordon, two men from very different British colonies, had little reason to believe that William supported either them or their political goals. When he spoke in public, the king gave no indication that he supported reform in either place. In fact, he spoke against the abolition of slavery in the House of Lords prior to his accession to the throne.

"The nation is divided into parties, but the Crown is of no party," wrote Walter Bagehot in *The English Constitution*.<sup>163</sup> Howe and Jordon were able to proclaim their loyalty

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<sup>158</sup> As stated in the introduction, whether Howe was charged with seditious or criminal defamatory libel is a matter of debate. According to Lyndsay M. Campbell, the language of seditious libel was used by the prosecution (which was led by Nova Scotia's Attorney-General), but the case proceeded as if it was a criminal defamatory case. See Lyndsay M. Campbell, "License to Publish: Joseph Howe's Contribution to Libel Law in Nova Scotia," 98-9.

<sup>159</sup> Joseph Howe, *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, 8 September 1830, hereafter *The Watchman*. The words 'Free Press' were dropped after Jordon's first trial. See *The Watchman*, 30 May 1832.

<sup>162</sup> "Editorial," *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

<sup>163</sup> Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1867), 68.

to the king precisely because he was of no party and could voice no opinion on their trials. This distance transformed the podgy, ageing William into ‘His Majesty,’ the ‘Sovereign’ embodiment of Britain. And even though their trials were framed as “The King Versus Joseph Howe” and “The King Versus Edward Jordon,” both men were able to make a claim for his support because the king was the head of the British state of which they were subjects.

These were sincere statements of fidelity, but they were also tools with which the men signalled that their political views represented ‘true’ British values, in contrast to their opponents. Bellowing their support for Britain, they claimed the authority to decide what British liberty meant for them. They sought to use their loyalty to agitate successfully for press freedom.

Howe’s British identity was anchored by his family heritage. According to J. Murray Beck, Howe liked to trace his ancestry back to a chaplain of Oliver Cromwell – a pedigree as romantic as it was unlikely. He spoke proudly of his maternal grandfather, who was “familiar with the [Thames] River from the Isle of Dogs to the Forelands.”<sup>164</sup> He also began his trial defence with a plea to the jury wrapped up in religious language. “Will you permit the sacred fire of liberty, brought by your fathers from the venerable temples of Britain,” he asked them, “to be quenched and trodden out on the simple altars they have raised?”<sup>165</sup>

What was this heritage? Joseph Howe was born in 1804 to parents with close connections to what had become the United States. John Howe Snr., Joseph’s father, was born into a wealthy Boston family but migrated to Nova Scotia during the American Revolution. He founded the *Halifax Journal* in 1780 and established himself in the city after the war’s end. Until 1813, the *Journal* and the *Weekly Chronicle* (which was published by his brother-in-law) were the only local Halifax newspapers. In 1801, the position of King’s

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<sup>164</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 5.

<sup>165</sup> *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

Printer burnished John's credentials as one of Halifax's senior journalists. In 1803, a deputy postmaster generalship followed. By the 1830s, he was a member of the same group of magistrates against whom Joseph Howe campaigned. Joseph's mother, Mary Ede Austen, was taken to Halifax from Baltimore by her widowed mother when she was a teenager. Her father had previously been lost at sea, and her mother kept no contact with their American family. Joseph Howe was therefore raised by a family which, though rooted in America, had consciously rejected the United States and in doing so, become relatively powerful and prosperous.<sup>166</sup>

Yet Howe's physical connection to Great Britain was much more tenuous. His maternal grandfather was his closest relative born there and, though he studied its literature and history with great fervour, he knew very little of it as a place. This was reflected in a diary he kept when he visited the United Kingdom later in life. Exeter Cathedral made him think of "a log house on the Wilmot Mountain"; he was "interested but not impressed" by Westminster Abbey; Stirling was like "the dirty parts of Pictou."<sup>167</sup> Though Joseph called his father "the noblest Briton," the Howes' connection was to British colonial life in North America rather than to Great Britain itself. Nonetheless, he referred to England in early letters to his brothers as "home."<sup>168</sup>

Like Howe, Edward Jordon's heritage in the British Isles was not immediate. W. Adolphe Roberts states that he was a "light-coloured freeman," while Gad Heuman suggests that his father was of colour and his mother black.<sup>169</sup> His Barbadian father, Roberts states, came to Jamaica after progressive political views (of unspecified character) landed him in hot water.<sup>170</sup> Yet Jordon's lack of a clear, British ethnic connection arguably pushed him towards

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<sup>166</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 3-10.

<sup>167</sup> Chester Martin, "Reviewed Work: *Joseph Howe: A Study in Achievement and Frustration*," 78.

<sup>168</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 25-6.

<sup>169</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 4. See also, Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 58-9.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

loyalty – not away from it. The many free people of colour who inherited enslaved people from their British fathers, or who relied upon them for money, had less reason to support the British policy of abolition. White enslavers of British birth or heritage were arguably the least loyal racial group in 1830s Jamaica, as many advocated independence or annexation by the United States.<sup>171</sup> The absence of close connections to the enslaving class meant that Jordon had no familial interests which he was obliged to defend.

Apprenticed to a tailor in Kingston, it appears the young Jordon quickly took up the fight for civil rights.<sup>172</sup> It was while apprenticed here that Jordon befriended Robert Osborn, a free man of colour apprenticed to a printer nearby. Osborn would later co-edit *The Watchman* and remained Jordon's partner in politics and business throughout his life.<sup>173</sup> By 1820, Jordon and Osborn were part of the "Kingston Colored Committee," a secret society whose aim was to remove civil disabilities against free men of colour.<sup>174</sup> It was this group which unsuccessfully petitioned the Jamaican assembly in 1823 and sent a deputation led by the lawyer Richard Hill to the bar of the House of Commons in 1827.<sup>175</sup> As the secretary of this group, Jordon probably helped to write the 1823 petition.<sup>176</sup> This was clearly a role which opened him to the persecution of the ruling class, as is shown by the fact that he was dismissed from his job as a clerk to a white shop-owner for his "political sentiments."<sup>177</sup> It appears that this episode and others like it were part of a broader campaign of intimidation against the group.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Alpen Razi, "Coloured Citizens of the World," 105-124.

<sup>172</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 4-5.

<sup>173</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 132.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>175</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 48.

<sup>176</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 132.

<sup>177</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 5-6.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Yet this early activity reveals more than Jordon's persecution. It also illustrates a shift in strategy on the part of the free men of colour, who had previously aimed their petitions primarily at the Jamaican assembly. For instance, in 1816 a wealthy man of colour named John Campbell delivered a petition to the assembly. Yet he made no effort to appeal to abolitionists in Great Britain.<sup>179</sup> Jordon's group widened the scope of the campaign, and, crucially, added to it a moral imperative. By sending representatives to the House of Commons, the group gained the friendship of abolitionist MPs, the Anti-Slavery Society, and Christian missionaries, whose influence in Jamaica expanded throughout the 1820s.<sup>180</sup> According to Mavis Campbell, almost all MPs who spoke in the Commons commented admiringly on their loyalty to the Crown, although MPs did not go so far as to supersede the Jamaican assembly by granting the petition against its wishes.<sup>181</sup> The free men of colour also received an affirmation from the House of Lords when the Earl of Harrowby said that "it was something for the petitioners to know, that the individuals of that unfortunate and degraded race were considered by the Peers of Great Britain as their brethren."<sup>182</sup> On the other hand, Jordon's group left room for an appeal to white Jamaicans throughout the 1820s. Though the group forged links with abolitionists, they did not advocate publicly for the end of slavery or even for the extension of rights to free black people. The 1823 petition to the assembly, for instance, spoke only of their own rights, "leaving to the wisdom of the Legislature to extend to the Free Black Population, or not, as it may deem proper..."<sup>183</sup>

All of this suggests an intelligent political calculation. As the British government committed to ameliorating the condition of enslaved people in 1823, it also committed itself

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<sup>179</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 84-5.

<sup>180</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society 1787-1834* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 38-65.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>183</sup> Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 46.



to confrontation with the Jamaican enslaving class.<sup>184</sup> A rhetoric of loyalty to the Crown set the free people of colour up as allies in that confrontation. Given that the British government was the only power which could supersede the Jamaican assembly, this was a shrewd move. The use of conciliatory language also undermined potential attempts by Jamaican assemblymen to portray the petitioners as harbingers of a second Haiti. Moreover, by neglecting to comment on abolition, the petitioners did not close the door on a future alliance with white Jamaicans. When Jordon and Osborn founded *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press* in 1829, they were in an excellent position to gain from the coming political crisis.

In Nova Scotia, conversely, Howe's shift towards to reform was slower and less inevitable. According to J. Murray Beck, it is important that Howe did not grow up in Halifax. Rather, he was born by the North-West Arm, which was well into the countryside in that era.<sup>185</sup> Halifax itself was a garrison town known for its small group of 'respectable' merchants and large group of sailors, soldiers, and sex workers. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the corruption of its legislature and council were felt during the 1820s. Yet Howe, raised in the North Arm "Midst Trees, and Birds, and Summer Flowers," as his own juvenile poem had it, was insulated from the poverty and corruption of the town.<sup>186</sup> He entered journalism, the family profession, to "provide for myself" rather than to agitate for reform, and in his early career his conservative temperament was strong. In 1827, for instance, he criticized Thomas Chandler Halliburton for calling legislative councillors "dignified, deep read, pensioned old ladies."<sup>187</sup>

What brought Howe to the cause of reform was his exposure to corruption and malpractice once he became a journalist. After he purchased *The Novascotian* in 1828, he

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<sup>184</sup> Mavis Campbell, *The Dynamics of Change in a Slave Society*, 91.

<sup>185</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> Joseph Howe, *Poems and Essays* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1874), 133.

<sup>187</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 26-58.

teetered towards criticism of the assemblymen and councillors, growing with confidence as economic stagnation and a cholera pandemic hit in the early 1830s.<sup>188</sup> In 1833, he criticized the appointment of Brenton Halliburton as chief justice in the province, challenged the malpractice of assemblyman William Roach, and criticized the mismanagement of the provincial Treasury.<sup>189</sup>

But it was his activity as the pandemic and economic crisis intensified in 1834 which attracted the attention of the magistracy. In March of that year, the assembly debated a proposal which would increase the salaries of judges. According to J. Murray Beck, the unfairness of the proposal, made at a time of severe economic downturn, shocked Howe. While the other major newspaper in town, the *Acadian Recorder*, quietly condemned the move, *The Novascotian* publicised its opposition in a series of articles that spring. These contributed to the popularity of a petition presented to the assembly which compared the lavish salaries of Nova Scotian officials with the recently reformed rotten boroughs of England.<sup>190</sup>

As the assembly reconvened in November 1834, Howe's articles became angrier. The people, he suggested, should raise a petition against the "insidious grasp of office holders and trading politicians" before they voted to increase salaries again.<sup>191</sup> Whether prompted by Howe or not, a petition was raised by the constituents of Alexander Stewart, a liberal assemblyman. Once again, it referenced reform in England.<sup>192</sup> Howe increasingly spoke to large public audiences during this time, such as at a public meeting on 26 December, a sign of his growing confidence as a public figure. On 1 January 1835, *The Novascotian* published

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 26-58.

<sup>189</sup> Joseph Howe, "Editorial," *The Novascotian*, 29 March 1833. See also, *The Novascotian*, 7 February 1833; *The Novascotian*, 7 August 1833.

<sup>190</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 123-4.

<sup>191</sup> Joseph Howe, "Editorial," *The Novascotian*, 12 November 1834.

<sup>192</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 126.

the second part of a letter signed “The People” which accused magistrates and the police of taking thousands of pounds from the “pockets of the poor.”<sup>193</sup> It was this accusation which prompted Howe’s prosecution at the beginning of March.

Since the first issue of *The Novascotian*, Howe had combined his Tory patriotism with the argument that Nova Scotia’s government must be improved. “We are no cold approvers but ardent admirers of the system under which we live,” he wrote, “we are not blind to its blemishes but feelingly alive to its excellence.”<sup>194</sup> At the end of 1834, this rhetoric had heightened to a call to action: “purifying the Institutions and promoting the prosperity of the world,” as he said in a public speech. “The best way to prove our loyalty to Britain,” he continued, “is to show that we duly appreciate the struggles in her history, and the glorious principles they conferred.”<sup>195</sup> As with Jordon, there is no reason to doubt that this loyalty was deeply felt, but that does not diminish its intelligence as a strategy. With Howe publicly proclaiming his affection for Britain, it was difficult for his political enemies – the assemblymen, councillors, and magistrates – to paint him as a radical. As the magistrates brought him to trial in March, they would find that the jury thought their charge not just wrong, but ridiculous.

Jordon’s journey to trial was characteristic of a more violent and less stable society. As the 1820s ended, Jamaica approached the most transformative years in its history: its position in the British Empire was threatened by an increasingly vociferous assembly; its racial hierarchy was disrupted by the campaign for civil rights; and the foundation of its society, slavery, was in its death throes.

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<sup>193</sup> “Letter to the Editor,” *The Novascotian*, 1 January 1835.

<sup>194</sup> Paul Keen, “Radical Atlantic: Joseph Howe and the Culture of Reform,” 35.

<sup>195</sup> Joseph Howe, “Supplement,” *The Novascotian*, 29 December 1834.

After consistent pressure from the British government, equal rights were finally extended to free non-whites in December 1830. As Gad Heuman argues, however, this was “too little, too late.”<sup>196</sup> By resisting civil rights in the 1820s, the assembly alienated free non-whites who had hitherto voiced no opposition to slavery. This made the prospect of an alliance against abolition impossible, as was reflected in the attitude taken by *The Watchman* in August 1830. “If they [white Jamaicans] lose their ascendancy, it will be because they have clung to it with too great pertinacity, and viewed the coloured inhabitants with too great degree of prejudice.”<sup>197</sup> At the beginning of the 1820s, the free people of colour’s petition had been respectful, deferential even, appealing to the “wisdom” of the assembly to grant rights. This position had been squandered by the “complexional Aristocracy,” as Richard Hill called assemblymen, through delay and obfuscation.<sup>198</sup> It must be stressed that this breakdown was by no means inevitable. In 1831, people of colour and black people kept about 70,000 people enslaved between them, which was over one-fifth of the total number of enslaved people in the colony.<sup>199</sup> The natural alliance between enslavers of all races was stymied by the racial arrogance and political incompetence of the white men in the assembly.

*The Watchman* turned against the enslaving class in the 1830s; and it was this turn which eventually brought Jordon to trial. In July 1830, it called for the end of slavery and the foundation of an Anti-Slavery Society in Jamaica.<sup>200</sup> However, its campaign accelerated after a major rebellion led by the enslaved Baptist missionary Samuel Sharpe was put down from 1831-2. With the rebellion defeated in February 1832, the enslaving class violently repressed the missionaries whom they held responsible, with special brutality reserved for enslaved

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<sup>196</sup> Gad Heuman, “The Response of the Whites: Too Little, Too Late, 1823-1830,” *Between Black and White*, 44-55.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>200</sup> “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 31 July 1830.

converts. *The Watchman* condemned the violent retaliation wholeheartedly, cataloguing the brutalities against enslaved people in April 1832.<sup>201</sup> It also protested the burning of mission chapels by predominantly (but not exclusively) white mobs from February onwards.

According to Mary Turner, *The Watchman* was one of three targets for the organization which represented these mobs, the Colonial Church Union. The others were the imperial government and the missionaries, a sign of Jordon's importance within the emerging abolitionist coalition.<sup>202</sup>

The final proof of this turn is shown by the editorial which brought Jordon to trial. In April 1832, *The Watchman* celebrated a member of the assembly, Augustus Beaumont, who had recently turned against the plantocracy. "Now that the Member for Westmoreland [Beaumont] has come over to our side, we shall be happy with him, and the other friends of humanity, to... bring the system down by the run—knock off the fetters, and let the oppressed go free."<sup>203</sup> The threat to "bring the system down" was ill-advised in the midst of a campaign of legal persecution against critics of Jamaican slavery. Rev. Thomas Burchell, who had been Samuel Sharpe's pastor, was arrested in February and nearly lynched before he could stand trial.<sup>204</sup> His charge was groundless, and he was acquitted; but the liberty of a free trial was not generally extended to enslaved people, of whom hundreds were killed after quick trials or no trial at all.<sup>205</sup> In the midst of these outbursts, *The Watchman's* editorials gave ammunition to an enslaving class that was increasingly violent towards dissent. Attending an assize as a reporter during April, Jordon was arrested and charged with constructive treason, an extreme form of sedition outlined in 1823's Island Act.<sup>206</sup> Whereas

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<sup>201</sup> *The Watchman*, 7 April 1832.

<sup>202</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 168.

<sup>203</sup> *The Watchman*, 7 April 1832.

<sup>204</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 167-70.

<sup>205</sup> Christer Petley, "Slavery, emancipation and the creole world view of Jamaican colonists, 1800–1834," *Slavery and Abolition* 26, no.1 (2005): 93-114.

<sup>206</sup> "Constructive treason" was described in Jordon's trial as "treason, treasonable conspiracies, and seditious conspiracies." See, *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

Howe could expect a prison sentence if found guilty, in Jamaica the stakes were much higher. The penalty for constructive treason was death.<sup>207</sup>

Throughout the crisis, Jordon maintained his stalwart loyalty to the Crown. During the Samuel Sharpe Rebellion, he fought in the militia *against* enslaved people. He was as willing to defend the Crown with words as he was with arms. In the “knock off the fetters” issue, *The Watchman* referred to “our beloved King Williams’ veto” and said “our objections go *home* [italics mine] to the Colonial Office.”<sup>208</sup> Yet the imperial government did little to prevent the violence of 1832 after the rebellion. The Jamaican governor, Earl Belmore, took no steps to engineer the prosecution of mobs. According to Mary Turner, he also allowed the “legal chicanery” which persecuted missionaries and enslaved people to go ahead without question.<sup>209</sup> According to the missionary Henry Bleby, Belmore did nothing to prevent the trial of Jordon in an effort to “pander to the base passions” of the enslaving class.<sup>210</sup> *The Watchman*, however, maintained its position of loyalty throughout the ordeal.

Yet loyalty remained a valuable rhetorical tool which allowed Jordon to circumvent the authority of the Jamaican enslaving class. It appealed to the British government whose authority superseded that of the assembly, and it was stunningly (albeit *eventually*) successful. In issues published at the time of the trial, *The Watchman* voiced its loyalty to “good old England,” “John Bull,” and “good King William.”<sup>211</sup> Jordon also sent a message in the courtroom. One of his witnesses was Sir Willoughby Cotton, the commander of British troops during the Samuel Sharpe Rebellion. Although Sir Willoughby did not speak, his

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<sup>207</sup> Candace Ward, “An Engine of Immense Power,” 483-503.

<sup>208</sup> “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 7 April 1832.

<sup>209</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 169.

<sup>210</sup> Henry Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery* (London, 1868), 149.

<sup>211</sup> “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

presence in the courtroom proved Jordon's service in the militia and his loyalty to British arms.<sup>212</sup>

This was particularly powerful because of threats by enslavers to make Jamaica an independent state or to seek annexation by the United States. At the apogee of the secessionist movement in summer 1831, meetings of enslavers across Jamaica had declared that they would try to leave the Empire if Westminster put abolition into law.<sup>213</sup> Christer Petley argues that "threats of secession from the Empire did not re-emerge in Jamaica after the Baptist War [in 1832]."<sup>214</sup> However, while Jordon's trial went on, membership of the Colonial Church Union, which was a militia opposed to the policy of the imperial government, remained high. "Let every member of the Colonial Church Union think that as in battle," a manifesto issued in March 1832 wrote, "the field may be won by his own arm, so in the present."<sup>215</sup> As late as November 1832, the House of Assembly declared itself independent of Westminster and beholden only to the Crown.<sup>216</sup> Although its members stressed their patriotism, their language was wrapped up in the same "yelps for liberty" that had been deployed at the beginning of the American Revolution.<sup>217</sup>

In such an atmosphere, *The Watchman's* declarations of loyalty showed the imperial government that they could rely upon the support of the free people of colour. The newspaper pushed this position by contrasting itself with secessionists. On 21 April 1832, it printed a letter which stated that "any attempt to sever this colony from Great Britain must prove abortive."<sup>218</sup> An article from 25 April was even more emphatic. The bayonets of enslavers, it

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Christer Petley, "Slavery, Emancipation, and the Creole World View," 93-114.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 93-114.

<sup>215</sup> *Jamaica Courant*, 3 March 1832. Quoted in Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 168.

<sup>216</sup> Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 186.

<sup>217</sup> Dr. Johnson famously asked: "how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negroes?" See Samuel Johnson, *Taxation no Tyranny: an answer to the resolutions and address of the American Congress* (London: T. Caddell, 1775).

<sup>218</sup> *The Watchman*, 18 April 1832,

wrote, “will never be directed against the AUTHORITIES AND CONSTITUTION OF GREAT BRITAIN!”<sup>219</sup> In another April issue, an article noted that “whilst the coloured body of Jamaica exist, they will defend the rights and liberties of British subjects and the British government.”<sup>220</sup> The Colonial Office, which had failed to back any single Jamaican faction amidst the violence of 1832, was left with no doubt as to which was most loyal.

Unlike Howe, Jordon did not make loyalty a feature of his trial defence. Instead, this was made on the basis that Jordon had been outside Kingston when the “knock off the fetters” issue was written. During the trial, the prosecution attempted to establish that Jordon had published the offending article; as Howe’s prosecution hoped in 1835, publication would be enough to find him guilty. But each witness brought to speak refused to say anything that contradicted Jordon’s alibi. Even James Lunan, a pro-slavery newspaper editor with whom *The Watchman* had feuded, refused to say that Jordon was its editor.<sup>221</sup> Meanwhile, the prosecution was weakened by the fact that the Attorney-General, Fitz Herbert Batty, refused to take the case. He argued that Jordon’s article was no more radical than a speech of Daniel O’Connell; as an Irishman, he could not indict him in good faith.<sup>222</sup> His deputy instead took on the prosecution. Amidst a dramatic courtroom scene which threatened to lapse into violence, Jordon was found not guilty.<sup>223</sup>

His victory was short-lived. Following the trial, the assembly immediately passed an “Editor-hanging bill,” as *The Watchman* called it, which dramatically curtailed the free

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<sup>219</sup> *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

<sup>220</sup> *The Watchman*, 18 April 1832.

<sup>221</sup> *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832. A week prior, *The Watchman* had called Lunan’s brother “a base, malicious \*\*\*\*\* [stars his].” “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 18 April 1832.

<sup>222</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 12.

<sup>223</sup> *The Watchman*, 28 April 1832. See also, *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832. For other accounts of the trial, see: W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 12-14; Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 184; Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 88; Candace Ward, “An Engine of Immense Power” 483-503; Alpen Razi, “Coloured Citizens of the World”; “Hon. Edward Jordon,” *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1 July 1869; *Supplement to the Royal Gazette*, 14 April 1832; Rev. Peter Duncan, *Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica* (London: Partridge and Oakey, Paternoster Row, 1849), 327-8.



press.<sup>224</sup> On 7 August, he was brought to trial again for a libel against the Scottish clergyman James Wordie. Jordon's defence relied on two claims. Firstly, he had been "forty miles from Kingston" in January 1832 serving in the militia, so could not have published the offending article. Secondly, the libel law in England had recently "become antiquated." "The progress of liberal opinion," Jordon's lawyer Price Watkis stated,

is such that when it can, the truth ought to be proven, and any article which professes to be a comment upon another may be safely written in the strongest language, provided such language be warranted by the article so commented on.<sup>225</sup>

Watkis was using the truth of the 'libel' as a defence, an innovation which was pioneered by the English lawyer Thomas Erskine following Fox's Libel Act of 1792.<sup>226</sup> Joseph Howe also used this defence, but was more successful with it than Jordon, who was found guilty, sentenced to six months in jail, and presented with large fines.<sup>227</sup>

The trial was entirely unfair. *The Watchman's* stiff words merely countered a vicious attack from Wordie in print, yet Wordie faced no prosecution. Moreover, the jury initially found Jordon guilty "of publishing only" but this was reversed by the Bench. Finally, a request for a new trial from Watkis was denied by the Bench.<sup>228</sup> Yet Jordon's declarations of loyalty proved useful when the sentence was reversed on appeal to the Colonial Office.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> *The Watchman*, 28 April 1832.

<sup>225</sup> *The Watchman*, 15 August 1832.

<sup>226</sup> Erskine, who successfully defended several cases of seditious libel and treason in the 1790s, became one of the most famous names of English reform at the beginning of the nineteenth century. His success relied on the exploitation of changes in the libel law due to Fox's Libel Act, which expanded the role of the jury in deciding whether a text was libellous. See, Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic," 30-49; "Libel Act 1792," Legislation, UK Government, accessed 19 June 2022, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/apgb/Geo3/32/60/content>.

<sup>227</sup> *The Watchman*, 15 August 1832. Jordon's second sentence is a matter of confusion in the secondary sources. *The Watchman's* transcript of the trial states that Jordon was sentenced to six months in gaol, as do Gad Heuman and Peter Duncan. But Mary Turner, Mavis Campbell, and W. Adolphe Roberts have the sentence at twelve months, with Jordon serving six. As the only primary source of the trial, *The Watchman's* figure has been taken here.

<sup>228</sup> Peter Duncan, *Wesleyan Mission to Jamaica*, 327-8.

<sup>229</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 184.

While in prison, Jordon had been elected as an alderman of Kingston and, with his release approved by the colonial secretary, was well-placed to begin a political career.

The Crown made a similar case in the prosecution of Joseph Howe. The assistant to the Attorney-General, James F. Gray, opened the case with a re-statement of libel law. Due to the “exertions of English lawyers,” he said, referring to the work of Thomas Erskine and others, “now it is for you [the jury] to say whether or not the matter charged is of a libellous nature...” Then he called the Crown’s single witness, Hugh Blackadar from the *Acadian Recorder*. As with Lunan in the Jordon case, Blackadar was reluctant to testify against a fellow newspaperman; but, as he teetered, Howe dramatically stepped in. He had published it, he said. With this admission, the Crown only needed to read the offending article, which every lawyer Howe saw before the trial had called libellous.<sup>230</sup> Having done so, it rested its case.

Howe then took the stand. He began with an exhortation of English law which was grounded in his British heritage. “I may be permitted to thank Heaven and our ancestors,” he said, “that I do not stand before a corrupt and venal Court.” He then re-iterated the change in libel law achieved in the 1790s in patriotic language, praising the “independent spirit of the English bar, the intelligence and determination of the English juries” and the “triumph” for the press which they had achieved.<sup>231</sup> Next, he read from an issue of *The Novascotian* published in 1830, in which he claimed membership of the British nation. Britain’s achievements, he said, “are as much the property of a Briton by the banks of the Avon, the Hillsborough, or the St. John [rivers in British North America], as by the Liffey, the Tweed or the Thames.” Howe’s appeal to the patriotic sensibilities of the jury was intelligent, as J.

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<sup>230</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 135.

<sup>231</sup> *The Novascotian* printed a shortened version of the speech, which was made on 2 March 1835, in its 12 March edition. See, Joseph Howe, *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835. For the full transcript of the speech, see “Libel Defence: Mr. Howe’s Defence,” Nova Scotia Legislature, accessed 3 August 2022. <https://nslegislature.ca/about/history/joe-howe/howedefense>.

Murray Beck argues. In contemporary legal language, seditious libel meant “wickedly, maliciously, and seditiously contriving, devising, and intending to stir up and excite discontent and sedition among His Majesty's subjects.”<sup>232</sup> By his resolutely loyal language, Howe made any association with sedition seem ridiculous. This was so to the point that Chief Justice Halliburton had to allow laughter in the court.<sup>233</sup>

As the speech continued, Howe applied this loyalty to British North America itself. Like *The Watchman*'s editorials, he railed against the prospect of joining the United States. “Could we join in the celebration of American Festivals,” he said, “every one of which was a disgrace to the arms that have protected, and not oppressed us, ever since we had a hut or foot of land to defend?”

Neither Gray nor anyone else had accused Howe of American sympathies, so why did he take time to distance himself from them so emphatically? There were two reasons. Firstly, such rhetoric made it clear that he should not be compared with William Lyon Mackenzie, a Canadian newspaperman who genuinely did harbour seditious views. Secondly, he anchored loyalty in the heritage of the jury, a tactic which was wise given that such a large number of them were children or grandchildren of Loyalist refugees. Howe's patriotism was oftentimes trite, but he spoke now of Loyalist heritage with a breath-taking invocation of the dead. “Were we to permit the American banner to float upon our soil,” he said, “if the bodies of our fathers did not leap from their honored graves, their spirits would walk abroad over the land, and blast us for such an unnatural violation.” By appealing to the heritage of loyal Nova Scotians, Howe made the trial bigger than himself, bigger even than press freedom. He made it a trial of faith – to ancestors and to Britain.

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 140.

After his appeal to King William, Howe pivoted to the abuses of the magistrates who had brought him to trial. Drawing on “my own experience as a Grand Juror,” he claimed that the ‘libellous’ letter was correct that “these inequalities and abuses did exist.” What followed was an excoriation of the activities of the magistrates, who oversaw the local government of Halifax. “Poor wretches are dragged down to their worships for non-payment [of assessments], while they see their rich neighbours not paying at all,” he said. The finances of the Poor Asylum in Halifax, he continued, had been corruptly manipulated by the magistrates, as had those of the Bridewell. The police had been mismanaged, along with various other institutions subject to public finances. “These things exist,” Howe said during the condemnation, “and yet a dozen men... have come here to prove me a rebel.”

Like *The Watchman*, Howe was alive to the trials’ implications for press freedom. He quoted from several English cases in which reformers had successfully defended the liberty of the press. He also quoted a speech by “the Irish Orator” John P. Curran, in which press freedom was venerated as “that sacred palladium” which “nothing but the depravity, or folly, or corruption of a jury, can ever destroy.” He finished with an appeal to the jury that incorporated the British patriotism, press freedom, and veneration of English law which were the speech’s major themes. “I conjure you to judge me by the principles of English law,” he said, “and to leave an unshackled Press as a legacy to your children. You remember the Press in your hours of conviviality and mirth – Oh! Do not desert it in this its day of trial.”<sup>234</sup>

Howe was acquitted almost instantly. His defence showed that he was patriotic and not seditious to the point that the jury needed only ten minutes to make their decision. He transformed the event, which was supposed to prosecute a libellous letter, into a trial of the magistrates’ corruption. Indeed, he made little attempt to prove the truth of the letter

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

published. The letter's figure of £30,000 taken "from the pockets of the poor" over thirty years went unmentioned and unsubstantiated for most of the speech. There was no effort made to engage with the case on its own terms.

Rather, Howe raised the stakes. He made the trial about freedom of the press generally, loyalty to the ancestors, and maintaining British "sacred fires" on the American continent. The tactic was spectacularly successful. According to J. Murray Beck, the verdict of 'not guilty' brought acclamation from the court and celebrations throughout Halifax. "All the sleds in town turned out in procession to serenade Howe," he writes.<sup>235</sup> The *Acadian Recorder* on 7 March likewise hailed Howe's release as the triumph of the free press and reform. "The press, thank God and the jury, is open, free as air, unmangled, and will, in due course, bring to punishment every offender."<sup>236</sup> Like Jordon, Howe's case had become important far beyond the technicality of libel law. He had made himself a cause célèbre for freedom of the press in Nova Scotia.

Despite his persecution, Howe had been allowed several advantages. As J. Murray Beck argues, the fact that he was not a lawyer meant that he was given license to defend in a less orthodox style than was usual. Attorney-General Archibald said as much at the end of the trial, when he argued that Howe had "stated a great variety of things which could not be evidence, which are mere hearsay, and which the court would not have permitted counsel to use."<sup>237</sup> Archibald's annoyed tone conceals the fact that he was a personal friend of Howe and, according to Barry Cahill, reluctant to press the case on Howe.<sup>238</sup> Yet this laxity can be deduced from the conciliatory language used by the Crown's attorneys. How could James F. Gray expect the jury to convict a man of libel whom he described as the publisher of a

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<sup>235</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 141.

<sup>236</sup> *Acadian Recorder*, 7 March 1835.

<sup>237</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 140.

<sup>238</sup> Barry Cahill, "R. v. Howe," 552.

“generally well managed newspaper”?<sup>239</sup> Moreover, none of the officials in the court, nor the prosecution, stopped Howe during his speech – a speech which lasted over *six* hours.

Howe was a member of a respected Halifax family and, through *The Novascotian* and his speeches at public meetings, had built up strong political support. The festive response to his acquittal indicates great support within Nova Scotia, as does his warm reception when he travelled around the province afterwards. The triumph was praised even by Howe’s enemies in the newspaper trade, such as the Tory editor of the *Temperance Recorder*, Edmund Ward.<sup>240</sup> Yet it was contingent on family connections as much as rhetorical skill. John Howe Snr., Joseph’s father, was a senior magistrate, and maintained his support for his son throughout the ordeal of the trial. To convict him risked a split within the magistracy and the elite class in Halifax more broadly. Unlike William Wilkie, who was convicted in a similar case in 1820, Howe was no upstart pamphleteer. Sprung from a well-established family, he had become a powerful journalist who was as socially connected as he was respected.

Jordon also benefitted from his social class. He may have been part of a group which only gained civil rights in 1830, but the relative silence of the vast majority of Jamaicans in the primary sources arguably clouds Jordon’s high status. Not only was he free in a society where, in 1834, nearly 80% were enslaved; he had also been born free.<sup>241</sup> For enslaved people put through unfair trials, intervention from the colonial secretary (which freed Jordon) was a remote possibility. During the Samuel Sharpe Rebellion, enslaved rebels who laid down their arms were issued pardons by Sir Willoughby Cotton, but these were not honoured as militiamen murdered anyone suspected of rebellion upon their return to the estates. In one case, a group which was pardoned by Sir Willoughby was massacred only an hour later as the

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<sup>239</sup> *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

<sup>240</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 141.

<sup>241</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 7.

estate's attorney, John Gunn, returned. In the months after the Samuel Sharpe Rebellion, 312 enslaved people were executed, many of them without having participated in it. Yet, as Mary Turner argues, this figure is made a nonsense by the uncounted number killed before they were tried.<sup>242</sup> Even though Jordon's trial was unfair, his status insulated him from the most brutal excesses of Jamaican society. As in Nova Scotia, British justice was a less powerful force for Jamaicans outside the elite.

Yet if Howe and Jordon were elevated by the British system, Britain was also ultimately responsible for their persecution. As Paul Keen argues, "it was the British themselves who had designed and maintained the structure of colonial government that Howe was opposing..."<sup>243</sup> Writing of its opposition to the "Editor-Hanging bill," *The Watchman* came close to describing the British Empire as unfree. In the past, it wrote, "such laws might have been deemed necessary, and perhaps it may be thought by some, even in this enlightened age, that it is only by them that the colonial system can be upheld or perpetuated."<sup>244</sup> Yet it did not view this as grounds for disloyalty. The same editorial in *The Watchman* stated that, if it were necessary to clamp down on the free press in Jamaica, "we must, in common with others, submit." Paul Keen argues that Howe, on the other hand, resolved the contradiction between British liberty and tyranny by portraying the British nation as essentially reformist in character, despite some vested interests in the House of Lords.<sup>245</sup> While Howe and Jordon were conscious of the authoritarian side of British power, they tended to downplay or ignore it.

Arguably, this was a rhetorical weapon in the war for press freedom. By contrasting Nova Scotia and Jamaica respectively with a free (and perhaps overstated) idea of Britain,

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<sup>242</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 161.

<sup>243</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic," 40.

<sup>244</sup> "Editorial," *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

<sup>245</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic," 39-40.

they shaped their colonies towards their own political values. In its account of Jordon's trial, *The Watchman* referenced "proceedings taken last year in the House of Lords against The Times newspaper" in which a "Mr. Lawson" refused to answer questions from the prosecution just as the witnesses in Jordon's trial did.<sup>246</sup> Howe, on the other hand, cited several English cases from prior decades in which press freedom was vindicated.<sup>247</sup> These cases provided precedents from which the journalists' defences were constructed, but they also suggested that libel prosecution in their respective colonies had deviated from what was decent and respectable for British subjects. "In England such law is unknown," wrote *The Watchman* of the "Editor-hanging bill."<sup>248</sup> In the same issue, it referred to "Good old England, where they don't choke people for expressing their sentiments." Howe, meanwhile, closed his trial speech with a passionate plea for the jury to "judge me by the principles of English law."<sup>249</sup> Through this rhetoric, they successfully portrayed press freedom as a natural British liberty.

Reforming ideas were transmitted to Nova Scotia and Jamaica through the United Kingdom and, subsequently, adapted by Howe and Jordon. Howe read widely and deeply on the British reformers by whom he was inspired. Indeed, he extensively covered and commented upon the events leading up to 1832's Great Reform Act, particularly drawing inspiration from the radical essayist William Cobbett.<sup>250</sup> Jordon was indirectly aided by Daniel O'Connell, whose campaign for Catholic emancipation tugged the conscience of the Jamaican Attorney-General to the extent that he publicly refused to prosecute Jordon. More directly, *The Watchman* was tied to the British abolitionist movement from its founding in 1829. The newspaper was commented upon favourably by the organ of the Anti-Slavery

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<sup>246</sup> *The Watchman*, 28 April 1832.

<sup>247</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic," 41.

<sup>248</sup> *The Watchman*, 25 April 1832.

<sup>249</sup> *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

<sup>250</sup> Paul Keen, "Radical Atlantic," 40.



Society, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, in that same year.<sup>251</sup> In 1830, *The Watchman* called for a Jamaican branch of the Society to be set up.<sup>252</sup> *The Watchman*'s account of the trial also states that, when Robert Osborn refused to name his co-editors at the newspaper, "here several of the Jamaica Aristocracy ejaculated, it is now quite certain that *The Watchman* is conducted by the Anti-Slavery Society in England."<sup>253</sup> It is also notable that Jordon and Howe identified their enemies as an "Aristocracy," since it was the British aristocracy whose power the Great Reform Act greatly curtailed.<sup>254</sup> Benedict Anderson described nations as "imagined communities" built around ideas exchanged in a common language, particularly through newspapers.<sup>255</sup> This was precisely how Jordon and Howe claimed their right to British liberties and, arguably, membership of the British nation.

However, it was a membership that did not extend to all people in Nova Scotia or Jamaica. Alpen Razi locates Jordon within the Black Atlantic, "a counterculture of modernity" by which people of African descent challenged Eurocentric models of nationalism.<sup>256</sup> Yet Jordon said nothing to challenge British nationalism. His best relations were with British abolitionists and editors of colour such as Henry Loving from Antigua. Loving, whose letters Jordon published, used a similarly patriotic strategy when subject to legal persecution in 1829.<sup>257</sup> It is not surprising that Loving was an enslaver; so was Price Watkis, Jordon's lawyer.<sup>258</sup> While generally opposed to slavery, *The Watchman* took it for granted that enslavers, not the enslaved, should receive compensation upon abolition. "We

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<sup>251</sup> "Recent News from Jamaica," *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, vol. 3, no. 55, December 1829.

<sup>252</sup> *The Watchman*, 31 July 1830.

<sup>253</sup> *The Watchman*, 28 April 1832.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. "The People" letter claimed that "the hard earnings of the people are lavished on an Aristocracy." *The Novascotian*, 1 January 1835.

<sup>255</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

<sup>256</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Quoted in Razi, "Coloured Citizens of the World," 110.

<sup>257</sup> *The Watchman*, 2 May 1832. See also, Razi, "Coloured Citizens of the World," 109.

<sup>258</sup> "Price Watkis," UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database, accessed 2 August 2022, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/14205/#:~:text=Biography,Park%2C%20St%20Ann%2C%20Jamaica>.

are not asking any man to manumise their slaves without compensation,” it wrote in May 1832.<sup>259</sup> *The Watchman* also carried advertisements for the purchase of enslaved people as late as 1830, and adverts about runaways beyond this date.<sup>260</sup> These facts complicate Candace Ward’s view that *The Watchman* fought for emancipation “on behalf of and in solidarity with the enslaved.”<sup>261</sup> They also help to explain why Jordon struggled to gain the votes of free black people when he entered politics in the 1830s.<sup>262</sup>

By all accounts, Joseph Howe was an advocate for the cause of the Mi’kmaq as he understood it. According to Courtney Mrazek, Howe believed that settlers should be prevented from squatting on Mi’kmaw land, that the government should provide them an English education, and that they should be encouraged to farm.<sup>263</sup> Daniel N. Paul, the noted Mi’kmaq historian, portrayed Howe as a saviour of the Mi’kmaq without whom they may not have survived.<sup>264</sup> Regardless of his advocacy, though, Howe’s description of “savages” placed them outside British society. Moreover, his investigation into the conditions of the Mi’kmaq was prompted by a personal request from Queen Victoria, who herself received a petition from Grand Chief Pemmeenauweet of Shubenacadie. It is notable that this petition entirely bypassed the Nova Scotian government.<sup>265</sup> In contrast to Howe, Pemmeenauweet’s petition placed the Mi’kmaq within the British community, under the auspice of the British monarch. “Am glad to hear that we have a good Queen, whose father I saw in this country,” he wrote, “we look to you the Queen... your Indian children love you, and will fight for you against all your enemies.”<sup>266</sup> This is not to condemn Howe’s attempts to ameliorate the

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<sup>259</sup> “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 2 May 1832.

<sup>260</sup> “For Sale: A Young Negro Woman,” *The Watchman*, 1 October 1830. See also, *The Watchman*, 8 August 1832.

<sup>261</sup> Candace Ward, “‘An Engine of Immense Power,’” 491.

<sup>262</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between Black and White*, 78-9.

<sup>263</sup> Courtney Mrazek, “‘Our Nation is like a withering leaf on a summer’s day’: The Mi’kmaq and British Agricultural Policies in Colonial Nova Scotia,” (MA diss., St. Mary’s University, 2016), 78-9.

<sup>264</sup> Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savages*, 191.

<sup>265</sup> Courtney Mrazek, “‘Our Nation is like a withering leaf on a summer’s day,’” 78-9.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

condition of the Mi'kmaq or to suggest that his language was uncharacteristic of the period, but rather to show that the paths he navigated through the British legal system were not open to all in contemporary Nova Scotia.<sup>267</sup>

While Howe and Jordon could be characterized as elites, their success up to their trials should be attributed primarily to rhetorical skill. They were part of an intellectual circle of reformers which crossed the Atlantic, but they were not passive recipients of British ideas. Rather, they shaped those ideas to their own priorities and used them to greatly improve press freedom in their respective colonies. However, these changes did not necessarily improve the rights of disenfranchised groups such as enslaved people and the Mi'kmaq. There is evidence to suggest that they were not intended to. Nonetheless, these men became 'national heroes' of a sort after their deaths. It is the process by which they became heroes which is examined in the next chapter.

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<sup>267</sup> *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

## *Chapter Three*

### *Afterlives*

“Honoured by his sovereign and beloved by the people, his name will ever be revered as one of Jamaica’s most distinguished sons.”<sup>268</sup> So reads the description of Edward Jordon on his statue in St. William Grant Park in downtown Kingston. A plaque dedicated to Joseph Howe on the wall of Province House’s Legislative Library in Nova Scotia hits equally exultant notes. “In this room on March 2, 1835,” it writes, “Joseph Howe... defended himself in an action for criminal libel. His masterly defence not only won him a triumphant acquittal, but established, forever, the freedom of the press in this country.”<sup>269</sup>

These assessments do not fit squarely with scholarship on Jordon and Howe. The claim that Jordon’s name “will ever be revered” is complicated by the fact that he has little reputation in Jamaica today. He is not one of Jamaica’s government-sanctioned national heroes, nor does he have the folk hero status of others absent from that list such as Bob Marley.<sup>270</sup> Indeed, Jordan’s name is seldom mentioned outside of academic work on Jamaican political history. Howe’s plaque is just as overstated. The dramatic statement that the trial “established, forever, the freedom of the press in this country” is highly questionable. Howe’s successor as editor of *The Novascotian*, Richard Nugent, was tried for criminal defamatory libel on successive occasions, suffered imprisonment, and forced to give up the newspaper. According to J. Murray Beck, the claim that Howe established press freedom is “a myth that has little basis in fact”; and, although other scholars give the trial more significance, none argue that it handed down press freedom to Nova Scotians “forever.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Petrina Dacres, “Keeping Alive Before the People’s Eyes This Great Event: Kingston’s Queen Victoria Monument,” *Victorian Jamaica* eds. Tim Barringer and Wayne Modest (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 493-523, at 497.

<sup>269</sup> Plaque, *In this room on March 2, 1835, Joseph Howe...*, Legislative Library, Province House, Halifax, NS.

<sup>270</sup> “National Heroes,” National Heroes, National Library of Jamaica, accessed 21 July 2021, <https://nlj.gov.jm/qcontentnational-heroes/>.

<sup>271</sup> J. Murray Beck, “A Fool for a Client: The King V. Joseph Howe,” *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 129-47, at 141. For recent accounts of the trial, see: Lyndsay M. Campbell, “License to Publish: Joseph Howe’s Contribution to Libel Law in Nova Scotia,” *Dalhousie Law Journal* 29, no.1: 79-116; Barry Cahill, “R. v. Howe

Scholars will not be shocked to discover that the descriptions on these monuments are not entirely accurate. Since 2010, public monuments have leaped from academic discussions into the public consciousness. Crowds in Canada, Britain, and the United States have pulled many of them down. Moreover, a large and growing corpus of critical literature has discussed the construction of heroes in public monuments, the grounds they provide for collective identity, and the messages they send to the reading public.<sup>272</sup>

In this final chapter, the discussion focuses on how Jordon and Howe became heroic figures after their deaths, the political ideas their stories conveyed to Jamaican and Nova Scotian readers, and their decline in significance as the political climate changed. The chapter argues that Jordon and Howe underwent a process of what Petrina Dacres calls “heroization.”<sup>273</sup> But the values of their heroic narratives were never stable. In the late Victorian period, they were venerated because of their advocacy for reform and loyalty to Britain. Yet Howe’s heroism was also placed in a grander, Anglo-Saxon narrative which spoke to racial arrogance in ways which Jordon’s elevation did not. In contrast, Jordon’s statue showed him as a free, venerable, and British subject. This portrayal sat uneasily with the absence of political rights in a colony whose legislative assembly was abolished after the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865.<sup>274</sup> As nationalism progressed in the twentieth century, Jordon and Howe ceased to be celebrated as ‘British’ heroic figures and, eventually, fell out of fashion entirely.

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(1835) for Seditious Libel: A Tale of Twelve Magistrates,” *Canadian State Trials Volume I*, eds. Frank Murray Greenwood and Barry Wright (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2019), 547-76.

<sup>272</sup> Petrina Dacres, “Monument and Meaning,” *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 8, no.2 (2004): 137-53. For more discussion of statues as memorials, Matthew J. Smith, “R O C K S T O N E: On Race, Politics, and Public Memorials in Jamaica,” *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 2 (2021): 219-39; “Statue Wars: Protest, Public Histories and Problematic Plinths,” *Public History Review*, vol. 28 (2021); Benjamin McHutchion, “Colonial Statues as Memorial Contact Zones: Macdonald, Cornwallis and Statue Removal in Canada,” *The Sculpture Journal* 31, no.1 (2022): 55-74; Benjamin McHutchion, “Collective Memory in Transition: Macdonald, Cornwallis and Statue Removal in Canada,” Master’s Thesis, Queen’s University, June 2019; John Reid, “The Three Lives of Edward Cornwallis,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 16, (2013): 19-46.

<sup>273</sup> Petrina Dacres, “Monument and Meaning,” *Small Axe* 8, no.2 (September 2004): 137-53.

<sup>274</sup> Gad Heuman, *Between and Black and White*, 189-95.

In 2011, the Barbadian historian Richard Drayton explained the construction of national heroes with reference to Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. According to the two pioneers of psychology, the hero of history is created by forgetting the individual. “Only those who drank of “‘the water of Forgetfulness’,” writes Drayton, “could conjure with heroes.”<sup>275</sup> Even though heroes may be historical figures, they function as psychological archetypes: embodiments of values which are lauded by societies. Their lives must be twisted into stories which present ‘lessons’ to society at large. In this way, they are more like religious figures than historical ones. This is especially true for those who have been ‘immortalised’ in statues. “The sacred is manifested in ritual display,” as Eviatar Zerubavel writes.<sup>276</sup>

Benedict Anderson holds that nations must imagine themselves coming out of “an immemorial past,” yet also must seem to “glide into a limitless future.”<sup>277</sup> In other words, nations need stories to answer the critical question of how they got to their present, but also to justify their existence in the future. Heroes give nations protagonists for these stories, which bind people together with shared values. As Edward Said wrote, “Nations are narrations.”<sup>278</sup>

In the years following their deaths, Howe and Jordon were heroes of this type. Their trials were stories that contained instructive ‘lessons’ about the societies which they represented. Yet these were not ‘national’ stories: they did not distance their societies from Britain, but rather expressed pride at their place in the British Empire. They represent what Melanie J. Newton calls “proimperial nationalism”: loyalty to Britain which could be

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<sup>275</sup> Richard Drayton, “The Problem of the Hero(ine) in Caribbean History,” *Small Axe* 15, 1 (March 2011): 26-45, at 35. See also, *Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London: International Psychoanalytical, 1922); C. G. Jung, “The Psychology of the Unconscious,” in *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 7, eds. and trans. G. Adler and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968).

<sup>276</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 29.

<sup>277</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 11.

<sup>278</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), xiii.

deployed as a rhetorical weapon for reform.<sup>279</sup> As the last chapter showed, both Howe and Jordon used their loyalty to expand press freedom in the face of persecution from colonial elites. After their deaths, Howe and Jordon were projected as heroes in stories which solidified a certain mould of British identity in their respective colonies. This kind of British identity located Canada and Jamaica within the Empire and situated political reform and emancipation respectively as achievements of that Empire.

The earliest evidence of Jordon's heroization is the statue erected on Grand Parade (now St. William Grant Park) in central Kingston. Constructed only six years after his death in 1869, the statue depicts Jordon upright with his hand resting on a stone. He looks stiffly at the viewer and, in typical Victorian fashion, wears a bowtie and waistcoat. Unlike later public Jamaican statues, there is no reference to his African heritage. However, this is the only Victorian public statue which depicts a non-white person. It is also the first to depict a native-born Jamaican. Artistically, the statue follows a Victorian pattern of showcasing an admirable individual with the manner and clothing of the respectable classes. Jordon's pose does not contrast greatly with that shown in the statue of Governor Charles Metcalfe, constructed in 1845.<sup>280</sup> Yet if colonial sculptures were "symbolic assertions of Empire," as Petrina Dacres argues, then this work differs from the norm.<sup>281</sup> Although it speaks the language of English Victorian sculpture, it does not transplant a 'British' figure into the colony, but rather shows a colonial figure as British. In this way, it suggests a British identity which is not imposed from abroad, but which springs from Jamaica itself. This message echoes Jordon's own words when he was awarded the Companion of the Order of the Bath (C.B.), wherein he stressed Jamaican connections to Britain. After receiving the honour, he said that it

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<sup>279</sup> Melanie J. Newton, *The Children of Africa in the Colonies*, 167-8.

<sup>280</sup> Petrina Dacres, "Kingston's Queen Victoria Monument," 495. See also, R.G. Miller, "Erected by Public Subscription in Memory of The Honorable Edward Jordon C.B. . .," Sculpture, 1875, St. William Grant Park, Kingston, Jamaica.

<sup>281</sup> Dacres, "Kingston's Queen Victoria Monument," 494.



affords evidence that distance from the source of honour is no bar to advancement – and that public services of individuals in this portion of her Majesty’s dominions will certainly be observed.<sup>282</sup>

The text of the statue shows Jordon as British. His name is listed with the honour he was given by Queen Victoria, “C.B.,” which highlights his achievement in the British realm. The text also boasts that he was “honored by his sovereign” first, and “beloved by the people” only afterwards. The stress on Jordon’s loyalty to the Crown is confirmed by the absence of his trial in the text, which is referred to euphemistically. The plaque simply says that Jordon “through a long series of years and in times of danger fearlessly stood forward as the advocate of emancipation and for the removal of civil disabilities...” without complicating the “services rendered to his country” with the caveat that he was tried for constructive treason by its court. In the statue’s description, Jordon’s achievements are typical of a Victorian patriarch. He was an “advocate of emancipation,” an “enlightened legislator,” honoured by Queen Victoria, and the founder of a life insurance society.<sup>283</sup>

According to Howard Johnson, from the end of the nineteenth century Edward Jordon and his co-editor Robert Osborne were the figures whom the press most frequently cited as national heroes in Jamaica.<sup>284</sup> Their peaceful campaigns for civil rights resonated with the light-skinned middle classes, who contrasted them with violent rebels such as Paul Bogle. As one columnist wrote, “the free coloured population agitated for equal political rights but did not resort to arms.”<sup>285</sup> Such approval was echoed in articles at the turn of the twentieth century by writers in *The Daily Gleaner* and *Jamaica Times*. The political calculations of

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<sup>282</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 20.

<sup>283</sup> R.G. Miller R.A., “Erected by Public Subscription in Memory of The Honorable Edward Jordon C.B...”

<sup>284</sup> Howard Johnson, “From Pariah to Patriot: The Posthumous Career of George William Gordon,” *New West Indian Guide* 81, no.3-4 (2007): 197-218.

<sup>285</sup> “Jamaica’s Greatest Men,” *Daily Gleaner*, 23 December 1899; “A Famous Jamaican,” *Jamaica Times*, June 22, 1901; “Westwood High School,” *Jamaica Times*, 22 July 1905.

Jordon around the period of the trial, as well as his complicated relationship with free black people, is absent in these descriptions.

These values located Jamaica in a British Empire which, its advocates maintained, was free, peaceful, and liberal; but also characterized by subjecthood rather than citizenship and monarchy rather than republicanism. As J.R. Seeley wrote in 1883,

The English State then, in what direction and towards what goal has that been advancing? The words which jump to our lips in answer are Liberty, Democracy! They are words which want a great deal of defining.<sup>286</sup>

Even if liberty and democracy were the watchwords of British patriotism, Seely argued, they amounted to a tendency “by which first the middle class and then gradually the lower classes have been admitted to a share of influence in public affairs.” As the statue suggests, British liberty in Jamaica had meant the formal end of civil disabilities on the basis of race, as well as emancipation from slavery. But, as the statue was unveiled, British liberty no longer included a representative assembly (which was abolished after 1865) and certainly did not include the right to resist colonial authority claimed by white Jamaicans in the 1830s.<sup>287</sup>

Jordon – who fought for civil rights but also for the colonial militia – could be made into a hero for Jamaicans who remained faithful to the cult of British liberty at the end of the nineteenth century.

Nonetheless, Jordon’s statue was used to direct a new generation towards the movement for greater political rights. At its unveiling in 1875, Lewis Quier Bowerbank stated that he hoped the statue would encourage young men to reverse the changes brought

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<sup>286</sup> J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Boston, MA: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 7.

<sup>287</sup> Jack P. Greene, “Liberty and Slavery: The Transfer of British Liberty to the West Indies, 1627–1865,” in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 51-76.

about by the Morant Bay Rebellion, which had resulted in the abolition of the Jamaican assembly and thus greatly restricted political rights in the country. “Should the erection of this statue, or the proceedings of this day, tend in any way to promote this object,” Bowerbank said, “then indeed it will be a memorial worthy of the late Edward Jordon.”<sup>288</sup> In fact, Jordon’s story was told less and less in Jamaica as the twentieth century progressed.

From the moment of his death in 1873, Howe was lauded as a heroic figure. In the last years of his life, he was unpopular in Nova Scotia due to his role in Canadian Confederation. But, according to J. Murray Beck, public anger was invisible in print upon his death. The *Evening Express* called him “our greatest man,” while others praised his powers of speech and use of “terse simple Anglo-Saxon” drawn from “Shakespeare and the other ‘wells of English undefiled.’”<sup>289</sup> According to David Sutherland, however, in the next two decades Nova Scotians remained suspicious of his role in Confederation and, when a statue of Howe was proposed in 1892, the public did not raise enough money to pay for it. With statues to ‘Fathers of Confederation’ like John A. Macdonald going up across Canada, the Nova Scotian assembly agreed to fund the remainder in 1903, and a statue of Howe was raised in time for his 1904 centennial.<sup>290</sup> This stuttering campaign to commemorate Howe is indicative of a Nova Scotian public which, contrary to laudatory obituaries, was as divided after his death as they had been during his life.

The ceremony which raised Howe’s statue was, as Sutherland describes, “an exercise in selective recall.”<sup>291</sup> At the event, the Attorney-General of Nova Scotia, J.W. Longley (who was also the driving force in the statue campaign) praised Howe’s efforts to bestow upon

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<sup>288</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 20.

<sup>289</sup> *Evening Express*, 3 June 1873. See also, *British Colonist*, 3 June 1873.

<sup>290</sup> David Sutherland, “Celebrating the Joseph Howe Centennial in 1904: an Exercise in Selective Recall,” *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 8 (2005): 76-91. J.W. Longley also published a biography of Howe in the following year: J.W. Longley, *The Makers of Canada: Joseph Howe* (Toronto: Morang & Co. Limited, 1905).

<sup>291</sup> David Sutherland, “Celebrating the Joseph Howe Centennial.”

Nova Scotians their inherent rights as members of “the Anglo-Saxon race.” The rhetoric of liberty was matched, as it had been in Howe’s trial speech, by flourishes of patriotism. “Thirty years dead but still his spirit lives...,” Longley closed his speech, “...the people’s friend... Joe Howe, their hero to the end.” As he finished, the band played Rule Britannia and God Save the King. Away from this atmosphere of bombastic patriotism, Longley was more circumspect. He had written in 1904 that Canada and Britain were “drifting apart rather than drifting together.”<sup>292</sup>

Longley’s rhetoric was heroization of the kind also seen in Jordon’s statue. Like Jordon, Howe was deemed to have a special connection with a loosely defined group of “the people,” though it was never specified who “the people” were. Moreover, the claim that “still his spirit lives” strikes a chord with that made on Jordon’s statue, which stated that “his name will be eternally revered.” If Benedict Anderson described nations as gliding “into a limitless future,” in these descriptions the heroic figures of Howe and Jordon also glide into immortality.<sup>293</sup> Finally, the ‘Rule Britannia’ which capped Longley’s speech proclaimed Howe’s membership of the British nation as much as the description of Jordon as “The Honorable Edward Jordon C.B. ... honoured by his sovereign.”<sup>294</sup> Yet Jordon and Howe’s statues did not remember them as nationalists in a modern Jamaican or Canadian sense. They commemorated them as local heroes of a global British Empire. Near-contemporary statues in Jamaica and Nova Scotia displayed heroes born in the British Isles: in Jamaica, Queen Victoria, and Governor Metcalfe; in Nova Scotia, Edward Cornwallis.<sup>295</sup> In contrast, Jordon and Howe’s statues display a strain of British identity generated in the colony itself.

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 76-91.

<sup>293</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 11.

<sup>294</sup> R.G. Miller R.A., “Erected by Public Subscription in Memory of The Honorable Edward Jordon C.B...”

<sup>295</sup> John G. Reid, “The Three Lives of Edward Cornwallis.”

Longley said that Howe claimed the inherent rights of the “Anglo-Saxon race” on behalf of Nova Scotians. Contemporary descriptions of Howe are full of such references. His early biographer, George Monro Grant, wrote that his “face and features were Saxon; the eyes light blue and full of kindly fun.”<sup>296</sup> As previously mentioned, *The Evening Herald* wrote of his command of “terse simple Anglo-Saxon.” Such descriptions located Howe within the racial sphere of Anglo-Saxondom, but also in a myth of free, primitive Anglo-Saxons which owed more to Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* than racial pseudoscience.<sup>297</sup>

Howe had himself spoken of Nova Scotia’s Anglo-Saxon heritage in his trial speech. “The language which we speak,” he said, “like a noble stream has come rolling onwards, from the days of the Saxon Heptarchy...”<sup>298</sup> However, in this passage Howe used Anglo-Saxon in a historical sense. He did not say Anglo-Saxon when he really meant English, as the *Evening Herald* did. He also downplayed the importance of British racial heritage. “Though the blood of Britons flows in our veins,” he said in the passage, “that would be of little consequence if everything else did not conspire to keep their spirit alive in our bosoms.”<sup>299</sup> As shown in the previous chapter, Howe meant to remove all doubt that he might sympathize with the United States, as was appropriate given the sedition charges laid against him. Because Nova Scotian Loyalists and rebellious Bostonians sprung from the same source, Anglo-Saxon ethnic pride did not inherently signify British loyalty. Such rhetoric could indeed be a weapon against British power: American patriots such as Thomas Jefferson claimed to be the true inheritors of Anglo-Saxon liberty.<sup>300</sup> Longley, Grant, and Howe’s other

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<sup>296</sup> George Monro Grant, *Joseph Howe* (Halifax: A. & W. MacKinlay, 1904), 14.

<sup>297</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1820). For a discussion of Anglo-Saxonism in Canadian and American culture, see Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).

<sup>298</sup> *The Novascotian*, 12 March 1835.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Thomas Jefferson wrote of “the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended, and whose political principles and forms of government we have assumed.” Quoted in Stanley R. Hauer, “Thomas Jefferson and the Anglo-Saxon Language,” *PMLA* 98, no. 5 (October 1983): 878-898.

eulogizers, on the other hand, wrote at the turn of the twentieth century. This period was marked by scientific racism, the absence of conflict between Canada and the United States, and rhetoric which placed the two countries at the pinnacle of English-speaking civilization.<sup>301</sup> Consequently, these men saw no reason to qualify Howe's membership of an "Anglo-Saxon race."

Longley viewed liberal government as a consequence of Nova Scotia's English settlement. As he wrote in his 1905 biography of Howe,

English-speaking people, wherever placed, will invariably struggle for the right of self-government... it was inevitable that nothing would satisfy them [Nova Scotian Loyalists] but a condition of responsibility to the people as full and ample as that which prevailed in the motherland.<sup>302</sup>

In his trial, Howe proved himself to be the hero who could deliver this freedom. He became "the great man, the heaven-inspired hero," who, "recognizing the moral principles involved, boldly dares to put everything at stake and challenge fate."<sup>303</sup> Longley's words evoke Ian Mackay and Robin Bates's description of the "white Anglo male who strides masterfully through history," whom they argue was a typical Nova Scotian hero at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>304</sup> It is also similar to language used to describe Edward Cornwallis during what John Reid calls his "second life." For instance, J. Massey Rhind wrote that he had attempted to portray the "dominating courage" of Cornwallis in the statue he sculpted in 1929.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People*.

<sup>302</sup> J.W. Longley, *Joseph Howe*, 16-17.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, 23-4.

<sup>304</sup> Ian Mackay and Robin Bates, *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 251.

<sup>305</sup> John Reid, "The Three Lives of Edward Cornwallis," 30-1.

The importance of ‘race’ in its pseudoscientific sense is not clear in these descriptions. Grant used the word ‘race’ only once in his biography, but not in relation to Anglo-Saxons. Longley used it so often that it is problematic to suggest he meant biology: he talks about the “race of clever men” whom Nova Scotia contributed to Canada, for instance.<sup>306</sup> However, the heroization of Howe certainly did descend into bluster about the “the Anglo-Saxon race” in Longley’s 1904 speech. The two biographers’ omissions are also telling. If political rights were inherent for Anglo-Saxons, as Longley stated explicitly, then for whom were they not inherent? Longley describes Howe’s friendship with the Mi’kmaq briefly, while Grant does not describe the relationship at all; Cape Breton is mentioned once in Grant and Longley’s respective biographies, but Scottish Highland settlers and African Nova Scotians are excluded entirely.

The limited public response to the call for a statue of Howe in the 1890s also suggests that the heroic portrayal given by Longley and Grant – both of whom knew Howe personally – was not embraced by all in the province.<sup>307</sup> The ambivalence of many Nova Scotians can be measured by their failure to raise funds for the statue, even in the midst of a period of so-called “statuomania” as noted by one scholar.<sup>308</sup> Like the text of Jordon’s statue, Longley’s speech claimed a connection between Howe and “the people,” but both Longley and Grant lamented his unpopularity with the Nova Scotian public at the time of his death. The powerful force of nostalgia was at work in their descriptions of Howe.

A useful point of comparison for attitudes to British imperialism in Canada and Jamaica is the commemoration of Queen Victoria. When the statue of Queen Victoria was unveiled in Kingston for her 1897 Diamond Jubilee, 30,000 people were reported to have

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<sup>306</sup> J.W. Longley, *Joseph Howe*, 277.

<sup>307</sup> P.A. Buckner, “Canadian Biography and the Search for Joseph Howe,” 105-116.

<sup>308</sup> Petrina Dacres, “Kingston’s Queen Victoria Monument,” 500.

attended the occasion. As Petrina Dacres argues, the ceremony can be viewed as “a strategy of bodily insistence around which a sense of shared belonging to empire could be built and sustained.”<sup>309</sup> Accordingly, the occasion was celebrated across the empire, including Canada, where two statues were raised to Victoria in the jubilee year and several more in the years following.<sup>310</sup> No statue was raised in Nova Scotia, however. The failure of the public campaign to raise funds for a statue to Howe in the 1890s may have contributed to this absence.

In the years prior to and immediately following Jamaican independence, Victoria’s statue was targeted by vandals on at least one occasion. During Queen Elizabeth’s visit in 1966, the statue was broken by a Rastafari elder who aimed to expose what he saw as a false, sacrilegious idol. Petrina Dacres argues that this protest was also directed at Jamaica’s post-independence elite.<sup>311</sup> This anger likely stemmed from the policies of Alexander Bustamante, Jamaica’s first Prime Minister, who in 1963 ordered the police to “bring them in, dead or alive” in reference to the Rastas.<sup>312</sup> Meanwhile, Jamaican politicians retained the British monarchy after independence. As Dacres argues, the British West Indies generated almost no violent anti-colonial movements, few attacks on colonial monuments, and no blanket change of colonial street names such as ‘Kings Street’ during the post-independence period.<sup>313</sup> According to Richard Drayton, it was only in the decades after independence that the rise of a “popular anti-imperialist consciousness” emerged.<sup>314</sup> Yet this was generated primarily by grassroots groups such as the Rastafari rather than political parties. When Petrina Dacres

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 501.

<sup>310</sup> Victoria R. Smith, “Constructing Victoria: The Representation of Queen Victoria in England, India, and Canada” (PhD diss., The State University of New Jersey, 1998).

<sup>311</sup> Petrina Dacres, “Kingston’s Queen Victoria Monument.”

<sup>312</sup> Horace G. Campbell, “Coral Gardens 1963: The Rastafari and Jamaican Independence,” *Social and Economic Studies* 63, no. 1 (2014): 197-214.

<sup>313</sup> Petrina Dacres, “‘But Bogle Was a Bold Man’: Vision, History, and Power for a New Jamaica,” *Small Axe* 8, no.2 (September 2004): 137-53.

<sup>314</sup> Richard Drayton, “The Problem of the Hero(ine) in Caribbean History,” *Small Axe* 15, 1 (March 2011): 26-45.



visited the statue in 2018, it had been attacked only by a solitary stick of gum deposited in the Queen's left nostril.<sup>315</sup> The sceptre which she originally carried had (rather poetically) fallen off, as had her left arm. Such shabbiness is characteristic of neglect, not virulent hostility, and speaks to Queen Victoria's irrelevance to contemporary Jamaicans outside of historical circles. This was reflected by a call from the historian Verene Shepherd to take the statue down in 2022, which, according to Veerle Poupeye, gained "limited public traction."<sup>316</sup>

Edward Jordon's journey into obscurity followed a similar trail. As Jamaican nationalism grew, the nascent independence movement venerated black heroes who were presented as hostile to the British Empire. All the 'National Heroes' sanctioned after independence, excluding those active in the twentieth century, engaged in some form of armed resistance. All were native-born, and they were mostly black.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, the mismatch between the race of Paul Bogle and that of his sculptor, Edna Manley, was controversial when his statue was raised in 1965.<sup>318</sup> In a culture which prized portrayals of the "Negro Aroused," as one Edna Manley sculpture was entitled, Jordon's absence of African features and loyalty to Britain made his heroism awkward. If nations are narrations, as Edward Said argued, then Jordon simply did not fit the narrative.

Where Jordon was put into heroic stories, his loyalty had to be addressed or pushed to the margins. For instance, W. Adolphe Roberts, a white Jamaican nationalist and trade unionist, stressed in his *Six Great Jamaicans* that "we shall fail to understand this remarkable man if we think of him as a revolutionist."<sup>319</sup> That he felt this necessary shows the temptation

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<sup>315</sup> Petrina Dacres, "Kingston's Queen Victoria Monument," 500.

<sup>316</sup> Veerle Poupeye, "Victoria in Jamaica: Neglect as Decolonial Refusal?" *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, accessed 23 July 2022, <https://19.bbk.ac.uk/article/id/8237/>.

<sup>317</sup> "National Heroes," National Heroes, National Library of Jamaica, accessed 21 July 2022, <https://nlj.gov.jm/qcontentnational-heroes/>.

<sup>318</sup> Manley, the wife of Jamaican Premier Norman Washington Manley, came from the light-skinned elite. See, Dacres, "But Bogle was a Bold Man," 117.

<sup>319</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 5.

to turn nineteenth century Jamaican heroes into proto nationalists. An educational film released by the National Library of Jamaica, *The Watchman: The Story of Edward Jordon*, took a different approach: it simply ignored Jordon's loyalty. In the film, no mention is made of Jordon's loyal rhetoric or, indeed, the secessionist rhetoric of white enslavers. The connection between Britain and the ruling elite, on the other hand, is emphasized when the judge who sentences Jordon to prison is placed in front of a large Union flag. At the close of the film, the voiceover calls the story of *The Watchman* "another milestone on our climb to freedom and independence."<sup>320</sup> Jordon is associated with a political movement to which he had no connection, either as a nationalist or as a proto nationalist who blazed the trail.

This was part of a wider pattern in Jamaican heroization. The Jamaican government made Paul Bogle an official 'National Hero' in 1965, even though the great Jamaican historian Douglas Hall had argued that he played little role in the Morant Bay Rebellion. In the 1950s, Hall wrote that Bogle did not "merit recognition" in any of the rebellion's "official records."<sup>321</sup> Yet, as Howard Johnson argues, there was a political purpose at work after independence which overrode the concerns of historians like Hall.<sup>322</sup> A black peasant executed after the Morant Bay Rebellion, Bogle was paired with the wealthy, mixed-race assemblyman George William Gordon in commemorations. The pair served as a symbol for the alliance nationalist politicians wished to create; namely, an alliance between light-skinned political elites and a lower-class, black popular movement. As a middle-class politician who centred loyalty to Britain in his rhetoric, Jordon was a far less useful hero. He has not been commemorated publicly since the National Library of Jamaica film.

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<sup>320</sup> National Library of Jamaica, *The Watchman – The Story of Edward Jordon*. (Kingston: National Library of Jamaica, published 2018), film.

<sup>321</sup> Petrina Dacres, "But Bogle was a Bold Man," 125.

<sup>322</sup> Howard Johnson, "From Pariah to Patriot," 197-217.

From the 1960s onwards, heroic stories of Howe also downplayed his loyalty to Britain. In 1961, the National Film Board of Canada released an educational biopic of Howe which replayed his trial on the big screen.<sup>323</sup> In the film's trial speech, Howe makes no reference to Great Britain, the Empire, or English law – a notable omission given their importance in the actual trial speech. The Joseph Howe Festival, which was held annually from 1973-85, likewise celebrated Howe's British connections only sporadically. The 1973 programme celebrates him as a Nova Scotian figure, who, according to the festival organizer Maria Nightingale, "believing his native province to be the best of all worlds... never flagged in his attempts to build up agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing."<sup>324</sup> In contrast to Longley, Nightingale made no reference to Howe's British connection, even though the achievements she listed were strikingly similar to those for which he was praised by his earlier biographers. Tellingly, one of these was "freedom of the press for Canada," an anachronism that transformed Howe from a colonial hero into a Canadian one.

In 1977, the theme of the festival was "Loyalty and Howe." This was chosen in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's silver jubilee, but also "the strong loyalties which Joseph Howe expressed to the Monarchy and to the governmental institutions of England."<sup>325</sup> Yet the annual report for that year gives little account of anything that is relevant to Howe's "strong loyalties." There were tugs of war, parades, and parties; but, in contrast to 1904, nothing that showed Howe as a hero of the British Empire or of the "Anglo-Saxon race" in Nova Scotia.<sup>326</sup> Moreover, Victorian political culture seems increasingly absurd when it seeps into the folksy events of the festival. 1973's programme described one event that humorously

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<sup>323</sup> Julian Biggs, *Joseph Howe: The Tribune of Nova Scotia* (National Film Board of Canada, 1961), film.

<sup>324</sup> Maria Nightingale, "Joseph Howe Festival, Program Highlights," Miscellaneous MS Collection MG 100 256, no. 25, Nova Scotia Archives (Halifax: booklet, 1973).

<sup>325</sup> "Joseph Howe Festival Annual Report 1977," Material re. the Joseph Howe Festival, Miscellaneous MS Collection, Nova Scotia Archives (Halifax: booklet, 1977).

<sup>326</sup> "Joseph Howe Festival Society," Memory NS, accessed 26 August 2022, <https://memoryns.ca/joseph-howe-festival-society>.

(albeit unintentionally) contrasted the high Victorian, British-style titles of politicians with a “Joseph Howe Festival Skate-A-Thon.” “The skate-a-thon will get under way with the official ceremonies by His Worship Mayor Walter Fitzgerald of Halifax,” it wrote.<sup>327</sup> It is unlikely that the solemnity of the skate-a-thon matched that of His Worship’s grand title. Some of the connections made between Howe and the events of the festival were dubious at best. “Joseph Howe was a great believer in sports,” stated the description of a “Festival of Sports” held “in recognition” of him in 1973.<sup>328</sup> The 1977 Joseph Howe Festival was about fun, but only tenuously about Joseph Howe, and not at all about British loyalty. This contrasts sharply with his commemoration in 1904 and is a mark of Canada’s transition from British colony to nation, which was enshrined in law by 1982’s Canada Act.

As noted in the Joseph Howe Festival of that year, in 1977 Queen Elizabeth celebrated her silver jubilee. Yet the lack of serious engagement with Howe’s connection to Britain in the festival did not speak to anti-monarchy, or anti-British, sentiment. Rather, it spoke to Britain’s irrelevance in contemporary culture. At the festival, the monarchy was simply background noise. To some extent, this also explains why Jordon’s afterlife may have come to an end. As a mixed-race Jamaican who was utterly loyal to Great Britain, he has become a curiosity of history rather than an inspiring hero. As Canada’s sense of its past has darkened in the twenty-first century, Howe’s brilliant advocacy for the “unshackled press” may also have lost some of its shine. If the fight for free speech and government were venerated today, new generations might naturally ask to whom freedom was extended, and who was left out. Ultimately, heroic stories are told to give meaning to the present. Perhaps

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<sup>327</sup> The skate-a-thon was held at St. Mary’s University in 1973 and 1974 but had disappeared from the annual report in 1977. See, “Joseph Howe Festival, Program Highlights,” Miscellaneous MS Collection MG 100, vol. 256, 25, Nova Scotia Archives (Halifax: booklet, 1973).

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

the values which are contained within narratives of Jordon and Howe are no longer meaningful.

## ***Conclusion***

As Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan write, systems of government in Britain's Atlantic Empire were deliberately designed to "keep popular impulses in check."<sup>329</sup> In practice, however, these governments rarely operated smoothly. The first half of the nineteenth century was marked by confrontation between colonial assemblies, the Colonial Office, governors, and popular movements throughout the region. Amongst these shifting powers, loyalty to Britain was a slippery concept and one which could be used to agitate for political reform in a variety of ways.

Above all else, Howe and Jordon's parallel careers illustrate this fact. Howe transformed his trial into a trial of the free press, which he described as a right delivered by British forefathers that needed to be defended at all costs. He turned the table on the magistrates by persuading the jury that the trial was about their crimes, not his. Jordon, on the other hand, contrasted his loyalty with the disloyalty of the Jamaican enslaving class. "Jamaica," wrote *The Watchman* in April 1832, "has been tried by her *Judge* (not her enemy) Great Britain, and has been convicted, not of slavery only, but of the abuses of slavery..."<sup>330</sup> As a Jamaican ally to a British government increasingly at odds with enslavers in the colony, Jordon was able to agitate for the rights of free people of colour, journalists, and enslaved people. As with Howe, all of this was made possible by his loyal rhetoric.

Yet Howe and Jordon's success was also dependent on their ability to align their rhetoric with the political wind. Jordon did argue for the abolition of slavery, but he did so as the abolitionist movement accelerated in the 1830s. His alliance with British abolitionists only began after the 1823 petition of the free men of colour, with all its deferential language,

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<sup>329</sup> Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic*, 22.

<sup>330</sup> "Editorial," *The Watchman*, 11 April 1832.

was rejected by the Jamaican assembly. As late as January 1830, *The Watchman* could write that

The master has a right to the slave's labour as so much available commodity because he has a right to all that that labour can bring. He has a right to it as the king has a right to the allegiance of a subject, as the father has a right to the services and obedience of his child.<sup>331</sup>

Howe, on the other hand, castigated Thomas Chandler Halliburton for his description of the legislative council as “dignified, deep read, pensioned old ladies” in 1827.<sup>332</sup> Yet, as an economic crisis and cholera pandemic hit Nova Scotia in the 1830s, he transformed himself into a leader of a popular movement. He ran a press campaign against elite corruption, spoke at public meetings, and provoked petitions to the assembly. In his trial, he made himself a *cause célèbre* for reform and press freedom. This label stuck to him, despite the fact that the victory he won for press freedom, while significant, was not permanent (as his successor at *The Novascotian*, Richard Nugent, would discover).

If Howe and Jordon's victories were the result of their political acumen, they were also attributable to their social class. Howe was prosecuted by an attorney-general who counted him as a personal friend and a judge who allowed him to speak for six hours without interruption. The case of William Wilkie in 1820 shows how individuals with fewer social connections could fail in their challenge to colonial elites.<sup>333</sup> Jordon also benefitted from his position. Although he was tried for his life, the liberty of a fair trial was not extended to the many enslaved people killed, at hastily arranged trials or with no trial at all, during the brutal repression of the Samuel Sharpe Rebellion.<sup>334</sup> As the publisher of the community's only

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<sup>331</sup> “Editorial,” *The Watchman*, 9 January 1830.

<sup>332</sup> J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Conservative Reformer*, 26-58.

<sup>333</sup> Barry Cahill, “Sedition in Nova Scotia: R. v. Wilkie (1820),” 458-97.

<sup>334</sup> Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 161.



newspaper, Jordon could also count on the support of free men of colour in Jamaica. According to W. Adolphe Roberts, “the courtroom was said to be flooded with free men of colour, armed and prepared to act” during his trial.<sup>335</sup> Nonetheless, Jordon’s position was not nearly as privileged as Howe’s. The assistant to the attorney-general who prosecuted Jordon was not a personal friend, as Archibald was to Howe; rather, he advocated intently for Jordon to be sentenced to death. Like enslaved people in Jamaica, the Mi’kmaq who navigated the British legal system in Nova Scotia were unlikely to enjoy the rights of Englishmen. Indeed, it is revealing that they attempted to bypass the colonial legal system in Nova Scotia by petitioning Queen Victoria directly. In Britain’s Atlantic Empire, British law achieved different results for different groups.

After their deaths, the stories in which Howe and Jordon were made heroes possessed similar qualities. They emphasized the British character of Nova Scotia and Jamaica respectively, as well as the loyalty which accompanied Howe and Jordon’s respective efforts for reform. As the twentieth century progressed, the imperative to emphasize this loyalty evaporated as the British Empire receded into history. Heroic narratives of Jordon and Howe pushed their loyalty to the margins or did not mention it at all. In the twenty-first century, it is not clear that Jordon or Howe retain any interest outside of a small group of historians.

Why, then, are the two relevant today? To be blunt, the legacy of the British Empire is relevant in Jamaica and Nova Scotia. If one wishes to understand the legacy of slavery in Jamaica, one must understand how it was abolished. That the colony neither produced a revolution of the oppressed, like Haiti, nor a revolution of the enslavers, as white Jamaicans threatened, is perhaps the singular fact of its history. It left a country which, to a great extent,

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<sup>335</sup> W. Adolphe Roberts, *Six Great Jamaicans*, 13.

was shaped in Jordon's image: bound to the British Crown, governed by a light-skinned elite, and generally non-violent in its resistance to imperialism. In Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe is relevant because attitudes to the British Empire, as in the rest of Canada, are in flux.

Contemporary debates over statues, imperial nomenclature, and colonialism benefit from the study of Howe and his contemporaries. They also benefit from an understanding of the imperial identity that enabled these figures to be raised onto pedestals at the beginning of the twentieth century. Howe and Jordon's heroization shows that, to a great extent, our present determines what we tell ourselves about the past. Their lives show that, even after it is forgotten, the past illuminates the present.

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